

David E. Aune. *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

The use of rhetorical and literary methods to study the New Testament has exploded in recent years, with critics using a variety of methods drawn from rhetorical and literary theories as tools for exploration and analysis. Often, however, those students who are uninitiated into the subtleties of such rhetorical or literary theories are hampered from appreciating the books and articles that utilize these approaches. David Aune's contribution here is, therefore, a very welcome reference book for those who need a quick introduction to terms, ideas, and theories that are informing much critical work on the New Testament.

Aune's volume has really three foci. First, it is a dictionary of basic terms found in rhetorical and literary theory. Second, it provides sketches of some of the important theoretical concepts that inform critics. And third, Aune provides nice summaries and analysis of much of the early Christian literature, both in the New Testament and texts contemporary with it. It is, then, a valuable reference tool on a number of fronts, and is a valuable addition to any serious student of the New Testament.

Certainly the plethora of rhetorical and literary terms can be a daunting obstacle to even the accomplished scholar when confronted by a scholarly analysis that utilizes a sophisticated theoretical analysis. Aune has provided a quite comprehensive explanation of a wide variety of rhetorical and literary terms that might be used by critics. As an example, Aune has an excellent entry explaining in the detail the term *enthymeme*, not only summarizing its common rhetorical meaning, but also exploring the various ways the term was used both by ancient rhetoricians and modern rhetorical theorists. Most of the main rhetorical terms one might confront and even minor ones, such as *metabasis*, *ekphrasis*, and *captatio benevolentia*, are addressed. While certainly not as exhaustive as Heinrich Lausberg's *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*, which is now available in English, Aune's dictionary is sufficiently extensive and far more accessible than Lausberg, making it a more useful tool for most students. Moreover, Aune has provided entries for a wide variety of modern literary terms that Lausberg's work does not address. Thus entries such as *intertextuality*, *unreliable narrator*, and *New Criticism* introduce modern literary theories and terms in very useful ways.

Major entries dealing with literary and rhetorical theories provide helpful sketches, with bibliographical citations of leading proponents, to help guide the reader in assessing the contours of such theories. Two such entries will serve as useful examples. Aune provides a useful summary of *narrative criticism* which outlines both the development of the theory out of New Criticism, but also pointing to the distinctive approaches of numerous theorists and practitioners (although notably absent was any reference to Mieke Bal's work on narratology). Similarly, the entry on *rhetorical criticism* is not only an excellent summary, but also makes helpful critical analysis of some of the uses of such criticism.

This dictionary also has extensive entries on various documents that are useful for the study of early Christianity. Each of the books of the New Testament has an entry, often providing outlines and a summary of major rhetorical or literary analyses of them. In addition, however, there are entries for most of the early non-canonical Christian documents (e.g. Sybillene Oracles, Gospel of Thomas) and for early Church Fathers (e.g. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus). These entries are very useful, often applying literary and rhetorical analyses to these documents as well describing their relationship to the New Testament.

Finally, Aune has provided a very comprehensive bibliography which is useful in and of

itself.

One can find weakness, of course. Some entries I thought would be obvious, especially for a student, were not there. For instance, the terms “proof” (nor the terms artistic or inartistic with reference to proof) or “logos” or “logic,” all of which are central to Aristotle’s rhetorical theory, have no entries. The concepts can be found with effort under Aristotle’s *Rhetorica* and by a careful reading of the entries to ethos and pathos and enthymeme. Similarly, some key rhetorical terms might have usefully been indexed, as for instance, “probatio.” I found some missing cross-references at the end of entries; for instance under ethos it refers to an entry “argument” which does not exist, and under inventio there is a cross-reference to an entry “rhetorical theory” which likewise is missing. And there were occasional errors, as when pathos was called a πίστεις ἄτεχνοι (it is an artistic proof, not an inartistic one). But I think these are primarily editorial errors which in no way detract from overall usefulness of the dictionary.

In summary, this is a very valuable addition to New Testament reference libraries. It is a book every student of the New Testament should have on their bookshelf.

Mark A. Matson
Milligan College