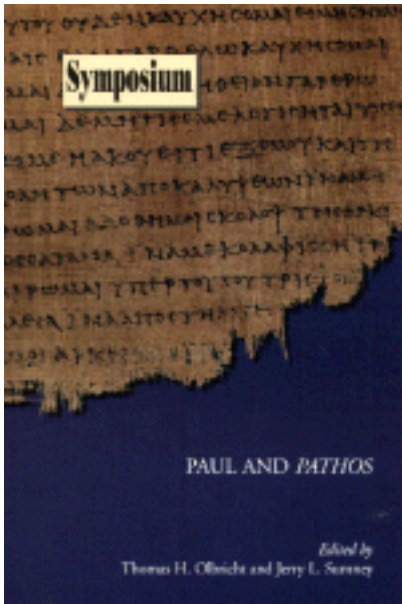


RBL 06/2004



Olbricht, Thomas H., and Jerry L. Sumney, eds.

Paul and Pathos

Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 16

Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001. Pp. xiii + 245. Paperback. \$39.95. ISBN 1589830113.

Paul Duff

George Washington University
Washington, DC 20052

Most of the essays in this collection were originally presented at the 1999 SBL International Meeting in Lahti, Finland. The volume addresses the subject of *pathos*, a long-neglected aspect of rhetoric as it relates to the New Testament and Paul in particular. Of the three dimensions of rhetorical invention, *logos*, *ēthos*, and *pathos*, the last focuses on the emotional dimension of a speech. As Thomas Olbricht remarks in one of the essays in the volume, “biblical scholars have long recognized appeal to emotions in biblical documents. But they have not given specific attention to ways in which these may be reflected upon systematically” (7). This book is offered as a corrective to that long-standing neglect.

The book is laid out in two sections. The first section addresses the rhetorical background of *pathos* and the manner in which ancient reflection on *pathos* can inform biblical (and specifically Pauline) interpretation. The second section directs its focus on *pathos* as exhibited in the Pauline letters.

The essays in the earlier section are authored by Thomas Olbricht, Carol Poster, and Steven Kraftchick. The initial essay, by Olbricht—as we might expect—surveys the Greek and Roman writers who addressed the subject of *pathos*. Of the authors surveyed—Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian—Olbricht sees Aristotle as the most useful. While

Olbricht acknowledges that philosophers such as Aristotle had different concerns than the New Testament writers (for the former focused on justice, while the latter centered their thinking on love), he nevertheless suggests that the former—especially Aristotle—raised all of the important fundamental questions concerning *pathos*. He suggests that biblical scholars should focus their attention on the biblical corpus so that they might create a catalogue and a ranking of the most significant emotions found in the biblical texts.

The second essay, written by Poser, has a very different focus than the other introductory essays in this work. While the first essay by Olbricht (and the third by Kraftchick) prepare the exegete for the task of correctly interpreting the role of *pathos* in the biblical (and particularly the Pauline) texts, Poser's essay demonstrates how Paul's texts (and especially the emotional appeals in his texts) would have been understood by the rhetorically and philosophically sophisticated readers in the second and third centuries of the common era. Ultimately, Poser concludes that "like the *katharsis* described in Aristotle's *Poetica* or music as understood by the Pythagoreans, *pathos* in Pauline speech is not rhetorical in the sense of persuasion toward a secular end but instead . . . by means of sublimity and allegory . . . [it] prepares the listener for Christian or philosophical instruction" (37).

Kraftchick, in the third essay of this volume, critiques the rhetorical approach to Pauline texts that one sometimes encounters in the scholarly literature (including this volume). Most scholars, Kraftchick contends, rely too heavily on the ancient handbooks for their analyses. He appeals instead to what he calls "original argument," a phrase borrowed from P. Christopher Smith. Kraftchick insists that, although Paul's writing is rhetorically sophisticated, its effectiveness results not from formal training but from Paul's extraordinary ability to read a given situation and respond in an effective way. Or, in Kraftchick's words, Paul's rhetoric was "born of aptitude rather than training" (68). But Kraftchick does not ignore the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition entirely. Instead, he demonstrates that Paul's emotional appeals are frequently in line with the rhetorical tradition's recommendations. This is because the principles of Paul's "original argument" cannot be totally divorced from the rhetorical insights of the ancients.

Leander Keck opens the second section of the book with an essay that focuses, at least nominally, on Romans. Keck's essay includes a discussion of the Pauline letter as a speech-act as well as an intriguing section in which Keck imagines the ways that ancient rhetoricians would have reacted to Paul's letter to the Romans. Ultimately, Keck suggests that since the rhetoricians assumed an institutional setting and function for their rhetoric that was quite different than that experienced by Paul, we should expect significant differences between rhetoricians' advice and Paul's writing. Although the majority of Keck's essay is composed—as the subtitle indicates—of "preliminary remarks," Keck

also turns his attention to Paul's (modified) use of *pathos* in Romans (notably in Rom 1; 7; 8; and 11).

Lauri Thurén focuses the next essay on Paul's technique of exaggeration, especially as exemplified in 1 Cor 13. She suggests that Paul prepared his readers for such exaggeration in 1 Cor 13 by announcing to them (in 1 Cor 12:31b) that "[he] will show [them] a way with some exaggeration" (101). Here Thurén reads the phrase *kath' hyperbolēn* of 12:31b in reference to the verb "to show" (and not with the noun "way," as most would read it). As Thurén reads this phrase, Paul warns the Corinthians that, throughout 1 Cor 13, he will diminish the importance of good works, faith, and proper theology so as to exaggerate the importance of love. Exaggeration, Thurén contends, is "one of the most obvious rhetorical features in Paul's texts" (105). If we miss this, then we are bound to create problems in our attempt to understand Paul's thought (as have many past interpreters of Paul).

The deliberative nature of 1 Corinthians provides the backdrop for Anders Eriksson's article on the final chapters of that letter. Eriksson points out that the *peroratio* of a speech was typically designed to arouse the emotions of one's audience—specifically, feelings of hope or fear in deliberative rhetoric—so we should expect such from Paul in the later chapters of 1 Corinthians. Eriksson claims that Paul indeed attempts to instill fear in his audience throughout 1 Cor 15. He does this—through his use of the "in vain" motif—by pointing to the negative consequences that result from misunderstanding the gospel message. Paul continues his appeal to fear in the final verses of 1 Cor 16 (vv. 13–24) where the *Maranatha* prayer of 16:22 functions as a conditional curse against the apostle's opponents. Conversely, the prayer also evokes hope for those in Paul's camp, those "who love the Lord."

James W. Thompson, in the next essay, uses the rhetoric outlined in the handbooks—with a special emphasis on *pathos*—as a way of arguing for the unity of the canonical 2 Corinthians. Hence, 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 should not be read as an intrusion but rather "an elaboration of the *propositio* of 1:12–14" (140). The presence of the monetary appeal in 2 Cor 8 and 9 can be justified because the "recitation of past relationships in 1–7 lay the basis for the [request] that Paul makes . . . in 8–9" (141). The extraordinary change in tone that characterizes the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians is due to the fact that the *peroratio* (10:1–13:14, according to Thompson)—and especially the *indignatio* within it—calls for an intensification of the emotional appeal found in the rest of the letters.

Jerry L. Sumney contributes a second essay on 2 Corinthians that focuses on the role that *pathos* plays in Paul's struggle to discredit his Corinthian opponents. Throughout the essay Sumney appeals to the handbooks to illustrate Paul's rhetorical strategy. Sumney,

like most scholars, views 2 Corinthians as a composite letter and suggests that 2 Cor 1-7 (or possibly 1-9) makes up the first letter sent by Paul to the community. In that letter, Paul uses *pathos* to draw contrasts between himself and his adversaries, characterizing the latter as shameful and worthy of enmity. Because that letter ultimately failed to achieve its purpose, Paul sent the letter now found in 2 Cor 10-13 to the community. In this second letter, the apostle relies less on direct and indirect contrast (between himself and his opponents) and instead focuses more directly on his adversaries. Paul's strategy is to depict them as boastful, deceitful, and abusive.

A third essay on *pathos* in 2 Corinthians comes from David E. Fredrickson. Fredrickson appeals to Paul's *pathos* argumentation in order to try and reconstruct the occasion of 2 Corinthians. He focuses his essay on Paul's "letter of tears" (mentioned in 2 Cor 2:4). Fredrickson insists that the tearful letter cannot be identified with 2 Cor 10-13 (an identification made by many Pauline scholars). Paul specifically ties "the letter of tears" with his grief (written out of "much affliction and contraction of the heart") in 2 Cor 2:4, and, Fredrickson contends, 2 Cor 10-13 is not a letter of grief. The "letter of tears" mentioned in 2:4, therefore, must be lost. Fredrickson then turns to letters of grief in ancient epistolography. This move is prompted by Fredrickson's belief that Paul's grieving self-presentation is the "key to the rhetoric of the letter" (162). As Fredrickson reconstructs the situation behind 2 Corinthians, Paul's lost "letter of tears" (like other ancient letters of grief) reproached the community in order to bring about their repentance. Unfortunately, there was an unintended consequence to this letter. Based upon Paul's forceful written communication in the tearful letter, Paul's adversaries charged that the apostle's meekness in person (see 2 Cor 10:10) indicated a rhetorical pretense behind which Paul concealed his true thoughts and intentions. As a result, Paul was forced to focus his attention on his *parrēsia* in 2 Cor 1-7.

The final essay in this collection, written by Troy W. Martin, contains an analysis of Gal 4:12-20, a passage that "defies analysis" in the eyes of many. Martin insists that the passage makes good sense when evaluated from the rhetorical viewpoint of *pathos* rather than *logos*. Martin suggests Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a guide for interpreting the Pauline text. Was Paul familiar with the *Rhetoric*? While not assuming the apostle's knowledge of this text, Martin leaves the possibility open. He suggests that "consciously or unconsciously [Paul adheres] to both the theory and prescriptions [that] Aristotle provides" (201). Paul, in line with the advice given by Aristotle, attempts to change the Corinthians' hostile feelings toward him into more sympathetic emotions. He also attempts to rouse the anger of the community against his adversaries.

Overall, this is a worthwhile anthology, although it is not without problems. The essays are uneven. A few are fairly unsophisticated methodologically, a few others barely fit the

topic, and there is considerable overlap in the discussions about the ancient rhetorical background of *pathos*. In addition, no consensus emerges in the volume on basic methodological issues. Some insist (at least implicitly) that Paul had significant rhetorical training, while others deny this. Consequently, there are varying opinions on the use and usefulness of the rhetorical handbooks. Some of the problems with the volume, no doubt, result from the fact that the exploration of *pathos* in Paul's rhetoric constitutes a new field of inquiry. Despite the limitations of this collection of essays, though, it is certainly a good starting place for anyone interested in understanding the role of *pathos* in New Testament (and particularly Pauline) rhetoric.