

## BOOK REVIEW

Fredrick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: the Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (SNTSMS, 131; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). xix + 291 pp. Hdbk. US\$80.00.

Since Hans Dieter Betz's commentary on Galatians (1979) there has been a proliferation of applications of rhetorical criticism to New Testament texts. Betz's work received mixed reviews. But regardless of whether or not his assertions about the rhetorical structure of Galatians are compelling, it is undeniable that his research has served as a catalyst for further application of rhetorical categories to the New Testament.

Fredrick Long seeks to substantiate many of Betz's original claims about apology as a rhetorical genre while marshalling several new arguments in favour of reading 2 Corinthians as an *official apologetic letter* that draws upon a well-established Greco-Roman forensic tradition. He concludes that this category from ancient rhetoric sheds light on the debate revolving around the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians.

In order to make his case, Long divides his monograph into two parts. Part One (Chapters 2 to 6) develops his rhetorical-critical model. Part Two (Chapters 7 to 10) is devoted to applying the method to 2 Corinthians.

The first chapter provides an overview of the debate revolving around compositional unity, as well as a synopsis of the content of the book. First, Long introduces the arguments that have traditionally been advanced against unified-letter theories. He concludes that, though there are real problems with these literary arguments, what they do seem to indicate is that, if the text was composed as a single unified letter, the author wrote into a very complex rhetorical situation. Accordingly, he suggests, it would have been entirely appropriate for Paul to draw upon ancient rhetoric to deal with this dynamic exigency.

In the next chapter, Long attempts to establish the pervasiveness of rhetoric within Greco-Roman culture and to examine some of the most salient features of forensic rhetoric in particular. A number of sources provide the basis for his generalizations, including a variety of rhetorical handbooks and forensic speeches. He concludes that there are twelve rhetorical features that can be categorized in relation to three categories, each of which receive detailed exposition in the following chapters: exigency (Chapter 3), invention (Chapter 4), and disposition (Chapter 5).

The discussion of exigency is relatively brief. Three issues that usually emerge in relation to forensic exigency are identified and summarized: (1) alleged wrongdoing in the past; (2) judicial setting; and (3) designation as defense or accusation.

Long's treatment of forensic invention is more extensive. It includes a discussion of *stasis* theory (which deals with questions or propositions involving prosecution and defense) and the importance of establishing the point upon which the case turns. A distinction is drawn between inartificial (witnesses, evidence, laws) and artificial proofs (*pathos*, *ethos* and *logos*) in forensic rhetoric. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the *topoi* of forensic argumentation.

In his analysis of rhetorical arrangement or disposition, Long catalogues a sequence of rhetorical categories typically found in forensic speeches. These include *Prooemium*, *Narratio*, *Divisio/Partitio*, *Refutatio* and self-adulation. He contends that there is good evidence of a widespread concern for disposition in judicial rhetoric. Yet he also suggests that the arrangements enjoyed a fair amount of versatility and variation.

A large portion of Long's theoretical burden of proof depends upon his success in Chapter 6. He begins with a helpful summary of the arguments of several scholars who have questioned the equation of rhetorical and epistolary categories. He perceives his detractors' objections, on the one hand, as a call to rhetorical critics to handle 'ancient sources with greater care, clarity, and consistency when interpreting biblical materials' and on the other as 'unjustified because of the nature and profusion of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical theory' (p. 98). He supports the latter claim by suggesting that Paul may have purposefully hidden his implementation of ancient rhetoric so that we as readers should not expect much technical rhetorical jargon. He then cites S. Stowers (*Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*

[Westminster: John Knox, 1986]), A. Malherbe (*Ancient Epistolary Theorists* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988]) and his own work as examples of research that suggests that 'a rigid dichotomy between ancient epistles and oratory' can no longer be maintained. But this is certainly not the impression one gets when consulting Stowers and Malherbe. Malherbe acknowledges that rhetorical theorists did have an interest in and awareness of letter-writing, but he also states that they did not incorporate it into their theoretical discussions of rhetoric in any significant way. Similarly, Stowers mentions a few Latin letter writers who had rhetorical training (but that rhetoricians often had letter-writing training is not in question) as well as the appended discussion on letter-writing by Julius Victor, a fourth-century rhetorician. Yet he still maintains that the guidelines for ancient epistolography and rhetoric remained distinct—regardless of whether certain epistolary theorists had also published works on rhetoric.

Perhaps Long does not intend to say that there was a total conflation of rhetorical and epistolary categories. Maybe he simply means that certain argumentative principles that governed ancient oration are also evident in epistolary works. This would certainly be in line with what Stowers and Malherbe have to say to the issue. In this scenario, however, Long's comment would not amount to much of a response to his critics since both sides of the debate seem to grant this. But regardless of whether these sources truly support what Long suggests or whether his responses are compelling, certainly the long list of criticisms he mentions merit more than two paragraphs of very general response and a reference to Chapter 2 on the profusion of rhetoric in the Greco-Roman culture—which many of the critics he mentions deal with directly.

The next stage of Long's theoretical discussion takes issue with classifying Paul's letters as personal rather than official letters. He argues that they should be read as official letters since Paul's letters are longer, more complex and richer in argumentation than the personal letters of his day. Most epistolary analyses of Pauline letters, however, suggest that there was a distinctively Pauline letter-form that included many elements that differed from the Hellenistic letters of his day. The employment of a paraenesis after the epistolary body is a typical example of this. It seems that most scholars would want to account for the divergent features Long mentions through Paul's unique letter-form rather than by seeking to make 2 Corinthians an official treatise.

Interaction with this way of dealing with Paul's distinct epistolary framework would have strengthened Long's case at this point.

Another important issue addressed in Chapter 6 is the apologetic letter genre. Long follows Betz in asserting that this genre was very much a part of ancient rhetorical theory and practice. While he acknowledges that many scholars remain unconvinced that Betz's original examples are relevant, he does not seek to move the discussion forward by offering new (more relevant) examples of the apologetic letter. Instead, he gives further exposition to essentially the same list of sources cited by Betz: Demosthenes's apologetic letters, Demosthenes's *Second*, *Third*, and *Fourth Letters*, Plato's *Third* and *Seventh Letter* and Isocrates's *To the Rulers of the Mytilenaeans*. He also includes a discussion of Pseudo-Demetrius's *Epistolary Types*. It is suggested that Pseudo-Demetrius's mention of an apologetic letter gives credence to the apologetic rhetorical genre since parallels can be drawn with rhetorical categories. Jeff Reed has dealt in some detail with this question from an opposing perspective. It would have been helpful to see some interaction with Reed's work on this issue—which deals specifically with Pseudo-Demetrius's mention of the apologetic letter. Reed suggests that functional parallels could exist without necessitating formal equivalence to rhetorical categories.

Part Two moves into the application portion of the book. The first chapter in this section (Chapter 7) deals with the exigency of the letter. The focus here is for the most part upon the charges that were brought against Paul, the identification of his critics, and the situation surrounding the letter.

Chapter 8 delineates the structure of 2 Corinthians according to the rhetorical disposition of a forensic speech. One interesting issue that presents itself within the rhetorical arrangement of the letter is the existence of multiple narrative sections. In addition to the one Long classifies as part of the macro-structural arrangement in 1.8-16, there are two *narratios* embedded within the *probatio* (2.12-13 and 7.2-16). Long deals with these by claiming that what is of primary importance in structuring the letter is the 'initial *narratio*' (p. 156). He contends that these narrative portions function as transitions within the discourse; but aside from initial placement, he offers no criteria for demarcating *narratios* which should be understood as embedded within another category and *narratios* which should be viewed as part of the rhetorical sequence.

The stated goal of Long's study is to establish the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians. His thesis, therefore, is that a rhetorical reading of the text (esp. rhetorical disposition) can make sense of sudden shifts and disjunctions in language that previous studies have understood as redactional seams. Some of these shifts are given more attention than others. For example, the disjunctions in thought between 2.13 and 2.14 (p. 167) and between 7.4 and 7.5 (p. 172) receive very little attention in terms of how they relate to the unity of the epistle, while the transition from 9.15 to 10.1 is dealt with at length by classifying 10.1-11:15 as an apologetic *refutatio* (pp. 178-86). The similarity of material in Chapters 8 to 9 also receives a fair amount of attention (pp. 175-77, 203-205). Long understands this section as a fifth argument within a sequence of arguments in the *probatio*. This fifth argument is said to have its own independent rhetorical structure including a *narratio* (8.1-6), a *partitio* (8.7-9), a *probatio* (8.10-9:12) and a *peroratio* (9.13-15). Long claims that this kind of arrangement within a larger rhetorical piece is not odd since Paul had already structured material in a similar fashion in 1 Corinthians 8-10, 12 and 15 (p. 176). But I wonder whether those who are not already convinced of the validity of rhetorical-critical analysis in the Pauline corpus will find this explanation convincing.

Chapter 9, which focuses upon rhetorical invention in 2 Corinthians, opens with a very helpful discussion of ancient *stasis* theory. Long employs Hermagoras's theoretic framework as reproduced in Cicero's *De Inventione Rhetorica*. Here Long deals with a variety of *topoi* that Paul incorporated into the argumentative framework of the letter. Also included in this chapter is an examination of artificial and inartificial rhetorical devices. Long provides a very insightful exposition here. He examines a large range of passages from 2 Corinthians and explores the possibility of an underlying argumentative strategy. Long's proposal that the author incorporated a broad spectrum of evidence—artificial and inartificial—to vindicate himself to the Corinthians is a very compelling and natural reading of the text that will unquestionably find a large amount of support among other scholars.

The final chapter (Chapter 10) provides a summary that merges the themes of unity and rhetoric with Pauline theology. The implication of compositional unity for Pauline theology is that on a unified understanding of 2 Corinthians, Paul's theology is not fragmented but can be viewed in its entirety as a description of God's work in Christ.

The book also includes two appendices. The first appendix is a chart that illustrates how the *peroratio* (12.11–13.10) summarizes 2 Corinthians. The second appendix provides the *topoi* for the subtypes of qualitative *stasis* in correlation with Chapter 9.

Several other issues in Long's analysis warrant mention. As a preliminary concern, Long runs into a few documenting issues. In Chapter 1 (p. 11), he cites J.L. White's 1986 work, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press) as being of little use in its analysis of the unity of 2 Corinthians. But White is addressing epistolary papyri in that work, not biblical texts, so the page numbers Long provides do not correspond to the appropriate content. The same mistake occurs twice in Chapter 6 (p. 99) as well. Someone unfamiliar with White's work would have to put forth some effort to track down the source of the citations (White's published dissertation: *The Body of the Greek Letter* [SBLDS, 2; Missoula: SBL, 1972]) since the book does not appear in Long's bibliography. Perhaps this should be corrected in a second edition.

Another weakness is found in the treatment of Greco-Roman education (Chapter 2, pp. 28-31). Long seems to understand it as monolithic across the various socio-economic boundaries of the Hellenistic period so that the 'educated person', regardless of social status or employment, would have received some level of rhetorical training. It has been pointed out (by Jan Swearingen, among others), however, that the question of whether epistolographers incorporated rhetorical categories as a formal basis for the organization of their letters centers on the training of the letter-writer. Greco-Roman education was available according to social status. A slave, for example, would not receive the same education as a politician, though many did receive extensive learning in stenography, scribal training and letter-writing. Rhetorical and sophistic training, on the other hand, was reserved for the Greco-Roman elite and those employed in positions of wealth and political prominence, since it served as preparation for very exclusive administrative and chancery professions, being unnecessary for lower-ranking employments. Long mentions sophistic education as evidence of the pervasiveness of rhetorical strategies within the Greco-Roman culture, but clearly this type of training was only accessible to a very small portion of the society. And there does not seem to be any solid evidence that Paul's social status would have afforded him these types of opportunities (Long seems to grant the last point, p. 239).

There are theoretical and interpretive problems, as well. First, a large portion of Long's case depends on the validity of apology as a rhetorical genre. Several scholars have called it into question (including many well-established rhetorical critics) since Betz first proposed it and we see very little interaction with this scholarship in Long's book. Secondly, as mentioned above, I would have expected to see some dialogue with Reed's work (Reed is not even present in the bibliography), which offers several arguments against rhetorical invention and arrangement in epistles. Thirdly, his analysis of the structure of 2 Corinthians is unsatisfactory in many places. For example, there is a total of four *narratios* within the letter and only the initial narrative is included in the macro-structure. Furthermore, one of the primary criteria for identifying the initial *narratio* is based on a temporal view of the verb (pp. 153-54) without any sensitivity to recent discussion in Greek grammar that suggests otherwise. Similarly, his reading of Chapters 8–9 as a self-contained rhetorical argument within a larger rhetorical unit does not find wide support within classical and Hellenistic literature.

This is certainly not to suggest that the book is without its strengths. Long's work is valuable in many respects. It provides a very helpful topical classification of many rhetorical works from the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The surveys of forensic exigency, invention and disposition are extremely concise and well-written. And his attempt to apply a new critical model to an old debate should be warmly welcomed.

*Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology* is likely to receive mixed reviews in the scholarly community, but it undoubtedly makes a contribution to studies in Pauline Rhetoric and 2 Corinthians and should be consulted by scholars with interests in these fields.

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