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# Rhetoric in the New Testament

## THE DICTION IN ROMANS AND HEBREWS

By WALTER A. JENNRICH

Our canonical writers and doctors possessed eloquence as well as wisdom, a kind of eloquence becoming in men of their character.

*Saint Augustine*

Oratory, as a general term, is properly defined as the power to sway an audience by eloquent speech. As far as is known, the art of such effective public speaking was first studied and taught in Greece, where it was called rhetoric. One of the early teachers of rhetoric in this proper sense was Gorgias, the Greek sophist, who brought his art to Athens in 427 B. C. from his native city of Leontini in Sicily. He afterwards settled in Athens, where he continued the practice and teaching of rhetoric. Therefore it is generally agreed that Gorgias is the creator of a new artistic medium—Attic prose—which he developed into a somewhat artificial and flowery mode of expression. However, the impetus which he provided in this somewhat new and different field of literature gave rise in Athens to a new professional class of men—the orators—whose business generally was to write speeches for others to declaim, in particular for delivery in the courtroom. Chief among this new order were the so-called “Ten Attic Orators,” who developed rhetoric into a conscious art and formulated rules as to its form. In fact, the art of public speaking became so popular in Athens through the practice of these gifted speakers that even ordinary audiences adjudged themselves capable critics in matters of style and language. For example, they were much alive to the charms of appropriate delivery and insisted on harmony and finish both of composition and of presentation. They demanded the best possible in beauty of human expression, and because they sought the best, they did call forth the superb oratorical virtuosity of such outstanding men as Isocrates and Demosthenes.

The present study neither suggests nor pretends to make the fantastic claim that the New Testament writers, any or all, slavishly imitated the literary style of classical Greek professional authors. They were neither equipped nor inclined to do that, for it is highly improbable that even the most learned of

them, except perhaps Paul, had ever received a comprehensive rhetorical schooling in the works of the ancient orators, and so, assuredly none of them was bound in strict adherence to Greek literary technique. But this inquiry does intend to show that the writings of the New Testament, in particular the Epistles under consideration, do owe a greater debt to the literary artistry of their authors than has been usually accorded them.

This rhetorical study is limited, at present, to an analysis of the style and language of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle to the Romans, because these letters offer the best representative examples of rhetorical style in the New Testament and hence are an excellent preliminary to a more complete investigation of style in the whole New Testament. The standard of criticism according to which the language and method of the Epistles will be judged is based upon the rhetorical writings and criticisms of the ancient literary critics of classical Greek oratory, namely, Aristotle, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Demetrius of Phalerum, and Longinus. This is a most severe canon by which to examine the writings of the New Testament, for it is a rule of criticism meant primarily for application to classical literature. And hence, though the New Testament writings may seem to shine only with reflected glory in the comparison with the brilliance of classic artistry, they may gain in luster by the company they have kept for the moment and even reveal a hidden splendor distinctly their own.

A brief word about these ancient critics and their respective works on the subject of the rhetorical art will give the student of the New Testament a better appreciation of the value of their criticisms even when applied to Koine literature.

That great systematizer Aristotle evaluated the various critical opinions which were freely discussed in his day and gathered the most pertinent of them into the most scientific treatise that has yet been written on the subject of rhetoric. His treatise, the *Rhetoric* — a remarkable product of its great author's maturity — consists of three books, which present an elaborate and authoritative exposition of the art of oratory. But more important than the "letter" of the work is the "spirit" of the author. For he looks at rhetoric with the sincerity of a lover of truth and with the breadth of a lover of wisdom. He defines its function as "not to persuade, but to ascertain in any

given case the available means of persuasion." And so throughout, the whole work is conceived in the same spirit of attention to truth rather than to mere persuasion, to matter rather than manner, to the solid facts of human nature rather than to the shallow blandishments of style. For this reason, the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, while it furnishes much valuable information and criticism of ancient rhetoric as a distinctly Greek literary phenomenon, also does contain much literary criticism that is modern and of permanent interest.

Much less rigid in form and less comprehensive in scope than the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle is the work entitled *On Style*, usually attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum. However, modern scholarship has quite convincingly confirmed the view that this work on rhetoric, which bears Demetrius' name, probably belongs to a later age—the age of Plutarch (d. 120 A. D.)<sup>1</sup> This would make the treatise more or less contemporaneous with the New Testament. However this may be, there can be no doubt that the author draws directly or indirectly from Peripatetic sources, particularly from the third book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and from Theophrastus' lost work *On Style*. Among other things the author presents in simple fashion the essentials of good writing in prose style. He discusses and amply illustrates the different types of sentence structure and the figures of speech which are involved. He stands alone among extant writers in introducing the "forcible" as a separate type of style in rhetoric. Though the work is not original in all its aspects, it is informative, interesting, and a valuable addition to the ancient works on literary criticism.

The traditional title of the famous treatise *Longinus, On the Sublime* is retained for convenience, inasmuch as present-day scholarship (and especially W. Rhys Roberts) feels that it cannot be assigned to the historical Longinus of the third century.<sup>2</sup> The internal evidence points strongly to the first century as the date of composition. Critics therefore assign him and his work, conjecturally, to a date not far from the year 40 A. D. And so this work also is more or less contemporaneous with the New Testament. The broad aim of the short essay is to indicate the essential elements of an elevated style: for instance, the sublime style avoids such defects as turgidity,

<sup>1</sup> W. Rhys Roberts, *Demetrius on Style*, Intro.

<sup>2</sup> W. Rhys Roberts, *Longinus, On the Sublime*, Intro.

puerility, affectation, and bad taste and finds its inspiration in great thought and deep emotion, and expresses itself in noble diction and well-ordered composition. This work differs in its conception and spirit from the works of Aristotle and Demetrius in that the author, more in the modern vein, judges literature by its effect rather than by its content. For he states that the degree of loftiness is measured by the amount of transport it causes in the reader. And in this respect the author can be called the first of the "romantic critics," and his essay will always remain one of the monuments in the history of literary criticism both ancient and modern.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, on his own testimony, lived in Rome from 30 B. C., to 8 B. C., and he was probably still living there at the time of Christ's birth. Within that time he was busily employed as a teacher of Greek literature and Greek views on public speaking to Roman youths of good family. He also found time to write both on these topics and on the early history of Rome, for his extant works include numerous rhetorical books and an opus entitled *Roman Antiquities*. Because of his numerous essays on rhetorical subjects he is accounted as one of the most celebrated literary critics of ancient times. In his oratorical views he was strictly classical, for he encouraged the Greek literary world of his day to revert to the best Attic models of speaking and writing and to repudiate those pestilent affectations which, after the death of Alexander, had for many generations flaunted themselves in the writing and speaking habits of his contemporaries. For us one of his chief merits is that he preserves the spirit of much lost criticism that is almost as old as Greek artistic prose itself. However, he was indebted to Aristotle and Theophrastus alike for details and for principles.

But the primary importance of Dionysius' writings is this, that, better than any other ancient writer, he shows the canons of criticism by which ancient literature was judged. He distinguishes the three modes of Greek prose composition as exemplified in the representative styles of its chief exponents: Thucydides representing the austere mode of composition; Isocrates, the smooth; and Demosthenes, the harmoniously blended. He devotes a separate essay to the rhetorical art of each of these titans of expression, and with a breadth of interest and a closely discriminating enthusiasm he discusses

both their merits and their faults. These excellent essays on the Attic orators contain a wealth of biographical detail, and their searching examination (well supported by ample quotation) of the formal characteristics of each constitute as near an approach to a history of literature as Greek antiquity has bequeathed to us.

When we are fortunate enough to have the aid of these capable literary critics who know so well that noble style is but the reflection of those noble thoughts and feelings which "spring eternal from the human breast," then a critical literary analysis of Romans and Hebrews is not so much the "rattle of dry bones," but rather "the warm clasp of a hand" and the forming of a new and close friendship with the authors. Though it may at first seem incongruous to subject the writings of the New Testament to a canon of criticism evolved by these classical critics and intended primarily for application to the Greek classics, this apparent inconsistency disappears in the light of the universality of their principles. These principles quite naturally fall under four main heads, as follows:

(1) A criticism of the diction.

(2) A criticism of the composition of words—and the figures which embrace the sentence structure.

(3) A criticism of the invention and arrangement of the subject matter.

(4) A criticism of the moral quality or purpose of the speech as reflected by the principles set forth.

In this present essay the diction of Romans and Hebrews will be subjected to the classical canon of the aforementioned critics. In addition, the diction of these two Epistles will be compared with the diction of the *Aegineticus*, a forensic oration of Isocrates. Isocrates is the acknowledged master of artistic prose style in the Attic Greek, and his court-room speech, the *Aegineticus*, is a fine example of studied art in forensic oratory. Because it is a court speech, it does not possess to the full the highest excellencies of Isocrates' rhetoric, but it does amply exemplify the Isocratean manner. It is of approximately the same length as Hebrews (being 13 Teubner pages), and therefore a comparison can readily be made on a statistical basis.

Unfortunately a study of this sort presents many matters of detail that are more or less tedious and call for patience,

but one must bear in mind that it is only by the examination of details that one may come to a reasonably safe conclusion about principles. Even a cursory study of the works of literary critics will demonstrate the necessity of the warning that the general impression of an author which one gets after a comparatively long study of him may not be a true one. That impression may be colored by past experience or by prejudice; in other words, may represent a purely personal idea of excellence. In fact, the literary critic and, in particular, the student of Greek must continually guard against seeing in an author only what he wishes to see and making his work only the instrument for demonstrating the truth of a prejudice.

Clear writing is a rare and cardinal excellence of style. Aristotle, indeed, regards simplicity of diction as the first essential of good writing, which must be (as he says) "clear without being mean." He calls it "to hellenidzein," that is, to use good clear Greek by employing proper terms and avoiding periphrastic and ambiguous diction.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Cicero puts clearness (*sermo dilucidus*) before ornament, asking how it is possible, "qui non dicat quod intellegamus, hunc posse quod admiremur dicere."<sup>4</sup> Horace commends *lucidus ordo* as a necessity for powerful speech.<sup>5</sup> Quintilian allots the primacy to the same quality: "nobis prima sit virtus perspicuitas, propria verba, rectus ordo, non in longum dilata conclusio; nihil neque desit neque superfluat."<sup>6</sup>

Dionysius mentions purity as an excellence of diction, which embraces two ideas, namely, correctness of idiom and, secondly, the avoidance of obsolete and peculiar words.<sup>7</sup> Correctness, or precision, of diction is, according to his definition, obtained by a careful and exact choice of words; or, as he himself explains it: it places no word without plan or purpose in a sentence. Further, it aims at employing the common, the usual, and the proper word. Reversely stated, this implies that diction avoid the vulgarity or tastelessness which arises from the use of old-fashioned or obsolete words and peculiar or strange vocabulary. The virtue of pure diction is that the

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Poet.*, XXII, 1; cf. *Rhet.*, III, 2, 1; III, 5, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Cicero, *de Orat.*, III, 9, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 40.

<sup>6</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. Or.*, VIII, 2, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Dionysius' criticism of diction is found in *De Isocr.*, 2, 11.

**words convey a meaning which is easily understood and cannot be construed ambiguously.**

**Among the Attic orators, Isocrates and Lysias, more especially, are representative examples of pure, plain diction, while Thucydides employs a more elaborate vocabulary, which is regarded by some critics as a serious fault in his style, since it contributes to much of the ambiguity of his history.**

**All the critics, ancient as well as modern, unite in extolling the excellence of simple diction as being the primary requisite of good prose composition, because it alone promotes that all-important perspicuity, or clarity, which is a necessity for every means of communication between men, whether it be oral or written. And it is well that the preacher of today bear in mind this necessary first precept of style and always consciously endeavor to express the truths of God's Word in a plain, simple choice of words so that even the children can readily understand the sweet message of the Gospel.**

**The basic vocabulary of Hebrews numbers approximately 2,580 words. This count includes only nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, etc., or, in other words, that part of diction which most naturally reflects either a tendency towards simplicity or grandeur in vocabulary. Of this total, about 2,250 words are the common, ordinary, and usual words of Greek classical prose and New Testament literature. Expressed in ratio form, this means that out of every 52 words which the author employs, 45 are of the common type, easily understandable to the average person. Or, on a percentage basis, 89% of the diction attains the virtue of purity.**

**In Romans, Paul uses about 3,530 words, of which approximately 3,195 words, or 64 out of every 71, comprise the simple and ordinary word usage, which is a percentage of 91.**

**The *Aegineticus* of Isocrates numbers about 1,375 words, of which 1,355 are classified as usual and common in good Attic prose. Or, in ratio form, 54 out of 55 words (98%) reflect a simple and ordinary diction.**

**Hence, on a comparative basis the vocabulary of Isocrates is to a greater degree Lysian in its simplicity than either Romans or Hebrews. However, neither of them can be said to violate this first rule of good writing, since both Hebrews (89%) and Romans (91%) do show a simplicity of vocabulary which is by far the most dominant feature of their diction.**

Then, too, their inferior showing to Isocrates can be explained to some extent by the fact that the New Testament writers were compelled by the demands of the new faith to utilize and even coin a new terminology in order to explain adequately the new ideas and concepts which Christianity set forth.

And yet, to a greater degree than even what is taken as their classic model Isocrates, the author of Hebrews and Paul in Romans have a general bent towards grandeur in their diction. This is evident from the many instances in which they do not strictly and altogether avoid strange, archaic, and poetic diction. Especially is this tendency conspicuous in Hebrews, where the author's more dignified and select vocabulary represents 330 words of the total 2,580, or 7 out of every 52 words (11%). Paul's penchant for a more distinctive vocabulary is shown by the 335 words of the total 3,530 which may be classed as out of the ordinary (9%), while Isocrates in the *Aegineticus* uses only 18 words (1.7%) which are not common in Attic prose. However, it must be remembered that his percentage is higher in his epideictic speeches.

This select and choice use of words in Hebrews and Romans is apparent in many ways and falls under various classifications. But it must be remembered that the vocabulary of the New Testament must take into account the use of a word over a long period of time, from the classic to the later Koine usage. Also to be considered is the influence of the LXX and the later ecclesiastical Greek. Accordingly, in the attempt to classify the vocabulary of New Testament writings, words which occur in secular authors down to and including Aristotle (d. 322 B. C.) are regarded as belonging to the classical period of the language and are classified accordingly. Words first met with between B. C. 322 and B. C. 150 are regarded as later Greek. It is in this class that the influence of the LXX makes itself felt for the period between B. C. 280 and B. C. 150. Words which occur within the period of the New Testament Koine writers are listed as such. Likewise, in a few instances the ecclesiastical writings of the period after the Apostles reflect usage of words as in the New Testament canon of the Scriptures. However, in all this classification of New Testament vocabulary according to hard and fast chronological lines, the student of Greek must be careful to obviate, in some measure,

the incorrect impression which the rigor of such a method might give. For it has often happened that in investigating the age of some word, the student discovers that a word which has dropped out of use for whole stretches of time suddenly and unaccountably reappears. Therefore, at best, any study of New Testament vocabulary must be content with only general results and conclusions. No definite statements can be made, but only the probability can be suggested. In accord with this word of caution, the following statistics are presented only as a general indication of the "flair" which the author of Hebrews and Paul had for a more select and choice use of diction.

The author of Hebrews uses about 87 words which are classified as either rare, unusual, archaic, or poetic in classic Greek. That is to say, if the author had lived in the period of the flourishing of Attic prose, 87 words (3%) of his vocabulary would be distinctly out of the ordinary; and this exhibits a rather strong tendency towards grandeur in vocabulary, as Dionysius calls it.

Paul, likewise, in Romans exhibits a choice use of vocabulary as far as classical Attic prose is concerned, for 115 words (3%) of his treasury of vocables are distinctly unusual. But Dobschuetz almost grudgingly remarks: "Was wir bei Paulus finden, ist nicht der Sprachreichtum eines gewandten Redners, und doch gegenueber volkstuemlicher Sprache ist es ein Wortreichtum."<sup>8</sup>

In both cases, then, these New Testament writers compare favorably with Isocrates (1.7%) in occasionally "dressing up" their speech pattern with distinctive diction.

In addition to words which are rare in classical Greek, about 40 words (1.5%) in Hebrews and 70 words (2%) in Romans are not even to be found in classical Greek literature. Now, one would reasonably expect an even greater change in New Testament Koine vocabulary than a mere 2% introduction of new words, considering the 300 to 400 years which elapsed between the end of the so-called classic age and the writing of the New Testament canon. Hence, this 2% change in vocabulary through the passing years is extremely insignificant in comparison with the overwhelming 98% of vocables which belong to the storehouse of classic literature. This is

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<sup>8</sup> Dobschuetz, E. von, "Zum Wortschatz und Stil des Roemerbriefs," in *Zeitschrift fuer die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1934. 33 Bd.

more evident when one considers that 94.5% of the words in Hebrews and 95% in Romans are the usual and ordinary words of good Attic prose in common use by the Athenian orators.

Studying the vocabulary of these books within their proper sphere and period of New Testament Koine, one notices that the tendency towards grandeur in diction becomes more pronounced. This is easily illustrated by the fact that 60 of the words in Hebrews can be classified as rare, unusual, or archaic in New Testament Koine, LXX, and ecclesiastical writings (2.3%), while 140 are *hapax legomena* in New Testament literature (5%). In other words, 7.3% of the vocabulary is distinctive in New Testament Koine literature.

In Romans, likewise, Paul exhibits a distinct fondness for rich vocabulary. About 75 words (2%) in Romans fall into this category, while another 85 words (2.5%) are *hapax legomena* in this particular Epistle. This accounts for a total of 4.5% of the diction in Romans, which is distinctive in New Testament Koine literature.

By comparison, Hebrews shows a greater emphasis on rich vocabulary than Romans — a fact which may reflect the richer cultural background of the author of the former Epistle.

Thus far considered, both in the period of classical and Koine literature, Romans and especially Hebrews reflect a distinctively choice diction approaching close to that of Thucydides.

It should be emphasized that the inclusion of select and not altogether simple words in Hebrews and Romans does not mar to any appreciable degree the purity of their diction. For, though they have not always avoided using rare, unusual, archaic, poetic, and even foreign words, they have not become guilty of the tastelessness or lack of beauty which arises from an injudicious use of such a diction. If (together with Isocrates) they cannot be said to be the equal of Lysias in purity and simplicity of vocabulary, yet they are close rivals. And of the two, Paul is more Lysian in simplicity, while the author of Hebrews is more Thucydidean in richness of diction.

Another important feature of diction is the figurative expression. The trope, or metaphor, is the use of a particular word in other than its normal sense, e. g., "Herod is a fox" (metaphor). Isocrates is judicious in his use of tropes. His general practice is to avoid them and use the individual word

in its proper sense, but when he does employ them (as Dionysius remarks), they are proportionately blended. By this he means that Isocrates blends the figurative expression sparingly into his sentences and not in a "heaped-up" manner. In this respect his diction differs little from that of Lysias, who prefers common words in their natural sense.

The special quality of a trope is that it lends vividness to the style and adds graphic detail to the narrative. Now, it is easily recognized that though the trope does give vividness, at the same time it militates against purity. Therefore Dionysius is very emphatic in insisting that, first and foremost, perspicuity is the governing principle of good diction and it must preserve this purity and plainness by a judicious and sparing use of figurative expressions.

Aristotle speaks in a similar vein in his discussion of the metaphor. He grants that it is useful in prose in that it gives clearness, pleasantness, and a "foreign air." But care must be taken to choose an appropriate metaphor, i. e., it should not be farfetched, but fitting to the subject which it modifies, e. g., to call poetry the "scream" of Calliope is altogether improper to the dignity of the Muse of Poetry. For this reason, Aristotle presents a rule which is useful to bear in mind for using the metaphor to its best advantage. If one wishes to adorn and elevate the subject, draw the metaphor from a better element. Improper use of the metaphor, either one that is unfitting or farfetched, is one of the defects of diction which, according to Aristotle, produces coldness of style.

Longinus also gives consideration to the use and proper place of the metaphor in prose. He notes that "with regard to the number of metaphors to be employed, Caecilius seems to assent to the view of those who lay it down that not more than two, or at the most three, should be ranged together in the same passage. Demosthenes is, in fact, the standard in this, as in other matters." But Longinus himself is far too liberal in his thinking to be so mathematical as to the frequency of its use. He takes a larger view when he presents his own feelings about the matter. He continues: "I accept that view, but still for number and boldness of metaphors I maintain, as I said in dealing with figures, that strong and timely passion and noble sublimity are the appropriate palliatives. For it is the nature of the passions, in their vehement rush, to sweep

and thrust everything before them, or rather to demand hazardous terms as altogether indispensable. They do not allow the hearer leisure to criticize the number of the metaphors because he is carried away by the fervor of the speaker."<sup>9</sup>

In the same category with the metaphor belongs the simile, which Aristotle defines as a metaphor plus a word of comparison expressed (which would be *as*). It is useful in prose, but classical Greek permits it a not frequent use, because it is poetical (being the invention and favorite device of the epic bard Homer).

In contrast with the sparing use of the metaphor and simile in good Greek prose, the English language is very liberal and lavish in adorning style with metaphorical expressions. Hence, obviously, it is difficult for the critic of modern prose to get an adequate impression of the effect produced on the ancients by the use of metaphors in prose except as they recognized their use in poetry. As a matter of fact, English prose is so thoroughly shot through with metaphors that some of the figures objected to by the ancients hardly strike the modern as being in bad taste in Greek prose. For example, Longinus severely censures two metaphors of Gorgias as being too daring: "Xerxes, the Persian Zeus," and "vultures, living sepulchers," but to the modern ear accustomed to such high-flown hyperbole, these metaphors seem rather tame. Longinus criticizes those who use this manner to excess when he says: "Often, when they think themselves inspired, their supposed ecstasy is mere childish folly."<sup>10</sup>

The student of English is amazed to note that throughout the entire *Aegineticus* Isocrates employed only four metaphors (less than ½%). And this, according to Dionysius, is the special virtue of good clear Greek. And it is here that the diction of the New Testament offends against good Attic prose style. For example, Hebrews has approximately 115 metaphors and metaphorical expressions and 9 similes (4.5% of the diction), while Romans, though more moderate, also exceeds the measure of the classic standard with 74 metaphors and 19 similes (2.5%). Of course, this abundance in Hebrews is due in great part to the allegorical treatment and to the inspired manner

<sup>9</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime* (ed. W. Rhys Roberts, pp. 121, 123)

<sup>10</sup> Longinus, *op. cit.*, III, 2. 2.

which the author employs in the handling of the subject matter. But classical Greek would not permit such elaborate allegory. This is rather the influence of Oriental character and custom — a natural and genuine product of the Hebrew mind. So, too, Paul's thoughts traverse the stately heights of Oriental imagery, as they also descend to the profound depths of mystic devotion. And then, too, it is the natural tendency for a language in its development, especially in its later history, to tend towards a freer use of words other than the primary meaning. That is true in the case of the Greek language. The Koine literature, being more of a popular character, reflects the idiomatic and metaphorical usage of words.

Note a few of the metaphors in Hebrews which would surely be disallowed by the ancient critics (with the possible exception of Longinus) on the grounds of their gross exaggeration, while to the modern reader they have a fresh picturesqueness of speech. "Who maketh His angels and His ministers a flame of fire" (1:7). In chapter 5:12-13 milk is metaphorically used for the essential and elemental matters of instruction and learning. In 12:1 "a cloud of witnesses" very strikingly illustrates the great and countless numbers of the saints.

However, in the case of similes both writers conform admirably to Aristotle's requisites of fittingness and not too frequent usage. Nor are they of the extended length to which Homer goes in his similes, which he sometimes stretches out beyond the point of comparison. This latter type of simile is strictly poetical and the prerogative of the epic bard alone.

But judged by their own age and in the light of the extenuating circumstances, Hebrews and Romans exhibit a natural, freer, and more abundant use of the metaphor. And to their credit, speaking from the point of view of human critical standards, it must be said that while the metaphors and similes at times are an exaggeration, nonetheless they do add a vital vividness and graphic detail to the diction. Judging by the old classical standard (and that of Dionysius in particular), a critic would say that the New Testament writers have not been judicious in their use of tropes and that they have not appropriately blended them into their style. Rather, in the opinion of Dionysius, the tropical expressions mar the perspicuity of the diction. The devout Bible student will, of course, say, So much the worse for old Dionysius!

In summarizing the results of this essay, one may say that in general the diction of both Romans and Hebrews favorably measures up to the classical standard established by the ancient critics. Like that of Isocrates, its dominant feature is the usage of common and ordinary words, which are readily understandable to the average person. Thereby it achieves a simplicity and clarity demanded by and characteristic of good Attic prose. As is the case with Isocrates, a touch of Thucydidean grandeur and the flavor of culture and wide reading in literature is added by the New Testament writers in the way of a judicious selection of choice vocabulary and even a few foreign words of Hebraic origin. This is especially true of Hebrews. Greater vividness is achieved by a moderate use of telling and pictorial similes, but, unlike Isocrates, the diction does offend classic taste in the too frequent employment of metaphors and tropical expressions. If it cannot be said that the author of Hebrews and Paul in Romans are the equal of Isocrates in beauty of diction, yet, we maintain, they do not fall far short of him.

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