

## THE LETTERS OF JOHN

In this commentary, Duane F. Watson provides a careful verse-by-verse interpretation of the Letters of John that foregrounds the author's rhetorical strategy. He emphasizes the means that the Elder uses to persuade the churches he addresses to continue affirming the Johannine tradition and to resist secessionists who corrupt it. While illuminating the sophistication of the author's rhetorical approach, Watson also explores traditional exegetical questions, demonstrating how many issues of interpretation are clarified or resolved by rhetorical analysis. He also sheds new light on the relationship between the author, his audience, and opposition in their original context. This commentary features "closer look" sections giving more detail on related subjects and "bridging the horizons" sections that suggest how these epistles address our world. The commentary is aimed at educated laity, clergy, college and graduate students, and scholars interested in the Letters of John, the history of the churches addressed, and the social formation and location of these early Christians.

**Duane F. Watson** is Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at Malone University in Canton, Ohio. He is most known for his pioneering work in the rhetorical analysis of the New Testament. His works include *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (1988); "The Second Letter of Peter" and "The Letter of Jude" in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (1998); editor, *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (2002); *First and Second Peter* (with Terrance Callan) in the Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (2012); editor, *Miracle Discourse in the New Testament* (2012); and editor (with Alan Hauser), *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, 3 volumes (2003, 2009, 2017).

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# *The Letters of John*



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*Dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Mary Lovice Halsted Watson (1900–1983), who always encouraged and gently advised me, and my grandfather, Harold Frederick Watson (1902–1999), for whom being an engineer was the dream, but being a farmer was the reality.*

## The Letters of John



This commentary is a careful interpretation of the Letters of John. Its distinctive feature is a focus on their rhetorical dimensions, which have been neglected or only briefly discussed in previous interpretations. The author of these letters used Greco-Roman, Jewish, and general rhetoric in their composition to make them persuasive to their recipients. He struggled to convince them to adhere to the theology and ethics of the Johannine tradition against challenges posed by secessionists from their own ranks. His rhetorical arsenal is rich and varied, employing everything from grammatical changes of person, to figures of speech and thought, to repetition and amplification, to simple argumentation. He employs invention (constructing arguments), arrangement (arranging rhetorical units), and style (figures of speech and thought) to enable the recipients to recognize the situation he addresses, assess them as he does, and respond to them as he deems most advantageous to them. These rhetorical dimensions provide numerous insights that enrich and clarify traditional interpretation.

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All quotations of Greek and Roman sources are from the latest editions in the Loeb Classical Library.

## Abbreviations



### PRIMARY SOURCES

Apoc. Ab.	Apocalypse of Abraham
Aristotle, <i>Poet.</i>	<i>Poetica</i>
Aristotle, <i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Rhetorica</i>
Aristotle, [ <i>Rhet. Alex.</i> ]	<i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i>
Aristotle, <i>Top.</i>	<i>Topica</i>
Augustine, <i>De doct. chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina christiana</i>
2 Bar.	2 Baruch
Barn.	Barnabas
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the Damascus Document
Cicero, <i>Brut.</i>	<i>Brutus</i>
Cicero, <i>De or.</i>	<i>De oratore</i>
Cicero, <i>Inv.</i>	<i>De invention rhetorica</i>
Cicero, <i>Opt. gen.</i>	<i>De optimo genere oratorum</i>
Cicero, <i>Or. Brut.</i>	<i>Orator ad M. Brutum</i>
Cicero, <i>Part. or.</i>	<i>Partitiones oratoriae</i>
Cicero, <i>Top.</i>	<i>Topica</i>
1 Clem.	1 Clement
2 Clem.	2 Clement
Clement of Alexandria, <i>Strom.</i>	<i>Miscellanies</i>
Demetrius, <i>Eloc.</i>	<i>De elocutione</i>
Did.	Didache
Diogn.	Diognetus
1 En.	1 Enoch
Eusebius, <i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>

Gk. Apoc. Ezra	Greek Apocalypse of Ezra
Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Or. Bas.</i>	<i>Oratio in laudem Basilii</i>
Herm. Mand.	Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate(s)
Herm. Sim.	Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude(s)
Herm. Vis.	Shepherd of Hermas, Vision(s)
Ign., <i>Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
Ign., <i>Magn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Magnesians</i>
Ign., <i>Phld.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Philadelphians</i>
Ign., <i>Smyrn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrnaeans</i>
Ign., <i>Trall.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Trallians</i>
Irenaeus, <i>Haer.</i>	<i>Against Heresies</i>
Josephus, <i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
Josephus, <i>J.W.</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>
Longinus, <i>Subl.</i>	<i>De sublimitate</i>
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
Philo, <i>Embassy</i>	<i>On the Embassy to Gaius</i>
Philo, <i>QG</i>	<i>Questions and Answers on Genesis</i>
Philo, <i>Spec. Laws</i>	<i>On the Special Laws</i>
Plato, <i>Phaedr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
Polycarp, <i>Phil.</i>	<i>To the Philippians</i>
Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
1QH	Thanksgiving Hymns
1QS	Rule of the Community
Quintilian, <i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutio oratoria</i>
Rhet. Her.	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
Sir	Sirach
T. Benj.	Testament of Benjamin
T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
T. Levi	Testament of Levi
T. Mos.	Testament of Moses
T. Sim.	Testament of Simeon
Tob	Tobit

## SECONDARY SOURCES

AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta Biblica

*List of Abbreviations*

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- ANTC Abington New Testament Commentaries  
 AUSS *Andrews University Seminary Studies*  
 BDAG F. Danker, W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.  
 BDF F. Blass and A. Debrunner. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Revised and translated by R. W. Funk. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.  
 BETL Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium  
*Bib* *Biblica*  
 BT *The Bible Translator*  
 BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft  
 CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*  
 DLNT *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Edited by R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1997.  
 ECL Early Christianity and Its Literature  
 EKKNT Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament  
*EvQ* *Evangelical Quarterly*  
*ExpTim* *Expository Times*  
 HNTC Harper’s New Testament Commentaries  
 HUT Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie  
 ICC International Critical Commentary  
*JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*  
*JSNT* *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*  
 JSNTSup Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series  
*JTS* *Journal of Theological Studies*  
 LEC Library of Early Christianity  
 MGNTG J. H. Moulton, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 4 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908–1976.  
 MNTC Moffatt New Testament Commentary  
*MTZ* *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift*  
*Neot* *Neotestamentica*  
 NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament  
*NovT* *Novum Testamentum*  
 NovTSup Supplements to Novum Testamentum

NRTh	La nouvelle revue théologique
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SBJT	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SJSJ	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SP	Sacra Pagina
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.</i> Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die      Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>