



The fruits of a text-generated persuasion-interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3



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This article interprets the persuasion of Paul's communication to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3 from a text-generated persuasion-interpretation (TGPI) rhetorical perspective. Text-generated persuasion-interpretation is not based on ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric and differs from ancient rhetorical analyses. Ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical analyses reimpose rhetorical categories on the text, analysing it within the confines of those rhetorical categories that merely mention rhetorical stylistic devices and techniques that the author uses to persuade the audience. Instead, this rhetorical approach is done by reconstructing the rhetorical strategy from the text itself, in other words, how Paul used rhetorical arguments and rhetorical techniques when persuading the Corinthians to pursue unity and order, by eulogising the excellencies of love. Paul's persuasive strategy from 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3 was constructed and analysed. The descriptive analysis of the author's persuasive intent was constructed from the text itself, proving that the means the author uses to persuade the readers can be based on the text alone. The author's dominant rhetorical strategy was defined from the text, by determining his primary rhetorical objective in the particular section. This article showed that Paul employed various rhetorical devices to enhance his persuasion. The first is the argument based on disillusionment. The second are rhetorical techniques such as explicit contrasting, conspicuous words and metaphors, binary, hyperbole, parallelism, repetition, rhythm, and antithesis to persuade the Corinthians to desire 'the far more supreme way' as the exclusive stimulus for practising spiritual gifts.

Contribution: This article offers something new in the sense that the rhetorical method of interpretation, called a text-generated persuasion-interpretation, is applied to 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3 for the first time. With a renewed interest in rhetorical interpretation of the texts, this methodology allows for its improvement with further research, as it has the potential to incorporate multidisciplinary approaches to the text. Furthermore, this article demonstrates that the dominant rhetorical objective of the text and the persuasion of the author can be derived from the text without relying on ancient rhetoric. Finally, the article shows that new rhetorical insights, such as new rhetorical techniques used to enhance the author's persuasion, can still be discovered, as they have been discovered in this study.

Keywords: persuasion; text-generated persuasion-interpretation; rhetorical analysis; rhetorical categories; rhetorical stylistic devices and techniques; love; 1 Corinthians 13.

Introduction

Firstly, 1 Corinthians 13 is the beloved so-called 'love chapter'. It has enjoyed tremendous discussion among New Testament scholars, in so far that Biatoma (2010:iii) and Prior (1993:225) labelled it the most researched, preached, quoted, known, and loved chapter of the New Testament. As a result, scholars have made immense contributions to the study of this beautifully crafted chapter.

Some interpret this passage from the grammatical-historical critical method of interpretation, exploring the historical situation behind the text that birthed 1 Corinthians 13, in order to understand it the way it was understood in its original, social, and cultural setting (Bartholomew 2015:337; Fee 2014:693; Kaiser & Silva 2007:335; Zuck 1991:16). According to Thomas (2002:203–207) it is logical to conclude that there are historical factors and a historical context within which an ancient text like 1 Corinthians 13 was written. Therefore, it is understanding that the said historical factors might bring one close to the understanding that the original author and the audience had.

Various scholars attempted to point out the rhetoric that Paul employed in 1 Corinthians 13 (Biatoma 2010; Collins 2016; Mitchell 1993; Smit 1991). In some commentaries like Thiselton (2000)

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and Fee (2014), the interpretation of the rhetoric of 1 Corinthians is limited to the identification of ancient rhetorical techniques¹ and rhetorical stylistic devices.² These attempts to identify the rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 13 are often made without the comprehensive analysis of how these rhetorical techniques and stylistic devices function to enhance the author's message. Beyond the identification of rhetorical techniques and stylistic devices, Cornelius (1998:8) proposes pivoting towards discerning the meaning the author seeks to communicate, and then to show how the speaker adapted his or her ideas through rhetoric to persuade the audience.

Focusing on the ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, scholars such as Mitchell (1993), Witherington (1995), Keener (2005), and Biatoma (2010) contributed to the understanding of how 1 Corinthians 13 functions within the ancient rhetorical genres, such as deliberative, judicial, and epideictic rhetoric (Aristotle *Ars Rhetorica*, 1, 3, 1–5; Quintilian 1947 *Institutio Oratoria* 3, 7–9). Although these scholars should be commended for their efforts, it is difficult to overlook the dearth of rhetorical consensus and consistency among those who supposedly use the same tradition to analyse Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Some scholars arrive at the conclusion that the genre of 1 Corinthians is deliberative (Mitchell 1993:1; Schüssler-Fiorenza 1987; Witherington 1995:73–79), while others argue that 1 Corinthians is epideictic (Perelman & Olbrecht-Tyteca 1969; Wuellner 1979:177–188).

Some scholars interpret the structure of 1 Corinthians by identifying the different speech parts – the *exordium*, *proposition*, *narratio*, *probatio*, and *conclusion* of the letter³ (Deissmann 1901:168; Doty 1973:27; White 1984:1739–1749). There is no consensus, however, on how 1 Corinthians should be demarcated. Consequently, these differences among scholars who rely on the same system to exegete the text cast into serious doubt the reliance on ancient rhetorical categories imposed on the text. If a text is forced into a pre-existing ancient model, the focus of the persuasion of the text is often missed, because the text is not allowed to speak for itself and explain its rhetorical logic (Meynet 1998:177).

In a distinction from the approaches of analysing Paul's letters by imposing ancient rhetorical genres and speech parts, or identifying persuasion strategies and stylistic devices, Tolmie (2004:13–39) developed a different approach, the so-called 'text-centred' approach. This methodology has never been used to interpret 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3 before. It is an approach that aims to analyse the rhetoric of the text by comprehensively describing all the means the author uses to persuade his readers to adopt his point of view. This analysis prioritises the text by involving it in identifying the dominant rhetorical strategy of the text, namely the author's objective in a particular text, and all the means in the text that the author uses to persuade his audience (Genade 2007:52; Snyman 2009b:1). These means include the supportive

rhetorical strategies, and the type of argument that the author uses to achieve the dominant rhetorical objective. Finally, in the process of the analysis, all the rhetorical techniques that the author uses to enhance the effectiveness of his communication are identified, described in detail, and it is shown how these contribute to the author's dominant rhetorical strategy.

To interpret 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3 by remaining within the parameters of the text, Tolmie's (2004:37–39) text-centred descriptive analysis is used. Tolmie formulated a minimal theoretical framework approach to analyse the rhetoric of the text, through a five-step guide of all the ingredients involved. Genade (2015:21–22) attributed the name 'text-generated persuasion-analysis' (TGPA) to this methodology and formalised the steps that are used in this study for the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3.

These steps include:

- Identifying the dominant rhetorical strategy.
- Creating a detailed analysis of the author's rhetorical strategy.
- Identifying the supportive rhetorical strategies.
- Identifying the rhetorical techniques.
- Describing the organisation of the argument in the letter as a whole.

It is necessary for a rhetorical interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3 to be preceded by an understanding of the rhetorical situation that occasioned the writing of 1 Corinthians. This is achieved by tracking the hints of the rhetorical situation in 1 Corinthians as a whole. The purpose for this is premised on the presupposition that the rhetorical situation directs the response by the author.

The rhetorical situation that occasioned the writing of 1 Corinthians

The following two passages are widely regarded by scholars as providing hints into the situation that occasioned the writing of 1 Corinthians (Kennedy 1984:87; Pogoloff 1992: 273–274; Schüssler-Fiorenza 1987:395; Snyman 2009a:132):

- 1 Corinthians 1:11 where Paul says, 'for I have been informed concerning you, my brothers, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you' [ἐδηλώθη γάρ μοι περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί μου, ὑπὸ τῶν Χλόης ὅτι ἐριδες ἐν ὑμῖν εἰσιν]. Paul indicates that he has been informed by Chloe's people about the existing *quarrels* [ἐριδες], which Louw and Wolvaardt (2015; 1 Cor 1:11b) describe as conflict that leads to antagonism, unnecessary rivalry, and discord.
- 1 Corinthians 7:1 where Paul says, 'now in response to the matters you wrote about: it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman' [περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε, καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἄπτεσθαι]. Paul further responds to other matters they wrote about in the chapters that follow

1. See Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica* I:ii, 2.

2. See Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica* III:1, 2.

3. See Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, and Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica* 3, 14–19.

1 Corinthians 7, one of which being issues concerning spirituals [περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν] (1 Corinthians 12:1) that covers 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3.

Chloe's people reported the situation to Paul by telling him of the alarming situation the divisions had caused (Biatoma 2010:27; Collins 2016:78; Snyman 2009b:2) and they supplied Paul with a written letter that contained questions from the Corinthians. Rhetorically, this gives credence to the report because Paul was informed by people who knew the situation intimately. The fact that the Corinthians sent their questions to Paul through Chloe's people renders it probable that the Corinthians either trusted Chloe's people, or that they were not so much part of the quarrels that existed. This means that Paul was not misled and his response was a response to a factual situation, reported by credible informants.

The conflict in the Corinthian church that Paul alludes to in 1 Corinthians 1:11, seems to have arisen over factionalism Paul highlights in 1 Corinthians 1:12–17. Evidently, this caused division in the Corinthian church. There is no scholarly consensus regarding the exact situation that caused the divisions (cf. Mitchell 1993:820; Lamp 1995:118; Pogoloff 1992).

Schüssler-Fiorenza (1987:395) proposes that one should not lose sight of the fact that Paul was supplied with two sources of information pertaining to the rhetorical situation in the Corinthian church. Therefore, Paul's response in the letter-body of 1 Corinthians is a response to a myriad of issues, which caused divisions in the church. Reading the letter as a whole, Snyman (2009a:132) convincingly argues that there is a plethora of practical and theological issues, that caused division in the Corinthian church. The major issues which needed to be settled were issues about sexuality (1 Cor 5–7), meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8:1–11:1), worship (1 Cor 11:2–14:40), the resurrection (1 Cor 15:12–37), and issues concerning the collection for the saints (1 Cor 16:1–4). The Corinthians were divided on the exact practice of these issues, resulting in strife between them.

If one accepts this specific reconstruction of the rhetorical situation that occasioned the writing of 1 Corinthians, then the dominant rhetorical objective of 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3 may be reconstructed from the context showing what exactly Paul intends to persuade the Corinthians of in this passage.

Interpretation of the rhetoric of 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3

After the dominant rhetorical strategy has been constructed from the text, this strategy will be described by answering Paul's primary objective in this section, namely how does he set about achieving this objective, by using various rhetorical objectives, arguments, and techniques?

The dominant rhetorical strategy

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul addresses the phenomenon of the pneumatic by challenging the Corinthians not to be ignorant concerning the use of spiritual gifts. He persuades them by saying, 'now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant' [περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν] (1 Cor 12:1). Their implied ignorance caused them to not pursue unity and order in the body, using their diverse spiritual gifts, which are meant for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). Therefore, Paul's dominant strategy in 1 Corinthians 12 focuses on various ways to persuade the Corinthians of the proper way to use spiritual gifts, because their way resulted in disunity and disorder, which, in the bigger picture of the letter, forms part of the existing antagonism, rivalry and discord.

To address the disunity, disorder, antagonism, rivalry and discord, Paul proposes to show the Corinthians a 'far more supreme way'⁴ [ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν] (1 Cor 12:31b) of practising spiritual gifts compared to their way, which did not achieve the ultimate purpose of why spiritual gifts are given (1 Cor 12:7). The 'far more supreme way' is demarcated into three supportive rhetorical strategies which feed the dominant rhetorical strategy. In the interpretation that follows, each of the supportive rhetorical strategies will be interpreted in detail to show how they contribute to the dominant rhetorical strategy in 1 Corinthians 13.

The dominant rhetorical strategy of 1 Corinthians 13 can be summarised as: *Paul illustrates the futility of practising spiritual gifts [πνευματικοί] without love [ἀγάπη], and presents love [ἀγάπη] as superior, necessary, and indispensable.* Paul structures his argument in a way that, firstly, seems intent on disillusioning the Corinthians regarding the phenomenon of the spiritual gifts. Thereafter, he persuades them that the practice of spiritual gifts without love is inadequate and will end when 'the perfect' [τὸ τέλειον] (1 Cor 13:8) comes. However, since spiritual gifts are temporaneous and may come to an end, Paul persuades the Corinthians to respond to the inauguration of that reality, with a sense of anticipation and excitement.

The three supportive strategies that accentuate the dominant rhetorical strategy, are presented in three phases. The first phase is 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3 in which Paul persuades the Corinthians to pursue unity and order by extolling the excellencies of love. The second phase is 1 Corinthians 13:4–8a in which Paul persuades the Corinthians to pursue unity and order, by vilifying the practice of spiritual gifts without love. The third phase is 1 Corinthians 13:8b–13 in which Paul persuades the Corinthians to pursue unity and order by extolling the coming supremacy of 'the perfect'. The focus of this article is only on the first phase.

4. According to Louw and Wolvaardt (2015:1 Cor 12:31b) the noun ὑπερβολὴν means, 'a degree which exceeds extraordinarily a point on an implied or overt scale of extent'. In 1 Corinthians 12:31, it can be translated as a 'far more supreme way' to capture the intensity of the degree that Paul expresses. Hereinafter and aforementioned, ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν is translated as 'a far more supreme way', based on Louw and Wolvaardt's definition.

Supportive strategy: Persuading the Corinthians to pursue unity and order by extolling the excellencies of love (1 Cor 12:31b–13:3)

This strategy is accentuated by employing a series of four Greek third-class conditional clauses,⁵ which include a contraction conjunction ‘and if’ [κἄν] at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 13:3 to make it five conditional clauses:

- ‘if’ [ἐάν] (1 Cor 13:1)
- ‘if’ [ἐάν] (1 Cor 13:2)
- ‘if’ [ἐάν] (1 Cor 13:2)
- ‘and if’ [κἄν] (1 Cor 13:3)
- ‘if’ [ἐάν] (1 Cor 13:3)

These conditional clauses may refer to uncertain, but likely, conditions that may transpire in the future. These hypothetical conditions serve as an enticing force to persuade the Corinthians to consider the implications, especially of the likely conditions that may transpire, should they practise spiritual gifts without love [ἀγάπην μὴ]. Taken collectively, the protases ἐάν (if) in 1 Corinthians 13:1, 2, and 3 demarcate the rhetorical strategy in 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3.

To persuade the Corinthians towards unity based on the excellencies of love, Paul begins his persuasion by exhorting the Corinthians to desire ‘the greater gifts’ in 1 Corinthians 12:31a [ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα]. The function of the present active verb *desire* [ζηλοῦτε] could either be viewed as an imperative or indicative verb (Conzelmann 1975; Horsley 2011; Keener 2005; Morris 1958).

According to these scholars, there are two possible ways to interpret the verb ζηλοῦτε for purposes of reconstructing Paul’s persuasive strategy in 1 Corinthians 13. The first is the realist understanding, proposed by Morris (1958:180) and Conzelmann (1975:217). In terms of the realist understanding, Paul is understood to persuade the Corinthians to desire the practice of spiritual gifts considering his teaching on the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14. In 1 Corinthians 12, he ranks the gifts, but despite ranking them, they all serve one purpose. In 1 Corinthians 14 he emphasises that spiritual gifts build up the church. Therefore, they must be desired in a realistic way.

The second way one may interpret the verb ζηλοῦτε for purposes of reconstructing Paul’s persuasive strategy in 1 Corinthians 13 is by interpreting it in line with the ironic interpretation, as opposed to the realist interpretation. In

5. Mounce (2003:341), Mounce (2009:329) and Wallace (1995:679–712) discuss the meaning and impact of conditional clauses on one’s exegesis. The significance of their impact on one’s exegesis is whether they refer to a likely or unlikely future occurrence. If they refer to a likely situation, then Paul is understood as being realistic. If they refer to an unlikely situation, then Paul may be understood as being hypothetical. Mounce and Wallace state there are three conditional clauses that are predominantly used in the Greek New Testament. The first is a simple conditional clause, or a statement of conditions of fact, which means if the protasis is true, then the apodosis is taken as true for the sake of the argument the author makes. The second class states a condition of fact in the apodosis and protasis even though it is not factual. The argument makes it plain that the assumptions are false. The third class presents an uncertain, but likely condition that may occur in the future. If the hypothetical protasis turns out to be fact, then the apodosis is true as well.

terms of the ironic interpretation, Horsley (2011:175) finds the interpretive strength leaning towards an ironic, rather than a realistic, interpretation in 1 Corinthians 12:31. He builds his case on what he perceives as the probability of taking ‘the far more supreme way’ as ironic. It is ironic because it makes sense to look at the aspects of 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul challenges the notion of the hierarchy of spiritual gifts as purported by the Corinthians. Horsley (2011:175) argues that in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul downplays any notion that there are any greater gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. Therefore, if Paul aims to downplay the notion of the hierarchy of spiritual gifts, he thus mocks the Corinthians’ pursuit of spiritual gifts, that they view as great. This leaves the verbal phrase ‘desire the greater gifts’ [ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα] (1 Corinthians 12:31) as probably being ironic.

Assuming Paul is ironic, one could argue that for him to communicate effectively, he has to persuade the Corinthians to move from an undesirable way of pursuing the practice of spiritual gifts, to a desirable way. Paul will persuade them to adopt a new perspective and practice of spiritual gifts, neither emphasising hierarchy, nor the non-building-up purpose of spiritual gifts. He transitions to show the Corinthians what the proper view and practice are. It is not the gifts, nor the practitioner, but the supreme way of practising spiritual gifts, that they must pursue. That supreme way is the way of love that Paul introduces in 1 Corinthians 12:31b, which carries to 1 Corinthians 13:3. Commentators generally agree that love is the greater way that Paul speaks about in 1 Corinthians 12:31b (Keener 2005:107; Malcolm 2013:88; Thiselton 2000:1025–1026; Witherington 1995:265–266). This way of love establishes unity and order, by extolling the excellencies of love in the congregation.

Argument based on disillusionment

To enhance the effectiveness of his persuasion, namely to pursue unity by extolling the excellencies of love, Paul employs *the argument based on evoking a sense of disillusionment*. The argument based on disillusionment is seen in the protasis ‘if I have’ [ἐάν ἔχω] (1 Cor 13:2, 3), a third-class conditional clause, which invites the Corinthians to think of the possibility and outcome of having spiritual gifts without love. The outcome is disastrous because it does not build up the church. Not only that, but Paul says, if having spiritual gifts without love were to happen, the gift and the loveless practitioner himself, or herself, would be a noisy gong, or a clanging cymbal [γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον] (1 Cor 13:1b), become nothing [οὐθέν] (1 Cor 13:2c), and gain nothing [οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι] (1 Cor 13:3c).

In addition, this argument is meant to induce a sense of shock. Shock is presumably induced, when the Corinthians discover that the spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy that they highly esteemed can potentially come to an end [καταργηθήσεται] (1 Cor 13:10), turn the practitioner into nothing, and lack excellency without love (1 Cor 13:1–3). Furthermore, a congregation that prized certain spiritual gifts highly is going to be shocked when Paul explains which gifts

are going to pass away by extolling the supremacy of what is to come [καταργηθήσονται και πάσονται] in 1 Corinthians 13:8b–10.

To further elucidate and enhance the effectiveness of his rhetorical strategy, Paul employs eight rhetorical techniques in 1 Corinthians 12:31–13:3. They are explicit contrasting, conspicuous words and metaphors, binary, hyperbole, parallelism, repetition, rhythm, and antithesis. These techniques will be explained briefly to show how they enhance Paul's communication.

Explicit contrasting

The technique of explicit contrasting is used in 1 Corinthians 12:31 to contrast the desire for greater gifts by the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12:31a, and what he aims to persuade them of, namely the far more supreme way he proposes in 1 Corinthians 12:31b. He begins his pursuit by using the imperatival verb, *desire* [ζηλοῦτε] in 1 Cor 12:31a. Taken as an imperative, it means Paul commands the Corinthians to pursue the better gifts, while his argument in 1 Corinthians 12 is that there are no gifts that are better than others. Louw and Nida (1988:298) and Dominy (1983:57) argue that the verb should not be understood as an imperative, but rather an indicative. If taken as an indicative, it states the attitude of the Corinthians that they 'set their hearts on the better gifts'. However, Smit (1991:196) and Thiselton (2000:1024–1026) argue convincingly that the imperative rendition helps with the flow of Paul's logic. Since there are no better gifts, the Corinthians cannot set their hearts on something that is non-existent, but rather on something contrary to what Paul is about to present.

Since there are no better gifts, what is there in reality is the 'far more supreme way' of practising spiritual gifts, as defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. Notwithstanding this definition, Paul's desire is not to discourage the Corinthians, nor quench their desire for spiritual gifts. Paul desires for the Corinthians to excel in the practice of spiritual gifts, and the way to excel is when the congregation is united in their desire to use spiritual gifts for mutual edification (1 Cor 12:7), which in Paul's definition is the excellent way of love.

Paul persuades the Corinthians to ensure that their practice of spiritual gifts revolves around love. Evidently, their view and way of practising spiritual gifts missed the antidote to their inconsideration toward one another, and the purpose for which spiritual gifts are given was not achieved. Contrasted with their way, the way that Paul presents as the 'far more supreme way', namely the way of love, results in spiritual gifts and the spiritual gift practitioner achieving the optimum purpose for why spiritual gifts are given to the congregation, and results in unity in the church.

Conspicuous words and metaphors

To enhance his persuasion of the Corinthians to desire the 'far more supreme way' of love, Paul uses what Smit

(1991:201) observes as four conspicuous words and metaphors in 1 Corinthians 12:31–13:3. According to Smit (1991:199), in 1 Corinthians 12:31 the accusative noun *way* [ὁδόν] and the indicative verb *I will show* [δείκνυμι] are metaphorically paired together in a unique way that is found nowhere else in the New Testament – hence they are conspicuous. The *way* is a pathway where movement occurs. In 1 Corinthians 12:31b, they are figuratively used to refer to the way the Corinthians are to follow in the practice of spiritual gifts (Louw & Wolvaardt 2015; 1 Cor 12:31b).

Bearing the characteristic of a *hapax legomenon*, Paul is not the only author who combines the noun and the verb, *I will show the way* [ὁδόν δείκνυμι] (1 Cor 12:31b), in the New Testament. However, he is the only author who can explain the logic of this phrase and show us the *far more supreme way* of achieving unity, by extolling the excellencies of love in his own unique way. Godet (1893:234) points out that we should not lean towards searching for a mysterious understanding of the *far more supreme way*. The apt reason he advances is that Paul explicitly *demonstrates* [δείκνυμι] (1 Cor 12:31b) what the supremely excellent way of practising spiritual gifts in love looks like.

In addition, Paul uses the *bipartite onomatopoeia*⁶ formulation of a noisy gong, or a clanging cymbal [χαλκός ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον] (1 Cor 13:1), which is conspicuously rare (Smit 1991:200). Lockwood (2010:266–267) claims that the Corinthians were familiar with theatre instruments that made beautiful melodies and could distinguish them from loud, annoying sounds. Therefore, Mare (1994:643) concludes that by comparing a beautiful and an annoying sound, meaningful instrumental playing, and a musical instrument that is out of tune, the Corinthians are able to draw the conclusion. The logical conclusion is that, without the excellencies of love, the speaker is undesirable, being noisy and clanging, one who practises spiritual gifts in no way that edifies and unifies the church. The onomatopoeic 'I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal' [χαλκός ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον] (1 Cor 13:1) points to the spiritual practitioner becoming [γέγονα] loveless, hollow, and reverberating.

Furthermore, the use of the metaphor, 'faith so that I can move mountains' [πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναι] (1 Cor 13:2), is made conspicuous by its rarity in the New Testament. In addition, it is also rare because it is a rhetorical technique that is employed to advance the persuasion of another rhetorical technique, namely the hyperbole, or the *if* [ἐάν] protasis in 1 Cor 13:1–3. To further substantiate that without love, *all* [πάντα και πάσαν] is nothing [οὐθέν] (1 Cor 13:2), Paul makes use of the adjective *all* [πάντα και πάσαν] (1 Cor 13:2), indicating the employment of a grotesque metaphor to enhance the point made through a hyperbole in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3.

Paul further uses the rare verb, 'I give away' [ψωμίσω] (1 Cor 13:3), which is conspicuous. Smit (1991:200) comments that it stands out because it appears only twice in the Pauline

⁶Words that sound like their meaning (Lanham 1991:105, 186). In 1 Corinthians 13:1 Paul uses two.

literature. The other place where Paul makes use of it, namely Romans 12:20, it is accompanied with the rhetorical *argument based on the authority of Scripture*. Since this is the case, Smit sees the possibility of Paul alluding to biblical archaism. However, instead of using the *argument based on the authority of Scripture*, which is often a direct quotation of Scripture, here Paul uses an *argument based on the allusion to authority of Scripture*.

The argument that Paul advances is that based on what Scripture alludes to, generous-philanthropic acts are worthless without love (Garland 2003:611). Even if one were to give himself or herself over to martyrdom, without love, hypothetically speaking, his or her action will be worthless (Morton 1999:13–14).

Taking these rhetorical techniques collectively, Paul aims to drive home the point that, in order for one to not become a worthless noise maker (1 Cor 13:1), amount to nothing (1 Cor 13:2), and gain nothing (1 Cor 13:3), he or she should see things from Paul's presentation, using himself as an example, that there is no value in anything unless it is grounded in the way of love. Scholars agree that Paul urges the Corinthians to pursue the 'far more supreme way' (Louw & Wolvaardt 2015; 1 Cor 12:31b) of love, without which spiritual gifts and practitioners are nothing (Prior 1993:228; Soards 2011:270–271; Verbrugge & Harris 2008).

Binary

The concept of the rhetorical technique of binary is dealt with comprehensively, and the crux of it is captured succinctly by Meggitt (1998:1–9). This technique is defined as viewing and categorising things as belonging to two opposites (Meggitt 1998:1–9). Meggitt's crux of the argument is that binary exhibited itself in the socio-economic disparities that played an important factor in the life of the Corinthian church. Since some may have been impoverished and others affluent, they attached socio-status classes to different groups of people. The most vivid picture seen is in the eating of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17–26). Friesen (2004:323) adds that binary categories factored even in the practice of spiritual gifts. Certain groups were favoured, while others were ignored, which is why certain spiritual gifts were elevated above others. To combat this, Paul challenges the Corinthians to think of the human body as something with many parts, while each part is indispensable (Asher 2000:116).

Hyperbole

According to Kaiser and Silva (2007:146), an 'hyperbole is a type of overstatement used in order to increase the effect of what is being said'. Zuck (1991:154) demonstrates that when the author uses a hyperbole, he or she deliberately says 'more than is literally meant'. This is seen when Paul uses deliberate exaggeration in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3, that he is capable of performing extraordinary acts from the lowest (speak with tongues of men – γλώσσας τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ, the ability to prophesy – προφητείαν, give away possessions – ψωμίσω

πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου) to the highest (speak with tongues of angels – λαλῶ γλώσσαις ἀγγέλων, knowing all mysteries and all knowledge and having all faith to remove mountains – εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναί, and surrender the body to be burned). The argument he advances is that without the excellencies of love [ἀγάπη], no good fruit is borne because it results in conflict in the church. Therefore, to amplify the point Paul hyperbolically argues, it makes no sense to have impressive miraculous abilities without love. Love empowers and gives meaning and purpose to all spiritual gifts.

Parallelism

Zuck (1991:138) explains parallelism as comparing or repeating the same ideas, contrasting ideas, or completing the idea of the first line in the second or last line. Paul flowers his persuasion with the beauty of parallelism in 1 Corinthians 12:31. In this verse, we find what Zuck (1991:138) calls a 'completion parallelism', where Paul uses similar structures. Kaiser and Silva (2007:333) explain that 'as a literary technique that inverts the elements into 2 parallel phrases', Paul inverts the order of repeated words to thus form parallelism.

Corinthians 12:31

- (a) verb *desire* [ζηλοῦτε]
 - (b) object *the gifts* [τὰ χαρίσματα]
 - (c) comparative apposition *the superior* [τὰ μείζονα]
 - (c) comparative apposition *far more supreme* [ὑπερβολὴν]
 - (b) object *way* [ὁδὸν]
- (a) verb *I will show* [δείκνυμι].

Smit (1991:197) observes that parallelism is further employed by Paul in a pattern of (1) positive conditional protases, (2) negative conditional protases, concluded by their respective (3) apodosis in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3.

Corinthians 13:1–3

- (a) If (protasis) I (subject) speak human or angelic tongues [Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων]
 - (b) but do not have love [ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω]
 - (c) then (implied apodosis) I (subject) am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal [γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον]
- (a) If (protasis) I (subject) have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains [ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν, καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναί,
 - (b) but do not have love [ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω]
 - (c) then (implied apodosis) I (subject) am nothing [οὐθέν εἰμι].
- (a) And if (protasis) I (subject) give away all my possessions, and if I (subject) give over my body in order to boast [καὶ ἐὰν

ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου, καὶ ἐὰν³ παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου, ἵνα καθήσομαι],

(b) but do not have love [ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω]

(c) then (implied apodosis) I gain nothing [οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι].

The beauty of parallelism should not merely be observed. It should lead to the detection of the author's aim. Snyman (1986:201, 211, 212) helpfully points out the twofold aim of parallelism in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3. Seeing that Paul is in the process of correcting the Corinthians' loveless use of spiritual gifts, parallelism carries a gracious effect with the purpose of causing the Corinthians to be charmed by it and persuaded to change. It is a gentle correction. The second aim of the use of parallelism is to persuade the audience in a way that stirs and appeal to the emotions of the audience, to arrive at a point where they affectionally desire the author's proposal.⁷

Repetition

Tolmie (2004:149, 178) proposes two kinds of repetition: the glaring repetition of words or phrases, and the repetition of sounds. Both kinds serve to enhance the importance of what is being said. Repetition causes the reader not to miss the repeated point. Nida et al. (1983:24) point out that the technique of repetition is used to place similar words, their similar meaning, and similar sound next to each other. This is evident in the use of *nothing* in 1 Corinthians 13:2 [οὐθέν] and 1 Corinthians 13:3 [οὐδὲν]. When Paul writes, 'I am nothing' [οὐθέν εἰμι] (1 Corinthians 13:2) and 'I gain nothing' [οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι] (1 Corinthians 13:3), he plays with words which correspond in meaning, even as they sound the same in Greek [οὐδὲν and οὐθέν].

The significance of the repetitions is to serve a cohesive purpose (Biatoma 2010:74–75). Cohesion's importance is only seen when the author adds an important point after repeating what is already stated (Van Neste 2002:121). The observed repetition in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3 points to the excellency that love adds to spiritual gifts. Love is that cohesive element that holds spiritual gifts and the purpose they are intended to achieve together.

Rhythm

Culler and Glaser (eds. 2019:2) define rhythm as speech which is aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, rhythm makes a piece of writing memorable. Because it sticks in the mind, it causes the reader to remember the logic and reasoning presented in what he or she reads. It adds to the quality of the words, which engages the emotions and thoughts of the reader, thus contributing to the reader's ability to learn the words by heart (eds. Culler & Glaser 2019:21–22).

Paul uses the rhetorical device of rhythm in 1 Corinthians 12:31–13:3, which Hendrick (2005:61) claims Paul adapted

⁷Borrowing from ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric, the author uses the persuasion strategy of *pathos*. Cornelius (1998:51) refers to Aristotle who said that the reader's judgement will be influenced when their emotions can be involved.

from inflected forms of the Greek language. As a result, Paul takes full advantage of crafting this text in a way that displays the capabilities of the Greek language to produce rhythmical beauty. Robertson and Plummer (1958:258) observe that, through the presentation of his argument in rhythmical beauty, Paul makes it pleasant to read, and it sounds pleasant to the ear, so that although 1 Corinthians 13 may be intended for correction, it invariably becomes a much-loved piece of literature among the Corinthians and today's modern readers.

When reading 1 Corinthians 13, one should be open to its rhythmical character. Aristotle (Rhet 3.8.3) is cited in Biatoma (2010), alluding to the observation that an orator, such as Paul could be conceptualised in 1 Corinthians 13, makes effort in his or her writings to purposefully make his or her words sound rhythmical. The genitive nouns, ἀνθρώπων and ἀγγέλων in 1 Corinthians 13:1, have the rhyming suffix. Similarly, the noun κύμβαλον is followed by the verb ἀλλάζον in 1 Corinthians 13:1, which have the rhythmical suffixes that sound the same. Independent clauses in 1 Corinthians 13:2a–d characteristically begin with the same conjunction, καί:

- καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν
- καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα
- καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν
- καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν

Biatoma (2010:76) is right to note that 1 Corinthians 13 is full of rhymes. The parallels rhyme, the alliterations rhyme, and the repetitions rhyme. 1 Corinthians 13 is crafted with careful-rhyming consonances.

Antithesis

Black (1987:183) regards antithesis as a positioning of contrasted ideas opposite to each other. According to Tolmie (2004:43), they are rhetorically effective because they are not mere propositional truth statements contrasted in opposition. They serve to strongly contrast ideas, leaving the reader with a choice in determining which of the contrasted idea is persuasive, and which is not. In the context of 1 Corinthians 13:1–3, the reader is left having to choose between the excellent way of spiritual gifts, contrasted with the non-excellent way of practising spiritual gifts, which is the loveless way. The antithesis is plain. The ideas that are contrasted are between having outstanding spiritual gifts, explicitly with not having love. The other contrast is between having all the three spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3 [πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν], explicitly contrasted with *nothing* and *nothing* [οὐθέν] (1 Cor 13:2), and [οὐδὲν] (1 Cor 13:3).

It is convincingly demonstrated by Malcolm (2013:199), concerning the overall antithetical contrast in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3, that if 1 Corinthians 13 is read through its broader rhetorical context of 1 Corinthians 12–14, it clearly shows that Paul persuades the Corinthians to consider what builds the other members within one church-body, as opposed to what builds up oneself. Moreover, Paul contrasts between dissensions that cause conflict leading to disunity, and what unifies. Thus,

Paul vilifies and is opposed to individuals who build themselves up without edifying nor uniting the church [ἐκτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ] (1 Cor 14:4). He hopes that his persuasion will cultivate the use of excellent spiritual gifts for the building-up and unification of the church [ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομῆν] (1 Cor 14:5).

Conclusion

This article's aim was to construct and interpret Paul's persuasive strategy from 1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:3, without imposing ancient Greco-Roman or modern rhetorical categories on the text. The descriptive interpretation of the author's persuasive intent was constructed from the text itself, proving that the means the author uses to persuade the readers to accept his persuasion can be based on the text alone. In addition, the author's dominant rhetorical strategy was defined from the text, by answering how one can describe the author's primary rhetorical objective in the particular section, and how the author sets about achieving this objective. This article showed that the author employed the argument based on disillusionment, and rhetorical techniques such as explicit contrasting, conspicuous words and metaphors, binary, hyperbole, parallelism, repetition, rhythm, and antithesis to persuade the Corinthians to desire 'the far more supreme way', which is the only way to practise spiritual gifts the way God intended.

Ethical consideration

This article complies with the standards of research involving humans and does not contain any studies involving human participants performed by any of the authors.

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