

A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Thessalonians 2:17–20

H.J. Prinsloo

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5809-8571>

- Department of Old and New Testament Studies, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa
-

Abstract

This article analyses 1 Thessalonians 2:17–20 from a rhetorical perspective. Instead of the typical approach used to analyse the letter in terms of ancient rhetorical theory, this article explains that Paul's rhetorical strategy is best observed by a close reading of the text itself; it is called a text-centred rhetorical analysis that follows a minimum theoretical approach. Accordingly, the overall rhetorical strategy is identified, followed by an outline of the dominant and supportive arguments, including the supportive strategies, and completed by identifying the rhetorical techniques. Moreover, this article highlights how Paul effectively adapts the ancient letter style to achieve his rhetorical objectives. It remains critical to understand the urgency of the missionaries not only to convey their loving concern but to exhort them to endure faithfully to the immanent parousia.

Keywords: Text-centred rhetorical analysis; 1 Thessalonians; Pauline Literature; Apostolic *parousia*; *Narratio*

Introduction

In comparing existing rhetorical analyses of Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, scholars usually assume that an analysis of 1 Thessalonians that employs schemes based on classical rhetoric is preferable. From the current state of scholarship, it has become evident that 2:17–20 is often identified as the *narratio*, e.g., Wanamaker (1990:49) and Witherington (2006:60). However, the function of the *narratio* is not always interpreted in the same way, e.g., Cho (2013:169) and Verhoef (1998:25) explain that the *narratio* serves to prepare the audience; Wanamaker (1990:90–91), Watson (1999:67) and Yeo (2002:530) motivate the function of the *narratio* as describing the narrative, specifically the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians. According to Jewett (1986:73–74) and Witherington (2006:60) the *narratio* serves to confirm the praiseworthiness of the apostle, while Hughes (1986:89) relate the *narratio* to explaining changes in Paul's fortune. Furthermore, there is no agreement on the demarcation of the *narratio*, e.g., Cho (2013:169) and Witherington (2006:60): 1 Thessalonians 1:4–3:10, Jewett (1986:73–74): 1 Thessalonians 1:6–3:13, Hughes (1986:89) and Wanamaker (1990:90–91): 1 Thessalonians 2:1–3:10, Verhoef (1998:25), Watson (1999:67) and Yeo (2002:530): 2:1–3:13 and Cornelius (1998:84): 2:17–3:13. More importantly, if this section is identified as the *narratio*, then its rhetorical function is, by definition, limited to preparation for the argument that follows later in the body of the letter (Mack 1990:41–

42). However, another approach will be utilised in this article to show that it is best not to classify this section as *narratio* but rather to approach it as an integrated part of Paul's overall argumentation in the letter.

This article thus proposes another methodology, namely to describe the persuasive strategy of the author through a close reading of the text itself. This approach, developed by Tolmie (2005), is described as a "text-centred rhetorical approach". Instead of merely applying a particular ancient rhetorical theory, as previous scholars have employed in various attempts, such an approach follows a "minimum theoretical approach" (Gombis 2007:348). In practice, one identifies the overall rhetorical strategy and the dominant and supportive arguments during the first section and focuses on using several rhetorical techniques during the second section. This article will demonstrate this approach in 2:17–20. This section forms part of a more extensive rhetorical section (2:17–3:13), but due to limited space, only vv. 17–20 will be discussed here. However, some general remarks about the pericope as a whole will be made in the next section.

1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:13: Paul's use of an apostolic *parousia* to assure the Thessalonians of his love and encourage them to persevere

The present state of scholarship highlights that the existing research based on schemes of classical rhetorical theory have identified this pericope as *narratio*, which includes a description of relevant events, e.g., Kennedy (1984:143) and Yeo (2002:530). Some of those who consider this pericope as *narratio* also identify a *partitio* or *transitus*¹ at the end of the pericope (vv. 11–13) to summarise the content of the *narratio*. The latter is then used to summarise the content of the narrative. The study will outline that Paul and his co-writers are not merely describing events completed in the past. Instead, he uses this section to express his desire to visit them soon – a future event. This longing of the missionaries serves as motivation to communicate with the young congregation, driven by their expectation of the coming *parousia* of Jesus, also a future event.

The pericope can be demarcated as 2:17–3:13. The unity of this pericope is evident from the similarity in Paul's rhetorical strategy and the repetition of the critical theme of his desire to visit the congregation. The pericope is further subdivided into four sections of argumentation: (a) 2:17–2:20: Paul's longing to see the Thessalonians again; (b) 3:1–5: Timothy sent as Paul's substitute; (c) 3:6–10: Timothy's report on the outcome of his visit; (d) 3:11–13, Paul's wish prayer for the congregation.² The discussion in this article will thus be limited to the first section in Paul's argumentation, namely 2:17–2:20.

Paul's overall rhetorical strategy in all four sections of argumentation may be summarised as follows: the utilisation of apostolic *parousia* to emphasise his/their great need to meet with the Thessalonians again in person, to convey his/their loving concern for them and exhort them to continue with perseverance (Jervis 1991:116; Weima 2016:118).

The description "apostolic *parousia*" not only describes a critical theme or *topos*, namely Paul's intense desire to meet with the Thessalonians in person yet again, but also

¹ See Donfried (2000:41). In the footnotes, he provides definitions for *partitio* and *transitus*.

² Paul utilises the micro genre of a wish prayer similar to the letter-opening and letter-closing. For a detailed discussion on Paul's utilisation of epistolary elements, see Weima (2016) titled: *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer*.

functions precisely as a sub-genre.³ An apostolic *parousia* allows his congregations to experience something of his presence⁴ rather than trying to defend his absence.⁵ By comparing his first correspondence to the following letters, one notes that Paul usually does this by emphasising his desire for a future visit to the congregation.⁶ However, if such a visit is not yet possible, there are other means by which he can be “present” at the congregations (hence the term “*parousia*”), namely: (a) a co-worker is sent on his behalf as his substitute and/or (b) a letter is used as substitute to convey something of his presence to them when read aloud (Bridges 1999:223; Jervis 1991:111; Weima 2016:114).

Bearing the last mentioned in mind, three functional units to account for the utilisation of an apostolic *parousia* may be identified,⁷ namely: (a) “the writing of a letter unit” – visible in the way in which Paul writes and calls upon the congregation to follow his teaching to obey; (b) “the sending of a co-worker unit” – mentioning that a co-worker has been sent and a brief description of the assignment with which the co-worker has been sent, including a brief motivation why he is worthy of being sent; and (c) “the apostolic visit unit” – indicating the intention of a desired visit, submission to God's will, motivation of his current absence, as well as the reasons for the desired visit (Jervis 1991:112–114 & Weima 2016:114). A striking feature in this pericope as a whole is that Paul uses all three aspects. When attention is paid to the construction of the pericope, therefore, all four sections can be distinguished in Paul's apostolic *parousia* in this letter, namely:

- a) Paul's longing to see the congregation (2:17–2:20)
- b) Timothy sent as his replacement (3:1–5)
- c) Timothy's report on the outcome of his visit (3:6–10)
- d) Paul's wishful prayer for the congregation (3:11–13)

Paul's utilisation of an apostolic parousia in 2:17–20

Paul's overall strategy in this section consists of utilising the apostolic *parousia*, specifically “the apostolic visit unit”. This is evident from the emphasis on his great need

³ *Contra* Mullins (1973:350–358) and Aune (1987:190). They relativise the identification of Paul's great need to visit the congregation himself to merely a theme or *topos* instead of identifying it as an epistolary feature with distinctive character and form.

⁴ See Funk (1967:249–268). The identification of the epistolary feature “apostolic *parousia*” is attributed to Funk, who was the first to coin the terminology.

⁵ *Contra* Beale (2003:90) and Weima (2014:191). Both Beale and Weima explain that as a result of Paul's sudden departure, the congregants feel vulnerable to possible criticism from others, e.g., that the apostle did not care about the new believers or did not even desire to meet again. Weima highlights that Paul, knowing about the criticism of others, responded with the apostolic *parousia* to reassure the Thessalonians of his/their love and encouragement. However, from the discussion of Paul's utilisation that follows, it will become evident that although he/they would like to assure and encourage the believers during their absence, the apostolic *parousia* clearly indicates, as an epistolary element, their intent not to defend their absence.

⁶ *Contra* Mitchell (1992:641–662). Mitchell, in response to Funk (1967:249–268), argues that in 1 Thessalonians Paul does not send a co-worker as a substitute to mediate his desirable presence with the believers, but to fulfil another complex intermediary role, which Paul himself is not capable of, though if he could be present, he would.

⁷ *Contra* Weima (2016:118). Weima limits the number of relevant aspects to only two, namely: Paul's longing to see the congregation (2:17–20) and Timothy sent as Paul's replacement (3:1–5). However, from the discussion of Paul's use of the apostolic *parousia*, his usage of all three possibilities will become evident.

to visit them (v. 17b): περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ (in person, not in heart—we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face). This is confirmed by his reference to his present absence, which is also explained (v. 18): διότι ἠθελήσαμεν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἄπαξ καὶ δῖς, καὶ ἐνέκοψεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς (For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and again—but Satan blocked our way). The reason for his need to visit them is his concern for them and his need to encourage them to persevere (vv. 19–20): τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπὶς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχίσεως ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ, ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρὰ (For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? Yes, you are our glory and joy!).

Several arguments are used in the pericope to convey Paul’s strategy. Some are dominant and others are supportive. The use of these arguments will be explained in more detail in the subsequent discussion. The arguments include:

1. Emotion – Type 1⁸
2. Praise
3. Vilification

In this section, emotion (Type 1) is the dominant argument. More specifically, it relates to Paul’s desire to see the congregation (vv. 17–18a). In the introduction, the situation is explained. Although they cannot physically be with the congregation, he and his co-missionaries have by no means forgotten about them (v. 17a): ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀδελφοί ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ’ ὑμῶν πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας, προσώπω οὐ καρδίᾳ (and we, brothers, when we were separated from you for a short time, in person, but not in heart) (Baumert & Seewann, 2013:35–36). The particle δέ (but) indicates the transition to a new argument. The insertion of the well-worn metaphor ἀδελφοί (brothers) emphasises the favourable memories cherished about their initial encounter and the solidarity between the missionaries and the Thessalonian believers (Jew 2021:201).

It is critical to note the metaphorical use of ἀπορφανίζω (to separate from), which is usually used in the context of the relationship between parents and their children, in which the parent or the child is separated from the other and left behind as an orphan (Johnson 2016:82–83). Earlier in the second chapter of this letter, Paul compares himself to a father (2:11) and to a nursing mother (2:7) (Jew 2021:106–107). In the metaphor of “separation”, he can effectively describe his and his co-workers’ emotions as parents concerned about the new believers as their children. Expressed in the passive participle employed here, it becomes even more apparent that this is an involuntary, painful, forced loss of a family member. Therefore, this experience of being left behind as an orphan is a metaphorical image to which believers can relate (Gerber 2005:315). Not only do they recall the vivid memories of Paul and his co-missionaries but they also remember their forced departure, which resulted in separation (Jew 2021:106–107). The Thessalonians also recall their experience of social and religious isolation from their previous circles as

⁸ See Prinsloo (2023:4) footnote 5. “When reading Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians as a whole it becomes clear that three types of emotional arguments are used, namely: (a) Emotion Type 1 – Paul’s desire to meet with the congregation again, (b) Emotion Type 2 – The congregation’s desire to see Paul and his co-missionaries again, (c) Emotion Type 3 – Paul’s concern about their spiritual endurance”.

a result of their conversion, which enables the converts to relate to the separation experience (Johnson 2016:82–83). Thus, the metaphorical use of ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ’ ὑμῶν (separated from you) serves to bring the emotional argument, which Paul uses to confirm the extent of their concern, to completion.

Consider the effectiveness of the metaphor. Although the separation is irrevocable, there are still limitations: (a) πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας (for a short time). This period refers to the time that has passed since the forced departure until they would be able to return in person to the congregation and not only up to and including the writing of the letter (Hiebert 1992:133–134).⁹ It thus relativises the finality of the separation as implied by ἀπορφανίζω (orphaned): (b) προσώπῳ οὐ καρδίᾳ (in person not in heart). This confirms that the separation between the missionaries in terms of locality does not relativise either their remembrance or emotional concern. In Hebrew reference, the heart is the centre of personality, thought, feeling and will. By reminding the congregation about their active presence in the missionaries' hearts, Paul can underscore their compassion for their new brothers in Thessalonica (Marshall 1983:85). Therefore, the orphan metaphor effectively articulates the pain of physical separation but less effectively describes its duration and finality.

The desire of Paul and his co-missionaries to see the congregation is formulated as follows (v. 17b): περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ (even more for our intense longing we made every effort to see you in person). With this statement, Paul again confirms that no effort was spared in their previous attempts. His usage of repetitive and accumulative descriptions also underscores the urgency of meeting again. From Paul's own point of view, it was a priority for him to send some co-missionaries, as well as to visit the congregation himself once again (Malherbe 2000:183). This statement is evident from the following (v. 18a): διότι ἠθελασημαν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ δῖς (because we wanted to come to you, I, Paul, numerous times). Their collective intense desire to revisit the congregation is confirmed by their repeated (failed) attempts to return. Keeping in mind that Paul was primarily responsible for the writing of the letter, he explicitly refers to himself, ἐγὼ, Παῦλος (me, Paul) which confirms his own determination (Haufe 1999:53).

In this section, supporting arguments are also used. The first is vilification. With this argument, Satan is held responsible for the fact that Paul and his associates' attempts to visit them did not succeed (v. 18b): καὶ ἐνέκοψεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς (and Satan prevented us). Paul explains that an overwhelming external spiritual force opposed their plans (Marshall 1983:87). He does not account for any details to explain this statement, probably because Timothy has already provided the believers with the necessary information (Boring 2015:110). However, he unequivocally states that this power, responsible for hindering their return, can be identified as “Satan” (Roose 2016:48). Although this is a prominent concept in Jewish apocalyptic literature, he probably assumes that the name “Satan” would already be known to the mainly non-Jewish

⁹ *Contra* Roose (2016:46). Roose accepts that this relates to the time that passes up to and including the writing of the letter. Since Paul uses an apostolic *parousia* here in this pericope, the possibility of a visit, either by Paul and his associates or by one of them alone, is prioritised over writing a letter. Up until the writing of the letter, the mission of Timothy was the only contact with the congregation (3:5), and Paul still desires to visit the congregation after it ends (3:10). See Marshall (1983:85) and Hiebert (1992:133–134).

congregation from his/their initial preaching and the new symbolic reality in which they took part since their conversion to the true and living God (1:9–10). Through vilification, Satan is blamed for the opposition experienced by the missionaries. This objection is described with the verb ἐγκόπτω (hindered). In a military context, it has the literal meaning of obstacles or pitfalls that are utilised to hinder the movement of an enemy (Boring 2015:109). This description does not refer to such obstruction in a literal sense but describes the experience of opposition (Holtz 1986:117). This opposition refers specifically to the objection experienced during the repeated attempts to visit the congregation, including individual attempts Paul could have underway (v. 18a, ἐγώ) and attempts when they wanted to return together (v. 18b, ὑμεῖς).

To Paul, there is no neutral or middle ground; his proclamation of the gospel happens according to God's will and is driven by the expectation of making God's rule visible through saved people;¹⁰ he cannot but identify Satan's involvement in the opposition (Knoch 1987:43). Through this vilification, Paul achieves the following: (a) the fact that, precisely, the visit to this congregation is opposed emphasises the situation of the congregation within the greater context of salvation, and (b) it confirms the claim made by the dominant emotional argument, namely that neither he nor any of his associates have forgotten about the congregation, but have simply been prevented from meeting with the congregants.

The second supporting argument is praise. With this, the congregation is typified as worthy of praise (v. 19): ἡμῶν ἡ χαρὰ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου (our joy before the Lord), v. 20: ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἡμῶν ἡ χαρὰ (you are our joy). From Paul's recollections of the congregation, in the light of Timothy's report (3:6), he has the conviction to characterise the Thessalonian congregation as his/their joy. To Paul's mind, this joy is immanent at the *parousia* (Marxsen 1979:53). This selection of words can be attributed to the congregation's steadfast faith in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1).¹¹ Through the expressions of praise, relationships are reaffirmed: it confirms the favourable relationship in which the congregation stands with God; it also confirms the satisfaction of the missionaries with the congregation.

The abovementioned “praise” cannot be isolated from the concepts ἐλπίς, (hope), στέφανος (crown), καυχήσεως (boasting) and δόξα (glory) (vv. 19–20) or the eschatological expectation of the *parousia*, ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ (before our Lord Jesus at his coming) (v. 19). This supporting strategy used can be described as “exhortation”, specifically based on the coming *parousia* of Jesus Christ (v. 19): τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἡ χαρὰ ἡ στέφανος καυχήσεως - ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς – ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ (for who else is our hope or joy or crown of glory – if it is not you – before our Lord Jesus at his coming?); (v. 20): ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρὰ (For you are our joy and glory). The concept *παρουσία* may be interpreted as “arrival” and “presence”. In the Hellenistic world at the time, the term was usually used in a political context to describe the arrival of a ruler or a person of high rank during an official visit (Schreiber 2014:177–178). By applying the notion, Paul ascribes a new meaning to this secular term. He uses it not only to describe

¹⁰ See Prinsloo (2023:1–23) for a discussion on Paul's rhetorical strategy to reaffirm the integrity of their practice as missionaries among them.

¹¹ See Prinsloo (2022:1–19) for a discussion on Paul's rhetorical strategy in the letter-opening, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, in which the function of noting their faith in God the Father and the Lord Jesus is rhetorically explored.

the expected coming (and presence) of Jesus but also to emphasise his glory by introducing him as “our Lord”. It is critical to pay attention to the concept of *παρουσία* for a better understanding of the implication of this supporting strategy, namely exhortation.

Concerning the *parousia*, the believers are depicted as already present before the face of Jesus, ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ (in a praiseworthy way). Consider the imagery that Paul includes in his depiction: (a) ἐλπίς (hope) (v. 19): To Paul, driven by an immediate *parousia* expectation, the distinction between the present and the future eschatology is blurred in his presupposition. Therefore, he connects the believers to their eschatological hope before the Lord as an (already) existing reality (Roose 2016:50); (b) ἡ χαρά (joy) (vv. 19–20): In light of the congregation's faith, Paul focuses on the fruit that already exists in their lives. Based on his immediate *parousia* expectation, he now portrays this eschatological joy, which presupposes their salvation and participation in Jesus' reign to be an (already) existing reality (Poplutz 2004:235–236); (c) ἡ στέφανος καυχήσεως (crown of boasting) and ἡ δόξα (glory); a crown used to refer to a circular object bestowed upon the human head announcing the victory of an athlete or a badge of office of an emperor (Collins 2008:19–20). To Paul, the crown of glory portrays the honour that will be bestowed. This wreath refers to a laurel wreath, which they will receive, just like athletes in a Greek race, to confirm that they have completed the race (Malherbe 2000:185). Therefore, the glory in focus here is not the honour that the missionaries appropriate for themselves or their effort but the glory that God receives, which confirms that his work has been completed through them (Best 1972:127–128). Just as in the case of hope and joy, he presupposes the readiness of this future eschatological reality. So, Paul can already describe them as his/their (ὑμῶν) crown of fame and honour (Peters 2015:69–70). Critical to understand this, Paul does not identify the believers as “their crown” to simply praise themselves, but to achieve the anticipated outcomes of his overall rhetorical strategy. In doing so, he praises the converts and effectively exhorts them to endure in their faith while envisioning the *parousia*, for their endurance will serve as the required eschatological confirmation that their efforts were not in vain.

With vv. 19–20, the urgency of their longing to meet again with the believers is underscored. Therefore, his concern for them is inextricably linked to their perseverance until the *parousia* (Johnson 2016:83). When the congregation is depicted as their hope, joy, crown of boasting and honour; this does *not* imply that believers' initial conversion and endurance serve as an achievement that distinguishes the missionaries from the converts. Instead, with the coming of Jesus the Lord, the missionaries and the fellow believers will be present together (Haufe 1999:54).¹² If the congregation perseveres through their faith, their presence will serve as confirmation or as a testimony. In doing so, they will confirm that Paul and his co-missionaries faithfully completed their God-

¹² *Contra* Holtz (1986:119). Holtz argues as follows: “Dann wird die Beziehung des Apostels zum Herrn bestimmt sein durch seine Gemeinden. Nur sie können für ihn Hoffnung, Freude und Ruhm im Angesicht Jesu gründen.” See Haufe (1999:54) for confirmation of the opposite understanding to that argued in the text above. Haufe states: “Dieses aus dem Wortlaut wie aus dem brieflichen Kontext sich ergebende Verständnis verträgt sich freilich nicht mit der verbreiteten Auslegung der drei Begriffe im Sinn eschatologischer Heilsgüter, die die Missionare als Belohnung für den vorbildlichen Charakter der Gemeinde erwarten dürfen”.

given calling (Reinmuth 1998:132). In this way, with their eyes fixated on the coming *parousia*, the congregation can effectively be exhorted to persevere.

Several rhetorical techniques support this section of Paul's rhetorical strategy. The first technique is the usage of a metaphor ἀδελφοί (brothers) (v. 17). By starting with this metaphor as a form of address, the solidarity between Paul and the congregation is confirmed; an implied hierarchy is likewise assumed (Aasgaard 2004:302–303). Further note ἀπορφανίζω (orphaned) (v. 17). The inclusion of metaphorical language enables Paul to heighten the impact of his description of the implications of their forced separation (Weima 2014:196). Owing to the inclusion of family metaphors, the pain that the missionaries experienced for the sake of the converts can be envisioned metaphorically as similar, if not identical, to the typical pain “parents” experience as a result of forced separation from their “children” (Schreiber 2014:174–175).

The second technique involves the use of contrast προσώπω (in person) and καρδία (in heart) (v. 17). Through this contrast, Paul can, in a literal sense, distinguish his heart from his face. He distinguishes his physical absence from his present concern to emphasise that they have by no means forgotten about the congregation (Weima 2014:197).

The third technique is a stacking effect: (a) περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδασμαν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ (we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face) (v. 17). By piling up the descriptions, the intensity of their desire to see the congregation is emphasized and (b) ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως (our hope, joy, crown of boasting) (v. 19). By stacking these nouns, the congregation is characterised as praiseworthy.¹³

The fourth technique involves inclusive language τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ (our Lord Jesus), notable in the pronoun “we” next to the title and name “Lord Jesus” (v. 19). The use of inclusive language confirms the commonality between Paul and the congregation.¹⁴

The fifth technique is the use of a rhetorical question τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ (For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?) (v. 19). The answer to this rhetorical question is also included in v. 20. The addition to the rhetorical question heightens the strong emotion behind Paul's first question. He considered the believers' endurance equal to the necessary eschatological confirmation to illustrate that they have completed their mission faithfully (Weima 2014:201).

To summarise, Paul's overall rhetorical strategy may be viewed as the utilisation of an apostolic *parousia* to emphasise his/their great need to meet with the Thessalonians again in person, to convey his/their loving concern for them and to exhort them to continue with perseverance. He includes several arguments to achieve this rhetorical objective: Paul's dominant argument is Emotion – Type 1, which concerns his longing to see the congregation again; a few supportive arguments can be outlined as vilification

¹³ Prinsloo (2023:13) identifies another example of the rhetorical technique of *stacking effect* earlier in Paul's correspondence, in 2:10.

¹⁴ Prinsloo (2022:14) identifies another example of the rhetorical technique of *inclusive language* earlier in Paul's correspondence in 1:3 and 1:5.

and praise. He has invented a supportive strategy, namely exhortation. Paul's rhetorical techniques include metaphor, contrast, stacking effect, inclusive language and rhetorical questions.

Conclusion

An analysis of existing scholarship confirms that the publications on rhetorical analyses are typically based on schemes involving ancient rhetorical theories and categories. However, it is also true that none of these studies fully agree on the description of the rhetoric in Paul's letter. This article has illustrated a different methodology in a close reading of the text: a text-centred rhetorical analysis. Such an approach focuses on presenting a rhetorical text analysis instead of merely applying ancient theoretical principles. This article has explored Paul's argumentation in 2:17–3:13. The results can be summarised as follows: the dominant rhetorical strategy is the utilisation of an apostolic *parousia* to emphasise their great need to meet again in person; they are concerned about the congregation's perseverance. His dominant argument is Emotion – Type 1, followed by the supportive arguments of vilification and praise. He also utilises a supportive strategy, namely exhortation. His rhetorical techniques include metaphor, contrast, stacking effect, inclusive language and rhetorical questions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aasgaard, R. 2004. *My beloved brothers and sisters!*. London: T&T Clark International.
- Aune, D.E. 1987. *The New Testament in its literary environment*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.
- Baumert, N. and Seewann, M.I. 2014. *In der Gegenwart des Herrn*. Würzburg: Echter Verlag.
- Beale, G.K. 2003. *1–2 Thessalonians*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic.
- Best, E. 1972. *A commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*. London: A&C Black.
- Boring, M.E. 2015. *I & II Thessalonians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Bridges, L.M. 1999. Terms of endearment: Paul's words of comfort in First Thessalonians, *Review and Expositor* 96(2):211–232.
- Cho, J.K. 2013. *The rhetorical approach to 1 Thessalonians in light of funeral oration*. Willmore: Asbury Theological Seminary.
- Collins, R.F. 2008. *The power of images in Paul*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.
- Cornelius, E.M. 1998. *The effectiveness of 1 Thessalonians: A rhetorical-critical study*. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.
- Funk, R.F. 1967. The Apostolic Parousia: Form and significance. In Farmer W.R., Moule, C.F.D. and Niebuhr, R.R. (eds), *Christian history and interpretation: Studies presented to John Knox*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 249–268.
- Gerber, C. 2005. *Paulus und seine 'Kinder': Studien zur Beziehungsmetaphorik der paulinischen Briefe*. Berlyn: Walter de Gruyter.

- Gombis, T.G. 2007. Review of D.F. Tolmie, *Persuading the Galatians* (WUNT 2.190; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 17(2):347–348.
- Haufe, G. 1999. *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.
- Hiebert, D.E. 1992. *1 & 2 Thessalonians*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Holtz, T. 1986. *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*. Zürich: Benziger Verlag.
- Jervis, L.A. 1991. *The purpose of Romans: A comparative letter structure investigation*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Jew, I.Y.S. 2021. *Paul's emotional regime: The social function of emotion in Philippians and 1 Thessalonians*. London: T&T Clark.
- Jewett, R. 1986. *The Thessalonian correspondence: Pauline rhetoric and millenarian piety*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Johnson, A. 2016. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.
- Kennedy, G.A. 1984. *New Testament interpretation through rhetorical criticism*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press.
- Knoch, O. 1987. *1. und 2. Thessalonicherbrief*. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk.
- Mack, B.L. 1990. *Rhetoric and the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Malherbe, A.J. 2000. *The Letters to the Thessalonians*. London: Yale University Press.
- Marshall, I.H. 1983. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Marxsen, W. 1979. *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag.
- Mitchell, M.M. 1992. New Testament envoys in the context of Greco-Roman diplomatic and epistolary conventions: The example of Timothy and Titus, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111(4):641–662
- Peters, J. 2015. Crowns in 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and 1 Corinthians, *Biblica* 96(1):67–84
- Poplutz, U. 2004. *Athlet des Evangeliums: Eine motivgeschichtliche Studie zur Wettkampf-metaphorik bei Paulus*. Freiburg: Herder.
- Prinsloo, H.J. 2022. A text-centred rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10, *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 8(1):1–19.
- Prinsloo, H.J. 2023. A text-centred rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12, *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 9(1):1–23.
- Reinmuth, E. 1998. Die Brief an die Thessalonicher. In Lampe, P., Reinmuth, P. and Walter, N. (eds), *Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 115–156.
- Roose, H. 2016. *Der erste und zweite Thessalonicherbrief*. Göttingen: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Schreiber, S.G. 2014. *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.
- Tolmie, D.F. 2005. *Persuading the Galatians*. WUNT 2.190. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Wanamaker, C.A. 1990. *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Watson, D.F. 1999. Paul's appropriation of apocalyptic discourse: The rhetorical strategy of 1 Thessalonians. In Carey, G. and Bloomquist, L.G. (eds), *Vision and persuasion: Rhetorical dimensions of apocalyptic discourse*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 61–80.

- Weima, J.A.D. 2014. *1-2 Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Weima, J.A.D. 2016. *Paul the ancient letter writer*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Witherington, B. 2006. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Yeo, K.K. 2002. The rhetoric of election and calling language in 1 Thessalonians. In Porter, S.E. and Stamps, D.L. (eds), *Rhetorical criticism and the Bible*. London: Sheffield Academic Press), 526–547.