

**HERDERLIJKE REGEL OF INBURGERINGSCURSUS?**



THEOLOGISCHE UNIVERSITEIT VAN DE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN  
IN NEDERLAND TE KAMPEN

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**HERDERLIJKE REGEL OF INBURGERINGSCURSUS?  
EEN BIJDRAGE AAN HET ONDERZOEK NAAR DE ETHISCHE  
RICHTLIJNEN IN 1 TIMOTEÛS & TITUS**

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## SUMMARY

### *Outline*

Characterizing the ethics in the Pastoral Epistles (PE) as ‘bourgeois’ has been commonplace up until some thirty years ago. Unlike the undisputed Pauline Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus were said to promote a conservative lifestyle totally in agreement with the prevailing social conventions of the time. In doing so the letters reflect the situation of the early church in a stage of history where Christians came to realize that the *parousia* was not imminent. The author of the PE sought to regulate Christian community life for a long term stay in this world. Therefore, the ethical instructions in the PE aimed at peaceful coexistence with the non-Christian environment, hence its ‘bourgeois’ outlook. Martin Dibelius – and later Hans Conzelmann – held this position regarding the PE as documents that witness to a *christliche Bürgerlichkeit* (bourgeois Christianity) in his commentary on the letters. Subsequently, most authors on the PE followed his view.

In recent decades the research on the PE has shifted from a focus on the discontinuity of these letters with the undisputed Pauline Epistles – regarding matters of language, style, theology, church organisation etc. – to their continuity with them. The PE enjoy a more ‘positive’ approach in general and the label ‘bourgeois’ has been omitted. Nevertheless, the bourgeois character of the ethical instructions has remained *implicitly assumed* by a good deal of authors: ethics in the PE are still interpreted as Pauline tradition in a conservative track in line with the prevailing social conventions.

The present study of the ethical instructions in 1 Timothy & Titus aims to put this characterization as bourgeois to the test, especially in the field of human relationships such as the relationship between men and women. Unlike the second letter to Timothy, 1 Timothy & Titus contain largely ethical instructions for different groups of people within the church. The extent to which these instructions testify to a bourgeois form of Christianity is examined.

The study consists of two parts. In part one the regulations of 1 Timothy & Titus are exegetically examined and their content is compared to the prevailing social conventions. In addition, the motives that accompany these regulations are mapped. These motives are confronted with the concept of an author regulating Christian community life for a long term stay in this world. This ‘internal’ approach of the letters’ regulations is amplified with an ‘external’ approach in part two, a comparison of the instructions of 1 Timothy & Titus with instructions of 1 Corinthians, an undisputed Pauline letter.

As a working hypothesis 1 Timothy & Titus are understood in terms of their self-presentation as authentic Pauline correspondence with two co-workers in the field. This working hypothesis makes it possible to find out whether the ethical

instructions can be understood meaningfully within a framework of simultaneity rather than continuity with the undisputed Pauline Epistles.

### *Findings*

(1) The examined instructions in 1 Timothy & Titus correspond highly to the prevailing ethics at the time. Paul uses virtue lists and Hellenistic *topoi* to make his point. He requires impeccable behaviour, honourable and modest. This means, for instance, that women should subordinate to their husbands, slaves to their masters, and Christians in general to the authorities. Senior people and whoever holds a position is to be shown respect. In some areas Paul even formulates stricter requirements: Christians suit meekness, they should avoid drunkenness and should dislike greed. Also stricter than the prevailing morality – but close to some moral philosophers – is the expected fidelity of men to their wives.

(2) The motives that accompany the regulations in 1 Timothy & Titus are diverse. Sometimes, Paul supports his instructions by a reference to Scripture (e.g. 1 Tim.2:13-15a). Next to that also good leadership, the internal stability of the community, and protection against false teaching are important motivating factors (e.g. 1 Tim.3:4-5; Tit. 1:9). The instructions are further motivated by the ideal of a sincere Christian lifestyle, which should be convincing and appealing to outsiders (e.g. Tit. 2:9-10, 11). The majority of these motivational factors can be clustered into two categories: internal (focused on the community) and external (focused on outsiders). These two categories appear evenly distributed.

(3) The idea of the church preparing for a long term stay in this world is nowhere explicitly stated. At this point Dibelius-Conzelmann seem to draw a distinction between the textual motivations and the actual ‘drive’ of the author. However, it seems unlikely that the varicoloured palette of motives that accompany the ethical instructions would show no trace of this very ‘drive’. On the contrary, the motivational clauses regarding outsiders highlight the vitality of the missionary idea. The expected behaviour serves to spread the gospel, for God wants to save all mankind (1 Tim. 2:2-4; Tit. 2:11).

(4) The comparison of 1 Timothy & Titus to 1 Corinthians regarding the male – female relationship shows that basically two matters are at stake in 1 Timothy & Titus as well as in 1 Corinthians. First, the apostle expects marital fidelity of both husband and wife (1 Tim. 3:2, 12; 5:9; Tit. 1:6; 1 Cor. 7:1-7). Secondly, he expects women to stick to their positions being subordinate to their husbands (1 Tim. 2:8-3,1a; Tit. 2:4, 5; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Cor. 14:33b-36). On that front, 1 Timothy & Titus do not point to an increased adaptation to social conventions.

(5) Both 1 Timothy & Titus and 1 Corinthians show parallel motivational thoughts regarding the subordinate position of women to their husbands. In both cases the apostle provides for an ‘ontological’ reasoning by recalling the story of creation. Further, in both cases there is a ‘practical’ reasoning that has to do with the

‘internal’ concern for the orderly course of the Christian meetings on the one hand, and with the ‘external’ concern for the attractiveness of Christianity to outsiders on the other hand.

(6) There are also differences to note. Although the male – female relationship in both 1 Timothy & Titus and 1 Corinthians is viewed from an ‘outer’ perspective (that is, what is said about the relationship is viewed within a broader social perspective), 1 Corinthians also focuses on the relationship from an ‘inner’ perspective, more specifically regarding matters of sexuality. In that very context, the reciprocity within the relationship is more strongly elaborated.

(7) Most of the differences are seen at the motivational level. Paul’s ‘ontological’ reasoning in referring to the story of creation is worked out in a more balanced way to men and women ‘equally’ in 1 Corinthians. Next, another item that is more strongly elaborated in 1 Corinthians is the discourse regarding honour and shame. Further to this, especially regarding the topic of marital fidelity, the motivations in 1 Timothy & Titus and 1 Corinthians vary. That stems from the fact that the expectation of marital fidelity is found in two totally different literary contexts. In 1 Timothy & Titus it is placed, together with some other requirements, under the general requirement of irreproachable conduct of bishops, elders, deacons and widows. This general requirement, in turn, is motivated by reasons of community stability and the public image of the Christians. The expectation of marital fidelity in 1 Corinthians is uttered from an ‘inner’ perspective and motivated by the desire to prevent sin.

(8) The working hypothesis [1 Timothy & Titus are understood in terms of their self-presentation as authentic Pauline correspondence with two co-workers] provides a plausible explanation for the differences between 1 Timothy & Titus on the one hand and 1 Corinthians on the other. The different types of letters aimed at different audiences: Paul’s co-workers *versus* a Christian community. Therefore, they show a clear difference in practical orientation: instructions regarding management of a community *versus* s regarding specific questions that arose out of a community. This provides a plausible explanation for the differences in the instructions and their motivation. For example, the more explicit discourse of honour and shame fits well into a letter where Paul wants to convince the women in question by using a rhetorical argumentation. That, in the same situation, the ontological reasoning is worked out in a more balanced way to men and women ‘equally’ will not surprise either. Indeed, Paul *directly* addresses those people that are to adapt their behaviour to his instructions, men and women.

### *Conclusions*

Paul’s ethical regulations in 1 Timothy & Titus accord well to the prevailing social conventions. His demands are sometimes even stricter. He supports his instructions with a wide variety of motivations. However, the sum total of instructions and

motivations does not reflect the situation of a church preparing for a long term stay in this world. On the contrary, the motivations reflect more the vitality of the missionary idea.

Paul's ethical regulations in 1 Timothy & Titus concerning the relationship between men and women do not testify to an increased adaptation to social conventions compared to 1 Corinthians. The comparison shows important parallels, both on the level of instruction and motivation. Differences can be accounted for by the different audiences and practical orientation of the letters. The working hypothesis, embedded in a model of simultaneity, turns out to have explanatory capacity.

These results do not invalidate the hypothesis of *christliche Bürgerlichkeit* in the PE. The hypothesis is tested only on parts. The findings however, do not support it.

### *Broader relevance*

The discussion of the 'bourgeois' character of the ethical instructions in 1 Timothy & Titus is linked to the broader question on the appropriate historical and literary reference for studying and understanding the PE. Are these letters to be understood as part of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Paul's writings, so within a model of continuity and discontinuity to the undisputed Pauline Epistles? In that case they function as valuable sources to understand the history of early Christianity. If, on the other hand, the PE are to be understood as authentic Pauline letters, so within a model of simultaneity, they broaden our view on Paul, his theology, the early Christian communities and the social environment he worked in.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Myriam Klinker - De Klerck werd geboren op 26 september 1975 te Leuven. Na haar opleiding algemeen secundair onderwijs (studierichting klassieke talen) in het Heilig-Hartinstituut te Heverlee, studeerde zij aan de Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven. Daar behaalde zij een kandidaatsdiploma in de wijsbegeerte (1995), een licentiaatsdiploma in de godsdienstwetenschappen (1997), een aggregaat voor het godsdienstonderwijs (1997) en een licentiaatsdiploma in de godgeleerdheid (1999). Van 1999-2003 werkte zij als docente godsdienst aan het Heilig-Hartinstituut te Heverlee, waarna zij naar aanleiding van haar huwelijk verhuisde naar Nederland. Van 2004 tot 2012 was zij als AIO verbonden aan de Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Broederweg) te Kampen. Vanaf 2012 doceert zij aan deze universiteit Nieuwe Testament en nieuwtestamentisch Grieks. Myriam Klinker - De Klerck is gehuwd met Ron Klinker en moeder van drie kinderen: Karst, Tiemen en Isa.