

Preface

My purpose in this volume is to provide insights into the development of New Testament rhetorical criticism from those who actually participated in its development and those who were eyewitnesses to the origins of this method. The idea for this volume originated in 2010 with my being invited to join the Steering Committee of the Society of Biblical Literature Rhetoric and the New Testament Group. At our annual committee meeting on November 20, 2010, I proposed that we devote one of our sessions at the 2011 Society of Biblical Literature Meeting to a reflection on those scholars who shaped and developed the method of rhetorical criticism. I proposed that we name this session “Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism” and assess the contributions of those whom we might designate as the early ancestors of this method. The committee was very enthusiastic about pursuing this idea.

After considering those scholars most often cited by subsequent rhetorical critics and identified as somehow foundational to this method, the committee decided to focus on Hans Dieter Betz, George A. Kennedy, Wilhelm Wuellner, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Vernon K. Robbins. We decided to structure this session around presentations on each of these rhetorical forefathers and foremother with a response from the respective ancestor. As a

student of Betz, I volunteered to evaluate his contributions. After reflecting on students, colleagues, or close associates of the other ancestors, the committee invited C. Clifton Black to discuss Kennedy's contributions, James D. Hester to describe Wuellner's, John R. Lanci to assess Schüssler Fiorenza's, and L. Gregory Bloomquist to address Robbins'. The committee also invited Betz, Kennedy, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Robbins to respond to these presentations. Everyone except Kennedy enthusiastically accepted these invitations. Since Kennedy was unable to attend the session, the committee invited Duane F. Watson, one of Kennedy's former students, as a respondent in Kennedy's place. Since Wuellner had died, Thomas H. Olbricht, a close associate of Wuellner, was asked to stand in for him. Both Watson and Olbricht eagerly accepted, and our session was set after the committee invited Lillian I. Larsen to chair and Todd Penner to present some concluding thoughts. Both Larsen and Penner were members of the committee.

This session took place on Saturday, November 19, 2011, at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Francisco, CA. It was well attended and received. Following this session, several commented to me that these presentations deserved to be published. I contacted the participants in the session, and all agreed to revise their presentations for publication. The five essays and the five responses in the present volume represent the essence of the presentations at this session but are greatly expanded and revised. All are written by the original participant although James D. Hester invited J. David Hester, his son, to join him in the preparation of his essay for publication, and Penner invited Davina C. Lopez to co-author the conclusion with him. As chair of the session, Larsen wrote an introduction to the essays to complete the present volume.

I would like to express my gratitude to Sheryl Martin for preparing the Index and to Fortress Press for accepting this manuscript for

publication in the new Fortress Academic imprint. I must also thank Neil Elliott for his patience and expert assistance in bringing this volume to press. Its publication will allow subsequent generations of scholars to appreciate and benefit from the contributions of the five rhetorical ancestors discussed and celebrated here.

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