

Jeffrey W. Aernie, *Is Paul also among the Prophets? An Examination of the Relationship between Paul and the Old Testament Prophetic Tradition in 2 Corinthians* (LNTS 467; London – New York: T&T Clark 2012). Pp. XV+296. \$136. ISBN 978-05-671-75-724 (hardback)

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Is Paul also among the Prophets? by Jeffrey W. Aernie (JWA) is a continuation of the dissertation thesis, submitted to the University of Aberdeen in 2011. The author is lecturer in New Testament in the School of Theology at Charles Stuart University in Sydney, Australia. The present study seeks to examine the ways in which 2 Corinthians reflects the prophetic dimensions of Paul's apostolic self-presentation and rhetoric. The book consists of six chapters, followed by Bibliography, Index of References, and Index of Authors.

Chapter 1, "Introduction" (pp. 1-7), presents the reader with the thesis of the study, which is the influence of the prophetic tradition upon certain aspects of Paul's construction of his apostolic identity. The author intentionally confines the parameters of his work to the Corinthian correspondence, with only a limited use of Greco-Roman traditions and the social history of Corinth. The main focus of his investigation is the specifically prophetic dimension of Paul's self-conception and ministry, rooted in the Old Testament texts. In the introductory chapter, the reader will also find a concise polemical reference to other works on the issue by Karl Olav Sandnes, Florian Wilk, and Tobias Nicklas.

Chapter 2, "The Development of the Prophetic Tradition" (pp. 8-71), means to provide a contextual and methodological introduction for the examination of the material in 2 Corinthians. The author starts by explaining the meaning of the expression "prophetic tradition", and subsequently discusses the progression of the prophetic material within the Old Testament (Pentateuch, the Historical Books, and the Prophetic Literature), showing its multifaceted, equivocal character. Consequently, JWA evaluates the state and function of the prophetic material within the intertestamental period (1 Macc; Josephus, rabbinic literature; Daniel; Qumran; Philo; Ben Sira), providing the arguments for the continued prophetic activity in that period. The author also makes reference to the Hellenistic prophetic traditions noting both general similarities and serious differences between

them and the biblical material. The chapter finishes with a look at the profuse presence of the prophetic tradition in the Gospel traditions, which testifies to the influence of the former on the NT writers, including Paul.

Chapter 3, “The Prophetic Tradition in 1 Corinthians” (pp. 72-112), examines some portions of 1 Corinthians, namely 9:15-18 and 14:20-25, that offer insights into the prophetic aspects of Paul’s self-presentation. The author starts with the examination of the rhetorical movement in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1, in which chapter 9 plays the role of rhetorical example. A substantial part of the analysis is then dedicated to the notion of *anankē* (1 Cor 9:16), rendered by the author as “divine constraint”, similar to that experienced by the prophets (Exod 3–4; Isa 8:11; Jer 20:7-10; Ezek 3:14-19; Amos 3:7-8; Jon 1), and to their woe-formulas (Jer 4:13; 6:4; 10:19; 15:10; 22:18). Another passage, 1 Cor 14:20-25, according to the author, demonstrates Paul’s understanding of “unarticulated tongues” in the judgmental context of Isa 28:11-12. Whereas “the tongues” foreshadow judgment, the prophetic speech brings to conversion and thus restores hope; Paul reflects the Isaianic movement from exile to eschatological salvation. The analysis of 1 Cor 9:15-18 and 14:20-25 provides evidence that the apostle understood his ministry and his rhetoric as an extension of the prophetic tradition.

Chapter 4, “Paul’s Prophetic Self-Presentation in 2 Corinthians” (pp. 113-184), which together with the following one constitutes the core of the study, highlights Paul’s prophetic self-presentation in 2 Corinthians in terms of his connection with Moses, Isaianic servant of the Lord, and Jeremiah. Like Moses’, Paul’s authority derives from God’s call and his work of grace (2 Cor 2:16; 3:5); the apostle himself understands Moses as a point of reference for his ministry: they both stem from the glory of God (2 Cor 3:7-11). Divine call and the role of mediator willing to suffer on behalf of his people link Paul and Moses, although the apostle didn’t perceive himself as the “second Moses”. Subsequently, JWA investigates on the relationship between Paul and the Isaianic servant, starting from the broader context of the New Testament and Pauline letters to eventually focus on 2 Cor 5:11–6:10. The link between Paul and the Isaianic tradition is provided by the concepts of reconciliation, restoration, and eschatological salvation. However, despite some similarities between the servant’s and Paul’s mission, it’s Christ, not Paul, who is to be seen as a fulfilment of the servant tradition. Paul imitates Christ and roots his sufferings in God’s work of reconciliation in Christ. The third and the last figure analyzed by JWA in connection with Paul is the prophetic persona of Jeremiah. The references to the call and ministry of Jeremiah can be spotted primarily in 2 Cor 3:6 (Jer 38:31), where Paul describes himself as the servant of the new covenant, and in 2 Cor 10–13. In 2 Cor 10:8 and 13:10 Paul qualifies his ministry as aimed at edification, not

destruction of the community (Jer 1:10; 24:6; 46:10), and refers to Jeremiah's theocentric boasting in the Lord in 2 Cor 10:17 (Jer 9:22-23).

Chapter 5, "Paul's Prophetic Rhetoric in 2 Corinthians" (pp. 185-244), focuses on particular sections of 2 Corinthians to discern the influence of Paul's prophetic self-presentation on the conceptual framework of his rhetoric. Paul's military metaphor in 2 Cor 2:14-16, according to the author, is likely governed by the Old Testament sacrificial language and the Isaianic description of triumphant God who creates a new eschatological community. In a detailed analysis of 2 Cor 4:1-6, JWA argues for the influence of the Isaianic concept of light (Isa 9:2) associated with the work of the servant of the Lord (Isa 53). Interpreting 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, the author discards a non-Pauline (Qumranic) origin of the passage, and demonstrates instead its connection with Leviticus 26, Ezekiel 37, and with the contextual background of Isaiah 52. The analyzed passage works as a prophetic exhortation positioning the new existence of the Corinthians within the second-exodus theology of restoration. Finally, in 2 Cor 12:1-10, JWA perceives Paul's description of the failed heavenly ascent which corresponds to God's rejection of self-exaltation in Isa 14:12-15 and Ezek 28:2.

Chapter 6, "Conclusion" (pp. 245-250) concisely sums up the content and the main ideas of the book and opens perspective for further research and investigation on the impact of the prophetic tradition with respect to the other Pauline epistles and communities.

Is Paul also among the Prophets? by Jeffrey W. Aernie is an inspiring and well-written scholarly book. The comprehensive Bibliography (26 pages) lists mostly works in English and German, but also in French, and Italian. The language used by the author is smooth and readable. Introductions and summaries, placed respectively at the beginning and at the end of each paragraph and chapter, help the reader to "stay on the track". The thesis on the impact of the prophetic traditions on Paul is to some extent obvious, considering only Paul's quotations from the Scriptures, but it brings the author and readers to interesting and well-founded conclusions on the vicinity between Paul and the figures of Moses, servant of the Lord, or Jeremiah. JWA not only draws parallels between Paul and Moses but also stresses the difference between the two respective ministries (pp. 123-130). Paul serves the new covenant which represents God's complete and final word to humanity; his authority lies in the life-giving work of the Spirit. He doesn't perceive himself as a second Moses. On the other hand, the apostle presents his ministry as an eschatological counterpart of Jeremiah's (pp. 165, 175). The author sound-mindedly acknowledges that the Old Testament prophetic tradition was not the only framework with which Paul constructed his apostolic self-conception but that it was active and important in Paul's presentation of himself.

Notwithstanding all the mentioned merits of the book, the author's methodology and treatment of some Pauline passages raise justified objections and criticism. The major weakness of the work is the lack of more precise terminology and bibliographical references concerning an intertextual and rhetorical analysis. Discussing Paul's rendition of Isa 28:11-12 in 1 Cor 14:21, the author notices that it comports neither with the MT nor with the LXX. Paul simply departs from a strict translation. Further, 1 Cor 14:21 is described as a conflated citation from Isa 28:11-12 and other sources (Mic 5:5; Jer 7:24, 26; Zech 1:4) and labeled as "echo" or "allusion" to broader themes within the prophetic literature. In intertextual analysis, "echo" and "allusion" are not the same. They testify to different editorial operations and result in a different impact of the text upon the audience.

The same lack of precision can be spotted in the discussion on the influence of other Isaianic material on Paul. JWA argues for the presence of Isaianic ideas in 2 Cor 4:1-6. The basis is the conceptual link he finds between Isaiah 9, 50, and 52:13–53:12, and the association between the concept of light and the work of the servant (p. 209). Once again, we don't have any intertextual terminology that could qualify the dependence. First, light can simply function as a metaphor of salvation, thus providing only a very general link between Paul and the rest of the Scripture. Second, the author completely disregards the two utterly different concepts of a royal messiah and of a suffering messiah, present respectively in Isaiah 9 and 53. JWA has a tendency to speak of the "narrative movement" (p. 210n) in Isaiah, a very vague and imprecise expression to describe the prophetic book which *per se* is not a narration and which hardly demonstrates a clear movement between its various parts. On such hypothetical and methodologically doubtful operations the author builds his conclusions, like the one at p. 213: "Paul expresses the Isaianic movement from the concept of light to the work of the servant by correlating his spiritual illuminations with Christ, who is subsequently connected with the mission and character of the servant of the Lord (2 Cor 5:14-21). [...] Paul's rhetoric in 2 Cor 4:1-6 is dependent on the narrative movement of the Isaianic material".

That brings us to the author's imprecise use of the notion of rhetoric, which is the main field of investigation in chapter 5. In note 3 at page 185, the author explains that "rhetoric" functions throughout this chapter as a broad reference to Paul's development of his argument. Speaking of "rhetoric", the author then has in mind the *inventio*, the first step in the speech composition process, at which rhetorician gathers ideas and puts together different arguments. It's a pity that the author didn't go deeper into the ancient rhetorical theory or at least into some parts of it, like the rhetorical genre or *dispositio*. That could help him to avoid simply reducing the analyzed passages of 2 Cor 2:14–4:6, 5:14-21, and 6:1-2 to apology. At the beginning, the author rightly perceives 2 Corinthians not only

as a historical apology of Paul's apostolate but also as a universal presentation of the apostolic model based on the prophetic tradition (p. 114), but that idea passes without echo in subsequent study.

One more example of the analysis which could largely benefit from the author's more accurate use of rhetoric is the treatment of 2 Cor 12:1-10. Drawing on the work by Paula Gooder (*Only the Third Heaven. 2 Corinthians 2:1-10 and Heavenly Ascent*), JWA argues here for Paul's use of the motif of failed heavenly ascent. Additionally, the author defines it as ironic in tone, similar to the fool's speech in 2 Cor 11. First, the argument in 2 Cor 12:1-10 functions in connection with the thesis that Paul puts forward in 2 Cor 11:5-6, which claims his superiority with respect to his rivals in Corinth. The apostle's superior knowledge of Christ is then supported by the three arguments: 1) Paul's preaching free of charge (11:7-15); 2) the sufferings and hardships he endured for Christ (11:22-29); and 3) his visions and revelations (12:1-10). Paul restrains himself from dwelling at great length on the third argument (probably because it was abused by his opponents) but it doesn't mean that he describes here the failed ascent to heaven. It would be contrary and destructive to his argumentative strategy.

Additionally, in his rhetorical subversion of the concept of boasting Paul doesn't rely on his failed ascent but on the boasting in the Lord, which he announced in 2 Cor 10:17, and which he puts into effect by boasting of his weaknesses in 2 Cor 11:30-33 and 12:7-10. "The thorn in flesh" in 2 Cor 12:7 marks a passage to the new kind of boasting of weakness. The thorn is not, as JWA wants, the punishment for Paul who attempted to place himself in the position of God (p. 242). On the contrary, it's a revelatory event which legitimizes Paul's boasting of weakness, in which the apostle experiences the fullness of God's grace and imitates his suffering Lord.

Finally, Paul surely uses irony in 2 Cor 11:7 or 12:13 but it cannot be applied as a generic label for his entire discourse in 2 Cor 11:1-12:10. The irony, according to the ancients, functions as a two-edged sword; it's a dangerous and offensive tool. When speaking of Paul's rhetoric, JWA should himself examine the train of Paul's thought in the analyzed passage, instead of accepting a-critically interpretations put forward by other scholars. In effect, on the vague and borrowed concepts the author built the idea that 2 Cor 12:1-10 is linked to the failed ascents described in Isa 14:12-15 and Ezek 28:2.

Concluding, *Is Paul also among the Prophets?* by Jeffrey W. Aernie is surely a valuable and interesting book. The seemingly old and clichéd topic of the impact of the prophetic tradition on Paul is presented by the author in a fresh and creative manner. The book successfully testifies to the prophetic traditions as an important background for Paul's self-perception. It also proves the usefulness of intertextual and rhetorical analysis of Paul, in the same time calling for a more rigorous application of pertinent methodologies.