Rhetorical Criticism in Biblical Commentaries

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ABSTRACT

Biblical commentators through history have employed various methods to facilitate interpretation, including rhetorical criticism, with emphasis on classical rhetoric. Despite a resurgence of interest in rhetoric in the past two decades, only a few commentators in the *New Interpreter's Bible* and the *Hermeneia* series have undertaken in-depth rhetorical analysis. Most observations of these commentators are derived from the rhetorics of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. This essay sets forth and evaluates the various methods of rhetorical analysis and their employment in the two above-mentioned commentary series.

Keywords: biblical commentaries; Hermeneia; New Interpreters Bible; rhetoric; rhetorical criticism.

Introduction

Rhetoric has come to the forefront across the spectra of the academic disciplines in the past twenty years. Interest in rhetorical criticism has rapidly accelerated among biblical scholars. In 1994, Watson and Hauser published *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography, With Notes on History and Method*—200 pages listing about 2,000 items. Watson has now published *The Rhetoric of the New Testament: An Annotated Bibliography* (2006), with perhaps 4,000 entries beginning in 1500 CE. Two years ago, I checked the online listing of 'Dissertation Abstracts', which only goes back to 1997. I entered the word 'rhetoric', and 8,567 items showed up. When I searched for dissertations on the rhetoric of religion there were 372 entries. Many of these are studies on biblical documents. I then entered 'rhetoric' in the ATLA Religion Database and

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asked only for items with rhetoric in the title. Since 1992, 1,939 items were identified, and many of these are on biblical documents. Enough books, theses, and reviews have passed through the hands of each reader that no additional data seems required to document the escalating number of works on rhetoric.

In the past ten years, several new Bible commentaries have been published with 'Rhetoric' in the title. For example, Deo Publishing in the Netherlands has inaugurated 'Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity', a new series edited by Robbins and Watson. The announcement states that the series will begin 'with a full complement of socio-rhetorical commentaries on the New Testament'. Most of the books of the New Testament have already been assigned.

The focus of this essay is to assess the manner and mode in which rhetorical analysis has impacted commentaries in the last two decades. In order to provide some basis upon which to make this analysis, I will briefly sketch the history of rhetorical comments in biblical studies, then present a prospective on rhetorical criticism, especially that grounded in classical rhetorical criticism.

Early Rhetorical Comments on Biblical Documents

In the Hellenistic world, training in rhetoric followed upon rudimentary grammatical education. Rhetoric therefore made at least a cursory impression upon certain biblical authors from the third century BCE. Some of the earliest scriptural interpretation involved aspects of rhetoric having to do with style and literary figures. Even in the first century CE, Philo was using rhetorical analysis in his remarks on the Hebrew Bible (Alexandre 1999). Not too much later, his Christian intellectual heirs in Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, offered occasional rhetorical observations. The same types of rhetorical reflections may also be found in the commentaries of Basil the Great (329–379 CE), Gregory of Nyssa (332–400 CE) and Chrysostom (347–407 CE). These three trained as rhetoricians before they become preachers. By the time Augustine completed *De Doctrina Christiana* (427 CE), in which Book IV is dedicated to rhetorical criticism of the Scriptures, rhetorical observations were somewhat commonplace (Kennedy 1994; Classen 1991).

Rhetorical comments on Scripture continued throughout the Medieval era, and received new emphasis in the Renaissance by Erasmus (1467–1536; *Collected Works* 1974), and in the Reformation with Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), who published *De rhetorical libri tres* (1525), *Institutiones*

rhetoricae (1523), and *Elementa rhetorices* (1531=2001), and J.C.G. Ernesti, especially his *Initia rhetorica*, and his lexica of technical rhetorical terms in both Greek and Latin (1784; 1795; 1797). Perhaps some of the most creative work in the early part of the nineteenth century was that of Christian Gottlob Wilke (1786–1854) *Die neutestamentliche Rhetorik, ein Seitenstück zur Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms* (1843). Some of the studies around the turn of the twentieth century were published by Johannes Weiss (1897), E.W. Bullinger (1898), Eduard König (1900), Rudolf Bultmann (1910), and Eduard Norden (1913). See also the observations by Classen (1998) for details on the lives and works of Erasmus and Melanchthon.

Rhetorical Criticism Toward the End of the Twentieth Century

We turn now to the recent beginnings of rhetorical analysis of Scripture. James D. Hester, along with certain others, cites the challenge of the SBL presidential address of Muilenburg in December 1968, at the University of California, Berkeley, as the beginning of their interest in rhetorical criticism (James D. Hester 1984; 1986; 1991). Muilenburg was aware of classical rhetoric, but was more interested in what he perceived to be the distinctive rhetoric of the Hebrew Scriptures. His address, 'Form Criticism and Beyond' (1969), challenged the biblical guild to move beyond form criticism, in order to assess larger literary features of the texts. Muilenburg declared:

> What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole. Such an enterprise I should describe as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism (1969: 8).

A second major influence on rhetorical analysis in biblical studies was the work of Kennedy. Kennedy described the manner in which he entered upon a rapprochement with biblical critics:

> You asked about the inception of my book on the rhetorical criticism of the New Testament (Kennedy 1984). In the 1970s, a series of students in the Graduate Program in Religion at Duke began to come to Chapel Hill to study with me, encouraged by Professor Moody Smith at Duke. Their program required an 'outside minor' for the PhD in Religion, and 'rhetoric' was accepted as an option. The students usually took one or two courses with me and then I served on their doctoral oral exam and often

> also on their dissertation committees. Of these students, the one who took up my approaches most extensively has been Watson. All of my students from Duke contributed papers to the Festschrift in my honor that Duane organized, published by Sheffield Academic Press in 1991 as Persuasive Artistry. As a result of the needs of these students, I had in the late 1970s decided to write an introduction to rhetorical interpretation of the NT, which was published in 1981 by the University of North Carolina Press. It has continued to sell very well and seems to be used as a text in university and seminar courses. It in turn led to invitations to lecture on the subject and to contribute to collections of essays (private letter to Olbricht 1994).

Kennedy's publications have had a continuing influence on the rhetorical interpretation of the Scriptures, as the essays in a forthcoming volume will substantiate (Black and Watson 2008).

A third event for many was the publication of Wuellner's essay 'Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans', which appeared in 1976. I asked Jewett, who has written on Pauline rhetoric, what whetted his appetite. He replied, 'Without a doubt, it was the publication of Wilhelm Wuellner's article on Romans' (private communication with Olbricht 1993). Wuellner's article evinced a familiarity with classical rhetoric via the German philologists such as Lausberg (1960), the classically based rhetorics of persons in English composition, such as Edward P.J. Corbett (1999) and W.J. Brandt (1970), but especially the new rhetoric of Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969). I was attracted to this article by Wuellner, because it seemed to me that he was one of the first in this country to employ rhetoric, both ancient and modern, creatively in assessing biblical documents, while at the same time retaining the insights of traditional grammatico-literary-historical criticism. Wuellner was aware of the new interest of rhetoric in English departments, but was less informed, apparently, that American speech departments bore the heat of the noon-day sun in the fifty years from 1913–63. In November of 1993, *Rhetoric and the New Testament 1992 Heidelberg Conference* was presented to Wuellner, in his honor, in Berkeley, California. In the dedicatory statement I wrote:

> Professor Wuellner has been more active in the international promotion of rhetorical analysis of Scripture than any other person. While it cannot be said that he has created a school of rhetorical analysis, inasmuch as that implies a specific methodology and agenda, yet in the encouragement and, in certain cases, training of younger scholars, no one has expended more time and energy than Wilhelm… More than anyone else, Professor Wuellner has been in contact with scholars in the United States, Canada, Europe, South Africa, Australia, Japan and elsewhere (Porter and Olbricht 1993: 17).

By the time Betz published his landmark commentary on Galatians in 1979, biblical critics were disposed to treat Betz's comments on rhetoric with excitement and respect. Betz drew mostly upon German studies in rhetoric. In his footnotes, at least, Betz was oblivious to American rhetorical studies. His rhetorical focus was on arrangement, and he depended more on the Roman rhetorical tradition than on the Greek. In the 1980s, a number of biblical scholars interested in rhetoric were partially trained by speech communication and English rhetoricians, along with a few classicists, but principally Kennedy. I may mention here Hughes (1989), who studied with Leff, and Farrell at Northwestern, and Watson (1988b), who worked under Kennedy at the University of North Carolina.

Rhetorical criticism in biblical studies has flowered in all sorts of directions these days, and new books with rhetoric in the title are being announced monthly. There has also been a series of Pepperdine Conferences on rhetorical analysis of the Scriptures that Robbins describes in 'From Heidelberg to Heidelberg: Rhetorical Interpretation of the Bible at Seven "Pepperdine" Conferences from 1991–2002' (2005).

Rhetorical Criticism: Classical Approaches

The major extant works of classical rhetoric are: Aristotle, *The Rhetoric* (ca. 335 CE; 1959); Demetrius, *On Style* (ca. second century BCE; 1995); Cicero, *The Rhetorica ad Herennium* (ca. 85 BCE; 1989), *De inventione* (ca. 89 BCE; 1993), and *De oratore* (55 BCE; 1992–96); Longinus, *On the Sublime* (ca. first century CE; 1995); and Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* (ca. 92 CE; 1989).

The Greco-Roman rhetoricians set out, not so much to lay the foundations for rhetorical criticism, but to provide insight and practical guidelines for those engaged in speaking and writing. They limited their observations to discourse in the law courts (forensic or juridical δικανικον [dikanikon]), the political assemblies (deliberative συμβουλευτικον [sumbouleutikon]), and ceremonial occasions (demonstrative or epideictic επιδεικτικον [deiktikon]). These comprise the three famous genres of classical rhetoric. Aristotle declared that there were many other types of discourse that he did not subsume under the rubric of rhetoric (*The Rhetoric*, I, i, iv 6).

The observations of the classical rhetoricians may therefore be somewhat limited in value for biblical critics since the classical rhetoricians did not experience nor comment upon speaking in synagogues and churches. They focused on speeches, both oral and written, and viewed each speech as a total discourse. They did not apply rhetorical analysis to smaller units

(pericope) as if they were complete discourses within larger documents. Only after the third century CE were insights from rhetorical treatises useful in commenting on letters, histories, apocalypses, or dialogues.

The five classical canons or parts of rhetoric, first declared in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, are: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Some of these canons have been given more emphasis than others in later historical periods. Through medieval times, rhetorical analysis chiefly assessed style, including tropes and figures. In the eighteenth century, rhetorical critics turned to speakers and audiences. In America in the twentieth century, rhetoricians teaching speech and composition have stressed invention and rhetorical proofs. Beginning with Muilenburg, biblical scholars approaching the scriptures rhetorically have focused chiefly on structure (ταξις), that is, arrangement. Since the Renaissance, few comments have been made upon memory in rhetorical criticism, but because of recent discussions of memory in the ancient world, certain observations are possible (Olbricht 1997a). The criticism of delivery, of course, requires, preferably, both hearing and seeing the speaker, and therefore is not a component of comment when ancient documents are discussed, unless, of course, a contemporary wrote observations about the delivery.

Rhetorical criticism of biblical documents extrapolated from classical precepts may therefore proceed (step 1) with a determination of genre, whether forensic, deliberative or epideictic. (Kennedy [1984: 3-8] offers a somewhat different series of steps.) Such identification is often inconclusive and controverted, and in the end not especially efficacious in providing new insights (Olbricht 2005). Next, the canons of rhetoric are taken up in order, beginning with invention (εὕρεσις). Invention assesses both the status of the question (stasis στάσις) and the proofs (πίστεις). Hermagoras, in *Art of Rhetoric* (ca. 150 BCE; see Volkmann 1965) expounded a theory of stasis. Determining the stasis (step 2) has to do with basic issues involving fact, definition, quality, and jurisdiction. The proofs (πίστεις) were divided into non-artistic (ἄτχνος) and artistic (ἔντεχνος). The former consisted of what in the court room are called exhibits, such as objects, contracts, and witnesses. The citation of biblical texts belongs in this category. The speaker or writer also invents artistic proofs, that is, they select these with a specific audience in mind. There are three types of artistic proofs: logical argument and evidence (λόγος) (Ericksson, Olbricht and Übelacker 2002); the speaker's character (ἦθος) (Olbricht and Eriksson 2005); and emotive appeal (πάθος) (Olbricht and Sumney 2001).

The assessment of the logical argument (step 3) consists of examining enthymemes (ἐνθυμήματα)—rhetorical syllogisms—drawn from views

held by speaker and audience, in which the major premise is normally presumed and not stated; and examples (παραδείγματα). Aristotle argued that philosophical arguments proceeded from syllogisms based on universally declared premises. The premises of rhetors, however, are probable, and derive from presuppositions of the specific auditors addressed. The determination of enthymemes therefore requires picking out the assumptions in the speech, and ascertaining whether they correspond with the presuppositions of the audience. The speaker does not set these forth, Aristotle declared, as a complete syllogism. From examples in a speech, the speaker induces conclusions that in turn often become premises in enthymemes. Examples are of two kinds: those that have happened, which we may designate historical, and those invented, that is, comparisons (παραβολαί) or fables (λόγοι) (Aristotle, *The Rhetoric*, 2, 20, 3). One should consult the rhetoricians for observations on how the forms of proof differ from genre to genre.

The critic is now ready to turn to ethical proof (step 4), which is based on the character of the speaker. Speakers often stand before the auditors with a certain reputation. But in addition to what speakers bring to the situation, in the speech itself, they seek to establish themselves as persons of worthy character by their goodwill, virtue, good sense, and liberality. The examination of ethical proof is followed by the assessment (step 5) of pathos. In *The Rhetoric*, Aristotle set forth six emotions and their opposites: anger and mildness, love and hate, fear and confidence, shame and benevolence, pity and indignation, and envy and emulation.

The parts (step 6) of arrangement (τάξις) in their fullest classical expression are: exordium, narration, proposition, partition, proof, refutation, digression and peroration. Some of these parts may be omitted in specific discourses. The third canon (step 7) is style (λέξις). Aristotle declared that good style should be characterized by perspicuity, purity, loftiness and propriety. Various of the rhetoricians on style wrote of three levels: the plain, the grand, and the middle styles, and later of the styles of the first and second sophistic. The critics reflected on words (diction), how they were put together (synthesis) and the various literary figures and tropes (Rowe 1997). Memory (step 8) is more difficult to assess, but attention can be given to whether items might be arranged chronologically, or according to placement on a landscape.

While analyzing biblical documents according to the dictates of classical rhetoric may be of some help, it may be even more helpful to approach the biblical documents as a separate genre, since it makes as much sense to declare a separate genre for these religious discourses as it does to declare a separate

genre for political assemblies, courts, and occasional discourses of praise and blame (White 2003). The rhetoric of the 'biblical' genre will be generated through scrutiny of biblical texts and their unique features. For example, the special powers of quotations from earlier texts, metaphors, and narratives in biblical materials may differ in construction as well as in content, because of the conviction that the maker of heaven and earth revealed himself in human history through word and deed (Olbricht 2004a).

Other forms of rhetorical criticism have come to the forefront in recent years: those of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca; Burke; and Robbins. These, however, have not seriously impacted the writings of commentaries.

The most important rhetorical work of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca is *The New Rhetoric*: *A Treatise on Argumentation* (1969). While this work is intended as a rhetoric, and not as a handbook for rhetorical criticism, several authors have extrapolated a rhetorical criticism from it (Gross and Dearin 2003; Foss, Foss, and Trapp 2002; Maneli 1994; Golden and Pilotta 1986). Their approach is essentially a reworking of ancient rhetoric, drawing upon modern social psychology and logic. Those who undertake rhetorical criticism of Scripture have found it especially helpful in regard to argumentation. Thurén wrote:

> In my opinion, Perelman's book is useful in two ways. (a) The general view on argumentation yields a sound basis for studying any human reasoning; (b) Perelman's practical application (which is not the only way of using his theories) often provides more adequate classification of the types of argumentation than the traditional terms (Thurén 1993: 474; see also comments by Snyman 1993: 326; Vorster 1993: 157-58; Olbricht 1997a: 90; Viviers 1997: 137-53; van Eemeren 2002: 13-14).

Other contributions attributed to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca are their concept of dissociation (Vorster 1993: 162-67), rhetorical figures (Stamps 1993: 200-203), irony (Holland 1997: 238, 242), universal audience (Patrick and Scult 1999: 78-83), epideictic oratory (Coetzee 2002: 216-32), and enthymemes (Debanné 2002: 485-96).

Kenneth Burke has written much about rhetoric, and even the rhetoric of religion. In order, however, to do rhetorical interpretation based on the views of Burke, one has to mold his principles into a system, for Burke himself has not set out easily-followed directives for rhetorical criticism. His main publications are focused upon the rhetoric of motives (1969a; 1969b), action (1966), and religion (1970). The discussions of Burke's perspectives are legion (Biesecker 1997; Hyde 2004; Chesebro 1993; Brock 1995; Bygrave 1993; Wess 1996; Olson 1980; Wolin 2001; Clark 2004).

Biblical scholars have focused upon his view that tropes are a hidden determinant of: language, meaning, and culture (Schoeni 1993: 171-92); irony (Holland 1997); rhetoric (Marshall 1993); the hermeneutical power of Burkean criticism for biblical interpretation (Crafton 1993); religious use of myth (Wuellner 1993: 508-11); the creation of culture (Vorster 1997: 445-69); societal identification (Snyman 2002; Jeal 2002: 316-24); the meaning of religious language (Yeo 2002: 536-38); and the Sublime (J. David Hester 2005: 103-109).

Robbins has recently focused his rhetorical observations upon content genres that grow out of the New Testament. He identifies several socio-rhetorical modes that presumably will be employed by the authors of the commentaries in the series edited by Robbins and Watson:

> In other words, socio-rhetorical investigation has yielded six major rhetorical modes of discourse in New Testament literature: wisdom, miracle, prophetic, suffering-death, apocalyptic, and pre-creation. These modes intertwine with one another in different ways in different writings in the New Testament. A major task for rhetorical interpretation is to describe the centripetal-centrifugal interaction of these rhetorical discourses in the five biographical histories, twenty-one epistles, and one apocalypse that constitute the New Testament writings (2002: 30).

In his essay, Robbins discusses arguments pertaining to these six categories in various New Testament documents, demonstrating the merits of these categories (Robbins 2002: 31-65). Those who have worked from these categories are Bloomquist (2002: 157-73), and Watson (2002: 129-57).

Rhetorical Analysis in the Hermeneia Commentaries

It is ironic that the commentary by Betz (1979) did much to spark the recent interest in rhetorical criticism, yet few of the other commentators in the Hermeneia series employ a rhetorical approach. Those most likely to incorporate rhetorical analysis are Americans writing commentaries in the last two decades on the New Testament epistles.

The commentators on books of the Old Testament make very few rhetorical observations. Klein, in his recent commentary on 1 Chronicles, makes almost no such observations, even in respect to David's speeches in chs 28 and 29 (2006: 517-45). Hossfeld and Zenger, in *Psalms 2*, discuss the genre of the Psalms—that is, praise, lament, etc.—and the structure. The discussion of structure is more focused on the content, however, than on which way the structure adapts to the audience (Hossfeld and Zenger 2005: 45-46). In a section on structure in *Qoheleth*, Krüger mentions 'a series

of…short argumentatively and rhetorically cohesive units' (Krüger 2004: 5, 8). He also entertains the proposal of Schwienhorst-Schöberger that 1.3–12.7 falls into four parts that correspond 'to the four parts of classical ancient speech' (Schwienhorst-Schöberger 1997: 11-12), and cites Lausberg (1960: 147-49). Krüger rejects this structure, however, on the grounds that the four parts cannot be delineated from each other in respect to their content and function. Murphy, in *The Song of Songs*, comments on the book's literary character and structure, but does not draw on Greco-Roman stylistics and rhetoric (Murphy 1990: 57-63). Despite reference to the work of Muilenburg, Baltzer makes few observations on rhetorical structure, but rather is much more interested in identifying Deutero-Isaiah as dramatic in form (Baltzer 2001). Holladay, in his two-volume commentary on Jeremiah, includes a bibliography focusing upon the rhetoric in Jeremiah, but he makes few observations, even in his comments upon the temple sermon in Jeremiah 7 (Holladay 1986–89). Zimmerli discusses at some length the form-critical features of the speeches in Ezekiel, but does not take up rhetorical insights specifically (Zimmerli 1979; 1983). Collins, treating Daniel, analyzes the structures in the document from a form-critical, rather than a rhetorical, standpoint (Collins 1993). Wolff comments briefly on the legal form and rhythmic patterns of Hosea, but not from the perspective of traditional rhetoric (Wolff 1974). His approach to Joel and Amos is much the same (Wolff 1977). Paul proceeded in much the same way in his comments on the book of Amos (Paul 1991). Hillers on Micah (Hillers 1984), and Sweeney on Zephaniah, approach these prophetic oracles from a form-critical perspective (Sweeney 2003).

The commentaries on the New Testament, except for those on the epistles, are much the same. Though volumes 2 and 3 of Luz's commentary on Matthew have appeared, volume 1 is still forthcoming, so we don't have his introductory remarks. In his comments on the discourse of Jesus in Matthew 10, Luz comments on the rhetorical effectiveness of one of the sentences, but does proceed with observations regarding the discourse as a whole (Luz 2001, 2005). In his lengthy commentary on The Sermon on the Mount, Betz cites the rhetoricians in regard to concepts and word meanings, but not rhetoric. Discussing the genre of the Sermon on the Mount, Betz rejects the designators 'sermon' or 'speech'. He identifies the sermon as an *epitome*, and locates a parallel in Epictetus's *Encheiridion.* Though Betz has located rhetorical vocabulary in the Sermon he does not undertake a rhetorical analysis, as he did in the Galatians commentary (Betz 1995: 72-73). Bovon mentions rhetoric in his Luke commentary, but does not undertake rhetorical analysis. He observes, in regard to Luke:

> He abandons, for the most part, the persuasive techniques of rhetoric in order to conform his narrative technique to the biblical style of the historical books of the Hebrew Bible, so as to emphasize continuity between the LXX and his work (Bovon 2002: 3).

Haenchen makes no rhetorical observations, even on the discourses of Jesus in the Gospel of John (Haenchen 1984). Conzelman draws little upon rhetorical insights in his commentary on Acts, even in respect to the speeches. About the speeches, he writes, 'These are not abbreviated versions of actual speeches but are literary creations; the same practice was followed in the other literature of the time' (Conzelmann 1987: xliv). For detailed rhetorical observations on the speeches in Acts, the best recent commentary is that by Witherington (1998). I found Witherington's insights into the rhetorical reasons for the manner in which materials unfold in Luke–Acts, as well as why the speeches in Acts proceed as they do, extremely helpful. A case in point on the Acts speeches is Witherington's comparison of the three accounts of Paul's being confronted on the Damascus road by the risen Christ. Witherington argues effectively that the differences in the accounts arise from the different rhetorical purposes served by each narrative.

We come now to the most recent volume in the Hermeneia series—Jewett's expansive commentary on Romans (2007). Jewett has been interested in rhetorical analysis since at least the publication of Wuellner's essay, 'Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans: An Alternative to the Donfried-Karris Debate over Romans' (Wuellner 1976). Rhetorical analysis is therefore very important in Jewett's commentary. In the introduction, Jewett's comments on rhetoric comprise pp. 23-59. Jewett declares:

> While older commentaries and even some published recently view Romans 'primarily as a repository of theology', this commentary follows the lead of recent developments that view the letter as 'a work of Christian rhetoric, aiming to persuade' (Jewett 2007: 23).

Jewett then comments on the five ancient canons of persuasion, discussing the impact of each upon Romans: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. He also discusses the audience. Especially, the arrangement of Romans utilizes rhetoric in this commentary. Jewett proposes: an *exordium* (1.1-12); a *narratio* (1.13-15); a *propositio* (1.16-17); a proof divided into four discrete arguments (1.18–4.25; 5.1–8.39; 9.1–11.36; 12.1–15.13); and a peroration (15.14–16.16a + 16b-23), followed by the concluding doxology (16.25-27). Jewett has important and lengthy sections on style, setting

forth tropes and figures, as well as series of parallelisms such as those identified in ancient rhetoric. In terms of genre, Jewett proposes that the Epistle to the Romans is ambassadorial, with several subtypes: parenetic and hortatory letters, and philosophical diatribe (Jewett 2007: 44). In this commentary, Jewett sets a benchmark for rhetorical analysis of Romans, employing the ancient rhetorical observations and categories.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Conzelmann discusses various aspects of 1 Corinthians that are rhetorical in nature, but he does not bring ancient rhetoric to bear upon these matters, that is, the form of the epistle and the methods of presentation and argumentation (Conzelmann 1975). In his commentary on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Betz returns to his interest in rhetoric, as reflected in his Galatians commentary (Betz 1985). He approaches 8.1-24 as a letter to the church at Corinth, under the breakdown of a epistolary prescript, then an *exordium, narratio, propositio, probatio*, the commending of the delegates, a *peroratio*, and an epistolary postscript (Betz 1985: 38-41). Chapter 9 he labels as a letter to the Christians of Achaia, and divides it in the same manner, with an epistolary prescript and a *peroratio* followed by an epistolary postscript. He frequently cites ancient rhetorical works (Betz 1985: 88-90).

Discussing Colossians and Philemon Lohse briefly treats epistolary theory, but does not bring rhetoric to bear on the letters (1971). Dibelius and Conzelmann take the same approach to the Pastorals (Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972). In his commentary on Hebrews, Attridge recognizes the rhetorical influences on the structure and literary figures in Hebrews (Attridge 1989: 13, 20-21). His remarks on the rhetoric, however, are only occasional, and he does not explore the manner in which the larger structure of Hebrews is similar to a Greek eulogy. In his commentary on James, Dibelius examines the work from an epistolary perspective. His only comments on rhetoric have to do with certain features of the style (Dibelius 1976: 34-38). Achtemeier makes several rhetorical observations on 1 Peter, mostly having to do with arrangement and style (Achtemeier 1996: 4-9, 73-74) Though he notes that the beginning and end may conform to rhetorical conventions, he offers few additional observations regarding rhetorical arrangement in the body of the commentary. He discusses the genre of the letter according to the three standard genres, and concludes that the letter 'shows elements of judicial and epideictic structures, but seems to reflect most closely deliberative rhetoric of its Hellenistic age' (Achtemeier 1996: 6) Neither Bultmann (1973) or Strecker (1996) make observations on the Johannine epistles, based upon ancient rhetoric.

Rhetorical Criticism in the New Interpreter's Bible

Another manner of assessing the contemporary employment of rhetorical insight arises through scrutinizing the 12-volume *New Interpreter's Bible*, edited by Keck (1994–2002). All the books of the Bible and the Old Testament Apocrypha are discussed in these volumes. The authors were not specifically instructed to reflect upon rhetorical features in the documents; nevertheless, the increase in rhetorical comment is exponential as compared with the *Interpreter's Bible* of fifty years earlier, in which rhetorical observations were chiefly instigated by Muilenburg, in his discussion of Isaiah 40–66 (1956b: 388-93). Reading the *NIB* commentaries, I was interested not only in comments upon rhetoric, but also the type of rhetorical criticism utilized, as well as the extent of the comments. Many types of analysis fell under the rubric of rhetorical criticism. 'Rhetoric' has become such a well-worn coin that it is difficult to distinguish its specie.

As we might anticipate, most of the commentators who employ rhetorical criticism in the *NIB* are New Testament scholars, as with most of those writing on the epistles. What is meant by rhetorical criticism, however, varies considerably from author to author.

The general articles in the *NIB* do not include any essays on rhetorical criticism. However, C. Holladay, in 'Contemporary Methods of Reading the Bible', has a 500-word section titled 'Rhetorical Criticism'. He also has separate sections on 'Literary Criticism', 'Structuralism', and 'Narrative Criticism'. Some authors subsume these methods under the rubric of rhetorical criticism. C. Holladay defines rhetoric as 'the formal study of oratory in the Greco-Roman world', and observes that 'rhetorical criticism has often taken the form of identifying points of correspondence between the biblical text and Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition' (1994: I, 140). After some discussion of the implications of such a *modus operandi*, C. Holladay notes that among the earlier scholars, Wilder draws attention to the symbolic and aesthetic dimension of biblical language, and Muilenburg to the literary features of the Hebrew Bible (Holladay 1994: I, 140). It should be recalled that Muilenburg presented his famous 1968 presidential address to the SBL in San Francisco, calling for a move beyond form criticism, to rhetorical criticism (Muilenburg 1969). C. Holladay's observations are helpful, in that Wilder and Muilenburg were involved mostly in what some call 'stylistics'. Classical rhetoric in the tradition of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian focused upon: arrangement and proofs, that is, logos, or the logical arguments and evidences; and upon ēthos and pathos. To a lesser degree, the ancients discussed style, delivery, and memory.

The general articles on the New Testament include Tannehill's 'The Gospels and Narrative Literature' (1995), but no attention is given to rhetorical criticism. Such, I believe, is warranted, but some helpful insights on speeches, sermons, and trial scenes in the Gospels are to be obtained through rhetorical criticism. The most extensive comments on rhetoric are found in Wall's 'Introduction to Epistolary Literature', a section of more than a thousand words. He also makes remarks on the letter genre. In his essay, Wall discusses the author's audience, and how arguments emerge within the larger epistolary design, and how the content and language produce a particular response from the readers or auditors (2002b: X, 382). He mentions the three ancient genres of epideictic, deliberative, and judicial. He comments in some detail on the work of Betz (1979) regarding arrangement, which involves a *superscriptio* or prescript, a *stasis*, a *narratio*, a *propositio*, a *probatio*, an *exhoratio*, and a *peroratio*. From the perspective of the ancient canon, Wall's focus, therefore, is mostly on arrangement. I might point out that this seven-fold division of a discourse comes more from Lausberg, or a similar synoptic rhetoric, perhaps that of Kennedy, than it does from any one of the ancient rhetoricians. Both Anderson and Kern observe that such an approach to arrangement exists only in the modern synopses, not in the ancient rhetorical writings (Anderson 2002: 66-67; Kern 1998: 40).

In the *NIB*, almost all the rhetorical criticism is based upon the work of the ancient rhetoricians. When Wuellner took up rhetoric early on, he incorporated contemporary authorities as well as ancient. In his 1976 essay, 'Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans: An Alternative to the Donfried-Karris Debate over Romans', Wuellner (1976: 330-31; 1970: 199-204) referred to the works of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), Brandt (1970), and Corbett (1999).

I understand the claim that it is best to look for rhetorical features of biblical documents that parallel rhetorical features contemporary with these documents. However, biblical scholars employing historical, sociological, and form-critical theory have never limited their methodological insights to historiographical, sociological, and literary theory contemporaneous with the documents being examined.

The authors of the *NIB* commentaries on the Old Testament incorporate little rhetorical criticism. I suspected as much, since Old Testament scholars have been slower to take up such analysis. That has changed in the last few years. I reviewed the first one hundred 'rhetoric' entries in the ATLA database 2004–2002 (the ATLA database arranges entries from latest to earliest). Out of these, thirty were explicitly on Old Testament materials. In

the *NIB* commentaries on Genesis through 2 Maccabees, Volumes 1–4, that is the Torah and the historical books, almost no author gives attention to speech forms, whether utilizing some version of rhetoric or not. This is the case even with speeches found in Deuteronomy and Joshua, even though, for example, Clements, on Deuteronomy, describes the rhetorical style of the exhortations (1998: II, 272, 277). It is of some surprise that Brueggemann, in his commentary on Exodus, supplies few rhetorical reflections, despite the significance he assigns to rhetoric in his somewhat later *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (1997).

Because of Muilenburg's injunction to take up rhetorical criticism, one might suspect that authors commenting on poetic materials would pick up the gauntlet, and indeed several do. In his commentary on the Psalms McCann cites Muilenburg's presidential address, and essentially follows his lead in an introductory section titled 'Rhetorical Criticism'. McCann's subdivisions focus on parallelism, repetition, chiasm, structure, and other figurative uses of language (1996: IV, 653-55). He therefore is concerned with style and arrangement, not argument and proof. Seitz, in his commentary on Isaiah 40–66, mentions the work of Muilenburg, but gives little attention to Muilenburg's specific examinations of style and arrangement (Seitz 2001: VI, 322-23). Kolarcik, who in his commentary on the book of Wisdom discusses the genre in Aristotelian categories, says that the book of Wisdom is both epideictic and protreptic. He is especially interested in structures, and says the author of Wisdom favors the concentric and parallel structures of literary diptychs (Kolarcik 1997: V, 443-46). Yee locates the rhetorical power of Hosea in metaphor (1996: VII, 209-11). In his commentary on Obadiah, Pagán locates six short poems in chiastic form in the book (1996: VII, 438-40). In her commentary on Jonah, Trible discusses these rhetorical devices: (1) alliteration; (2) chiasm; (3) merism; (4) synecdoche; and (5) puns. Some of the rhetorical nomenclature designating these rhetorical tropes and figures derive from the Scottish rhetoricians (Trible 1996: VII, 477-78).

We turn now to the New Testament. The authors of the commentaries on the Gospels, much like the commentators on the narrative books of the Old Testament, give little attention to standard rhetorical observations. This is not too surprising, but rhetorical criticism can be helpful on speeches, discourses, and trials in the gospels. In the introduction to his commentary on Acts, Wall points out that speeches comprise almost a third of the book (2002a: X, 14-17). Wall discusses the purposes of the speeches and their function in Acts, but does not analyze ancient rhetorical conventions. In his comments on Stephen's speech in chapter 7, Peter's Cornealis' household speech in ch. 10, and Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin in Acts 22, Wall reflects on

the backgrounds of these speeches and the manner in which the arguments unfold—aspects of rhetorical criticism—although he does not identify them as such. Wright provides an excellent commentary on Romans (2002). While he spends considerable time tracing the arguments, he makes no effort to comment on their arrangement from the perspective of rhetoric.

In his lengthy section in his introduction titled 'Rhetoric and 1 Corinthians', Sampley gives special attention to the rhetorical features of 1 Corinthians (2002: X, 783-85). Sampley and Lampe chair a SNTS section on rhetorical criticism, which has now met five times. Some years ago Wuellner was asked to arrange for such a section in SNTS, but he reported that he could not find enough participants to convene it. In Bonn in 2003, the Sampley/Lampe sessions were among the largest at the conference. In his introduction to 1 Corinthians, Sampley declares that the letter is a mixture of the three classical genres. He also comments on the conventional topoi. He says little in the body of the commentary concerning genre, but does make helpful comments by declaring 1.10–4.21 an *inclusio* (2002: X, 802), and advancing occasional observations regarding rhetorical tropes (2002: X, 861). Contrary to a common assumption among biblical scholars, Aristotle did not suppose that the genres of discourse are limited to three: of the court, of the assembly, and of the market place. I find it strange, therefore, that biblical scholars force biblical documents into these Procrustean beds. After introductory efforts to delineate genre, Sampley essentially forgets genre in the rest of the commentary. It may be intriguing to identify the genre of a biblical document as one of the ancient three, but this is much like the gematria proposals for discerning the meaning of the 153 fish in John 21. In the final analysis, the gematria are not much help in throwing light upon the text and its power.

In the introduction of his commentary on Galatians, Hays mentions with gratitude the commentary of Betz. Subsequent to its publication in 1979—29 years ago—Betz's commentary, more than any other work, plunged rhetorical criticism into studies on the epistles. Hays particularly stresses Betz's declaration that Galatians is apologetic, therefore judicial, and stresses the importance of examining the proofs, that is, *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* (Hays 2000: XI, 188-89). Lincoln, in his commentary on Colossians, devotes more time to rhetoric than any other author, both in his introductory remarks, and in the body of his commentary. His comments are based upon classical rhetoric, and he discusses the rhetorical exigency, arrangement, genre, and proofs (2000: XI, 554-60). Smith employs classical rhetoric in his commentaries on 1 and 2 Thessalonians, especially the latter, although not in as great a detail as Lincoln (Smith 2000: XI, 684-85,

748-50). Watson, who was trained in rhetoric under Kennedy, examines 2 Peter and Jude under the classical rubrics (Watson 1998a: XII, 327-29; 1998b: XII, 476-79). Watson has more recently turned to socio-rhetorical criticism, as indicated by his editing, along with Robbins.

Conclusions

Though some commentators in the Hermeneia series gave considerable attention to rhetorical features, the majority did not. Those who do have, more recently, published on New Testament epistles, and are for the most part Americans. Rhetorical criticism made considerable headway into the *New Interpreter's Bible* as compared with the *Interpreter's Bible* of fifty years ago. The criticism is almost entirely based upon ancient classical rhetoric. Wuellner was influential in encouraging scholars to employ rhetorical criticism, but the guild has not pursued the wider scope he proposed. In his 1987 essay, 'Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?', Wuellner wrote:

> Rhetorical criticism is taking us beyond hermeneutics and structuralism to poststructuralism and posthermeneutics. It takes us to a yet richer harvest resulting from renewed and concerted efforts now being undertaken in the vast fields of the history of Western and non-western rhetoric—fields long neglected and much abused. Rhetoric, whether the classical 'old' or the proposed 'new rhetoric', has been and remains philosophy's archrival and religion's closest ally… The rhetorical view of religious literature takes us beyond viewing language as a reflection of reality, even 'ultimate reality' as understood in terms of traditional metaphysical and idealist philosophy, and takes us to 'the social aspect of language which is an instrument of communication and influence on others' (Wuellner 1987: 449).

Wuellner believed that linguistics, semiotics, structuralism, and pragmatics should also be incorporated as an aspect of rhetorical criticism, and that the apex of rhetorical criticism will be an examination of the rhetoric of the sublime (Olbricht 2004b: 81-84).

If we are to undertake a viable rhetorical criticism, we should learn about communication and discourse from every possible quarter. We should not, however, try to exhibit all the methodologies we have learned when we interpret the text, since all this exterior learning, if displayed, gets in the way of the power of the text, rather than placarding it.

We need to invent a rhetorical criticism that is consonant with biblical discourse. Before Aristotle theorized upon ancient governments, he collected every constitution he could lay his hands upon. He had his students send him city and state documents from far and wide. He did a similar

search of ancient rhetorics and discourses before he wrote his famous treatise. The insights of the three ancient rhetorical genres are limited in the way in which they help us understand what is going on rhetorically. The ancient rhetoricians provide beginning guidelines upon which we need to build. For example, in my treatment of Galatians, I have designated its genre as confrontational rhetoric. We should collect specimens of confrontational rhetoric, ancient and modern, and ponder the strategies that emerge. From such a study, we should be able to better understand and elucidate, for example, Paul's rhetoric. In doing so, we will also be sensitive to differing presuppositions lying behind the confrontations in these discourses, and ways in which they affect the rhetorical methodologies.

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Elements of Classical Greek Rhetoric

invention (εὕρεσις)
status of the question (στάσις)
proofs (πίστεις)
non-artistic (ἄτεχνοι)
artistic (ἔντεχνοι)
logical argument and evidence (λόγος)
the speaker's character (ἦθος)
and emotive appeal (πάθος)
enthymemes (ἐνθυμήματα)
examples (παραδείγματα)
invented examples, that is, comparisons (παραβολαί)
fables (λόγοι)
arrangement (τάξις)
style (λέξις)