

RHETORIC AND SCRIPTURE

SBL Press

# EMORY STUDIES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

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RHETORIC AND SCRIPTURE  
Collected Essays of Thomas H. Olbricht

*Edited by*

Lauri Thurén

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## Abbreviations

ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
Abr.	Philo, <i>De Abrahamo</i>
Adol. poet. aud.	Plutarch, <i>Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat</i>
All.	Heraclitus, <i>Allegoriae</i>
ANRW	Temporini, Hildegard, and Wolfgang Haase, eds. <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Part 2, <i>Principat</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–.
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ASTI	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und Antiken Judentums
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibLeb	<i>Bibel und Leben</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BRev	<i>Bible Review</i>
Brut.	Cicero, <i>Brutus</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–.
<i>Cels.</i>	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i>
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>ClQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>Contempl.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita contemplativa</i>
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>DBI</i>	Hayes, John, ed. <i>Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation</i> . 2 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
<i>De or.</i>	Cicero, <i>De oratore</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	Philo, <i>De decalogo</i>
<i>Descr.</i>	Pausanias, <i>Graeciae descriptio</i>
<i>DNTB</i>	Evans, Craig A., and Stanley E. Porter, eds. <i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i> . Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>Eloc.</i>	Demetrius, <i>De elocutione</i>
<i>Epit.</i>	Hyperides, <i>Epitaphios</i>
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
<i>Eth. nic.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Ethica nicomachea</i>
<i>Evag.</i>	Isocrates, <i>Evagoras (Or. 9)</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HBC</i>	Mays, James L., ed. <i>HarperCollins Bible Commentary</i> . Rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1988.
HThKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HvTSt</i>	<i>Hervormde theologiese studies</i>
<i>IB</i>	Buttrick, George A., et al., eds. <i>Interpreter's Bible</i> . 12 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1951–1957.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IDB</i>	Buttrick, George A., ed. <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . 4 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1962.
<i>IDBSup</i>	Crim, Keith, ed. <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume</i> . Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.



<i>Inst.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Institutio oratoria</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>Inv.</i>	Cicero, <i>De inventione rhetorica</i>
ISBE	Bromiley, Geoffrey W., ed. <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> . 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–1988.
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JTSA	<i>Journal of Theology for Southern Africa</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
LB	<i>Linguistica Biblica</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>Leg.</i>	Philo, <i>Legum allegoriae</i>
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
LTQ	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	Philo, <i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
NCB	New Century Bible
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NIB	Keck, Leander E., ed. <i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i> . 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
ODCC	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</i> . Edited by Frank L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
<i>Off.</i>	Cicero, <i>De officiis</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Or.</i>	Aelius Aristides, <i>Oration</i> ; Dio Chrysostom, <i>Oration</i>

<i>Or. Bas.</i>	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oratio in laudem Basilii</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>Part. or.</i>	Cicero, <i>Partitiones oratoriae</i>
<i>Praem.</i>	Philo, <i>De praemiis et poenis</i>
<i>Prob.</i>	Philo, <i>Quod omnis probus liber sit</i>
<i>P.W.</i>	Thucydides, <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>
QJS	<i>Quarterly Journal of Speech</i>
RevistB	<i>Revista biblica</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RelSRev	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>Rhet.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i>
Rhet. Her.	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SEÅ	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromateis</i>
[ <i>Subl.</i> ]	Longinus, <i>De sublimitate</i>
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SymS	Symposium Series
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
VCSup	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>Vit. Apoll.</i>	Philostratus, <i>Vita Apollonii</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

## Foreword

*Lauri Thurén*

Rhetorical criticism has become a standard tool in biblical studies. Every serious new commentary of the Bible includes at least some discussion of rhetorical features, devices, and structures. Even more specific studies of biblical topics tend to take rhetoric into consideration. Furthermore, scholars may attempt to identify the authors' persuasive strategies, or to *derhetorize* their heavily rhetorical expressions in order to reveal a more consistent theological or historical level beyond the actual text.

Currently, several guides describing how to best carry out rhetorical studies are available to students and researchers. But how did it all begin? Although the use of persuasion in the Bible has been observed since John Chrysostom, our contemporary academic approaches are not so old. When and by whom was rhetorical criticism invented?

This book offers a unique overview of the development of rhetorical criticism. Professor Thomas H. Olbricht's essays not only illuminate its history, but they also show rhetorical criticism "in the making." When reading his original papers, we learn how the German and American classicists inspired biblical scholars to liberate rhetoric from traditional stylistics and to realize its wide potential in the study of the Scriptures. Olbricht's articles also show how rhetorical criticism evolved into an internationally accepted approach to biblical research.

Olbricht belongs to the founding fathers of current rhetorical criticism together with Hans Dieter Betz, George A. Kennedy, and Wilhelm H. Wuellner. They all show that biblical rhetorical criticism is not an isolated approach but lives only in constant interaction with other academic disciplines. Even more than his distinguished colleagues, Olbricht has also guided the international community of rhetorically interested biblical scholars. Most of all, he has organized several international gatherings,

namely, the Pepperdine conferences, which have enabled New Testament scholars to exchange their views on rhetorical methodology.

Rhetorical studies of the Bible currently consist of a variety of methods, but all share the basic tenet: in the Scriptures, how things are said is at least as important as what is said.

Rhetorical criticism may be executed as a historical study, by comparing the persuasion in a text with its contemporary practices. Alternatively, scholars may analyze persuasion in a heuristic way, utilizing any of the tools available, whether classical or modern. Among the many scholars who tend to favor either the historical or the heuristic method, Olbricht is a *rara avis*. He appreciates the merits of both approaches. He discusses how these different ancient and new rhetorical approaches are motivated. He also practices both in thought-provoking ways.

Some time ago, Olbricht sent me an impressive collection of his essays on rhetorical criticism and its application to the New Testament. These essays were published in several sources. In this volume, I have collated these essays into a new type of guidebook to the realm of rhetorical criticism of the New Testament. It is my hope that anyone interested in approaching the New Testament from a rhetorical perspective, both graduate students and senior scholars alike, will find these articles inspiring and informative.

The first chapter describes the historical development of biblical rhetorical studies, mainly from an American perspective. The second chapter displays Olbricht's various ways of applying rhetorical criticism to biblical texts, while the third chapter focuses on particular issues pertaining methodology. The fourth chapter characterizes and discusses Olbricht's two most distinguished, even if different-minded, colleagues, the classicist Kennedy and the New Testament scholar Wuellner. As a student of the latter, I have added to this chapter my vision of how his—and Olbricht's—legacy could be carried forward in the future. All the articles have been published earlier and have now been technically edited to conform to SBL style. This has been an immense but rewarding task. Some of the articles have been slightly abbreviated due to overlaps. Each article is used here by permission.

As this book consists of original articles, it by no means attempts to provide an overall view of the development or the current state of rhetorical criticism. For example, despite Olbricht's extensive international network, he consciously provides a predominantly American perspective to rhetorical criticism. Whereas its German roots are referred to, many

essential Scandinavian and other European, African, and Asian scholars are barely mentioned at all.

However, even as it stands, this collection of essays witnesses to the strong roots of rhetorical studies of the Bible. It also challenges the younger generation to strive even further: to unleash the enormous potential of the rhetorical and other text-oriented approaches in an attempt to understand the biblical texts and the world behind them, and to illuminate how and why the biblical authors so strongly influenced their original and even current audiences.

To quote the original foreword to Olbricht's article on Kennedy,

Scholarship remains aloft on two wings: exploration of the novel and remembrance of the past. Among this generation of rhetorical analysts, Tom Olbricht possesses a memory of elephantine proportions. Not only does he have at his fingertips the names and places and dates; better than most he understands how the study of rhetoric has flourished among, while cross-pollinating, multiple disciplines in the humanities: classics, English, speech communication, and religion.... Seat yourself on the bench beside Olbricht, and listen while he tells you the tale.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Thomas H. Olbricht, "George Kennedy's Scholarship in the Context of North American Rhetorical Studies," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 21.