

A text-centred rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

H.J. Prinsloo¹

University of the Free State, South Africa
prinsloohj@ufs.ac.za

Abstract

This article analyses 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10 from a rhetorical perspective. Instead of the typical approach which is used to analyse the letter in terms of ancient rhetorical theory, this article explains Paul's rhetorical strategy found in the text itself; it is therefore called a text-centred rhetorical analysis which follows a minimum theoretical approach. Accordingly, the overall rhetorical strategy is identified in both pericopes. A discussion of the dominant and supportive arguments and rhetorical techniques follows the identification. This article illustrates how Paul adapts the ancient letter style to achieve his rhetorical objectives. It remains critically important to note that his pastoral concern confirms the favourable relationship that the congregation continued to have with God the Father, with Jesus the Lord and with the missionaries.

Keywords

Text-centred rhetorical analysis; 1 Thessalonians; Pauline literature; letter-opening; thanksgiving

1. Introduction

Several scholars have published rhetorical analyses of 1 Thessalonians (Cho 2013; Olbricht & Helton 2016). These scholars have analysed the letter based upon two assumptions, namely that Paul utilized ancient rhetorical categories and theories when he wrote this letter and that the usage of the aforementioned categories and theories is the preferred way of conducting a rhetorical analysis. However, limitations in the current state of scholarship on the rhetoric of the letter have become evident when one

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takes note of the large variety of rhetorical analyses and of competent New Testament scholars' contradictory applications of rhetorical categories, which continue to shed doubt on the use of these categories.

This article thus proposes another approach, namely, to describe the rhetoric of the text through a close reading of the text itself. This approach is described as a “text-centred rhetorical approach” that was developed by Tolmie (2005). Instead of merely applying a particular theory and ancient rhetorical categories, such an approach follows a “minimum theoretical approach” (Gombis 2007:348). In practice, one identifies the overall rhetorical strategy as well as the dominant and supportive arguments during the first phase and one focuses on the use of several rhetorical techniques during the second phase. This article aims to demonstrate how one can reconstruct Paul's rhetorical strategy in this part of the letter through a close reading of the first two pericopes: 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 1 Thessalonians 1:2–10.

2. Rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

2.1 1 Thessalonians 1:1 The utilization of the letter-opening to confirm a good relationship

The first verse of the letter may be demarcated as a separate pericope because it contains the letter-opening; it is used for the identification of the senders and the recipients and for the formulation of a greeting (Baumert & Seewann 2014:11). Paul's overall strategy was to adapt these letter-opening conventions to portray the congregants and the senders in a positive relationship, which supports the overall goal and expected outcome of his letter. Furthermore, Paul adapted the letter-opening to foreshadow the critical themes of the letter-body, i.e. the central issues of faith and the identity of God and Jesus Christ.

A typical Pauline letter-opening consists of the following elements: (a) a sender-formula which consists of the name, title, description and the identification of co-senders; (b) a recipient-formula which consists of the name of the recipients followed by a description; and (c) a greeting-formula which consists of the greeting, the recipients of the greeting and which concludes with the identification of the divine origin of the greeting

(Klauck 2006:357–358; Schnider & Stenger 1987:4–5, 15–16, 25–26; Weima 2016:12–13, 25–26, 32–33, 41). From a rhetorical perspective, it should be noted that Paul utilizes a single supportive argument in this pericope, namely an argument of divine control and initiative. This argument is clear from his adaptation of the recipient formula in the letter-opening as indicated below.

In line with Paul's rhetorical strategy, the following adaptations in his utilization of the letteropening should be noted: Paul eliminates both the title and the description of the senderformula (e.g. "a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle", Romans 1:1) while he keeps only his name and the names of the co-senders Silvanus and Timothy. In doing so, he confirms the origin and the authenticity of the letter. Scholars such as Weima (2016:29–31) accept Paul as the primary author in accommodating the input of his co-missionaries, while keeping in mind that Paul was likely to use a secretary to draft the final letter. The inclusion of the co-senders' names in addition to Paul's name thus serves to confirm that they are united in this endeavour. In view of Paul's acknowledgment of Timothy's favourable report about the Thessalonian congregation, there is no need for Paul to add any titles either to his name or to the names of his co-missionaries. However, it is also important to take note that the congregants did not receive an earlier letter from the apostle; therefore, they would not have noted the omission of a title.² Nevertheless, his adaptation of the senderformula, evaluated from a rhetorical perspective, is significant because it confirms their unity as senders and the authenticity of the entire letter.

Concerning the *recipient-formula*, Paul continues his adaptation so as to convey an argument of divine control and initiative. This becomes apparent in the description of the congregation as part of God's church and in the prepositional phrase "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" in order to confirm the relationship of the congregation to God the Father and to Jesus Christ. By using a word from the Septuagint, ἐκκλησία, Paul confirms the existence of the young congregation, which consists of

2 *Contra* Weima (2014:65). Weima argues that Paul had no need to defend his apostleship within the congregation but notes differences between this letter and some of his later letters as "striking". What Weima ignores is that the recipients of this letter did not yet know the pattern that Paul was about to establish in his later correspondences with other congregations.

Jewish and non-Jewish members, in continuity with Israel (Holtz, 1986:38). Rhetorically, it makes sense to confirm their new identity once again, but in addressing them as such, the apostle will also gain their attention to listen more eagerly to what follows in the letter-body. By including the prepositional phrase, he confirms their new identity under the control of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rhetorically, it also serves to foreshadow a key theme in the letter-body, namely the congregation's new identity.

In respect of the *greeting*, Paul utilizes both the greeting and the recipient-element, but he chooses not to include any description of divine origin. In formulating the greeting element, he neither repeats the existing Hellenistic greeting nor merely copies a Semitic greeting; rather, he adapts it to accommodate both Jewish and non-Jewish congregants. Considering the original Hellenistic formula, A → B + χαίρειν with χαίρω, which means to be happy, one notes that Paul replaces χαίρειν with a similar, yet different word, namely χάρις, which means “grace”. He also includes a second notion in his greeting element, namely εἰρήνη, which translates as “peace”. However, influenced by Jewish writing conventions, he does not limit the meaning to the Greek idea of peace as the absence of conflict; he implies the Jewish concept of מְלִכּוּת (Roose, 2016:8) that confirms the divine control and initiative of whose existence. The pronoun ὑμῖν (“unto you”), which is used in the recipient-formula, indicates to whom Paul directs his greeting and, in the absence of a verb, it conveys a wish. The congregants are not likely to consider the omission of the divine origin-element in the formulation of his wish as remarkable here; they do not yet know the pattern that Paul is about to establish in his later correspondences. Rhetorically spoken, his adaptations thus serve to accommodate both Jews and non-Jews in formulating his wish.³

In summary: in this pericope, one can describe Paul's rhetorical strategy as the utilization and adaptation of the typical letter-opening in order

3 *Contra* Bruce (1982:8). Bruce denies that Paul changed χαίρειν to χάρις and claims that Paul only repeated a Jewish greeting, “grace and peace”, formulated in Greek. Bruce also considers Paul's omission of the Divine origin-element as remarkable, without considering that it would have had no effect on the recipients who do not yet know any pattern that was to be established by his later correspondences. See Malherbe (2000:100).

to confirm the new identity of the congregants in God and in Christ. In addition, this strategy is used to confirm the favourable relationship that exists between the apostle, his co-missionaries, and the congregation, and to foreshadow some of the essential themes taken up later in the letter-body. He uses a supportive argument of divine control and initiative to tie the congregation's existence to the Deity's identity.

2.2 1 Thessalonians 1:2–10 The utilization of the letter thanksgiving element to exhort the congregation to live worthily

Verses 2–10 contain the thanksgiving element in the letter; these verses should therefore be demarcated as one pericope. Verse 2 is used to express Paul's gratitude and his method of thanksgiving, verses 3–5 clarify the cause of his thanksgiving and verses 6–10 further elaborate on his thanksgiving (Laub 1985:16). Rhetorically, Paul did not only utilize the letterthanksgiving element; he adapted it in order to reaffirm, in a pastoral sense, the favourable relationship between the apostle, his co-missionaries, and the congregation, including a positive relationship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ. Moreover, Paul's adaptation of the letter-thanksgiving exhorted the recipients to live worthily. Finally, the letterthanksgiving element foreshadowed some themes of critical importance in the letterbody (O'Brien 1977:262–263). Well known to the Hellenistic epistolary practice of his time, Paul utilized a typical Hellenistic thanksgiving element.⁴ Though the insertion of a thanksgiving element was not a prerequisite in letters that contained this element, it was usually recognized by some conjugation of the verb εὐχαριστέω with the thanksgiving directed to a Hellenistic deity for physical health and well-being. In contrast with typical Hellenistic practice, Paul's thanksgiving is not only much more detailed and focused on spiritual wellbeing, but he also directs his thanks in a Christian sense to God (Schubert, 1939:54–55). A typical Pauline thanksgiving element consists of a statement, a method, a reason for and a grounding of thanksgiving.⁵ Paul also uses various

4 *Contra* Best (1972:65). Best claims that the thanksgiving element is not standard Hellenistic practice and that it is only a convention created by Paul in his correspondences. See Weima (2014:73) to confirm the opposite.

5 Adapted from the following sources: Jervis (1991:86–109); McFarlane (1966:11); O'Brien (1977:11); Reed (1996:94); Wiles (1974:159–160); Weima (2016:53–54, 61).

arguments to support his overall rhetorical strategy in this pericope. Some of these arguments are dominant, while others are subordinate. These supportive arguments can be summarised as

1. divine control and initiative;
2. ethos;
3. praise;
4. experience; and
5. exhortation.

1 Thessalonians 1:2a – the thanksgiving statement

The dominant argument used by Paul is an argument of praise in verse 2a: “We always give thanks to God for all of you”. In this way, Paul and his co-missionaries praise the congregation. He does not motivate his thanksgiving statement by including a focus on physical health and well-being as the Hellenist writers of that time used to do (Malherbe 2000:104). Remembering their first encounter, Paul rather expresses the gratitude that he shared with his co-missionaries for the young congregation, including every congregant: “for all of you” (Best 1972:66). In doing so, Paul characterizes them as praiseworthy in order to support the pastoral aim of his overall rhetorical strategy (Weima 2014:82). By presenting the congregation as a motivation for thanksgiving, he portrays them in a positive relationship with himself and with his associates (Roose 2016:11–12).

1 Thessalonians 1:2b – the thanksgiving method

Paul’s supportive argument is an argument of *ethos*⁶ which he uses to confirm his and his coworkers’ integrity and trustworthiness. This argument appears in verse 2b: “constantly mention you in our prayers”.⁷ Being a Jew, Paul is acquainted with the rhythm and vocabulary of repetitive Jewish

6 See Anderson, Jr. (2000:61–62) for a discussion on the meaning of *ethos*.

7 At first glance the adverb ἀδιαλείπτως may be grouped with the previous μνειάν ποιούμενοι (v. 2), or with the subsequent μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν (v. 3); both could be grammatically justified. Considering the formula of the epistolary practice of that time, it is preferable to accept the first-mentioned. See Omanson (2006:423–424).

prayer (Weima 2014:83), but by writing a letter for a mainly non-Jewish congregation, he again chooses to use the Hellenistic epistolary formula with adaptation. Whereas Hellenistic writers prayed to Hellenistic deities, Paul and his co-missionaries mention the young congregation in their prayers to God (Malherbe 2000:103–104). Hearing about this repetitive practice of the missionaries, the congregation will probably recall the vivid image of how they prayed together during their initial encounter. Despite the physical distance and the lack of verbal communication, the congregation relies on the missionaries to continuously pray for them (Wanamaker, 1990:74). Thus, the argument of *ethos* compliments the pastoral aim of his overall rhetorical strategy, which confirms the favourable relationship which they continue to have with the missionaries. The argument also foreshadows a key theme in the remainder of the letter, namely the prayer theme in Chapter 3:11–13 and in Chapter 5:23–24 as examples of Paul’s prayer for them, as well as in Chapter 5:17, 25 where he exhorts the congregation to participate in prayer (Weima 2016:56–60).

1 Thessalonians 1:3 – the reason for thanksgiving

Paul’s dominant argument of *praise* is also evident from the reason for thanksgiving stated in verse 3: “remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”. The participle, *μνημονεύοντες*, explains how the missionaries continuously remember the congregation in a praiseworthy manner. Three characteristics, namely “your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope” clarify the commendation. Although the grouping of the words “faith”, “hope” and “love” may be an existing formula, the description is undoubtedly not a mere quotation; more likely, it is a Pauline creation which is used to articulate his praise (Boring, 2015:60). In doing so, he expresses the embodiment of their living faith, their self-sacrificial neighbourly love in sharing the gospel’s message, and their perseverance through the communal *parousia*-expectation amid tribulation (Roose 2016:15–16). Paul’s argument of praise furthers the aims of his overall rhetorical strategy; the commendation fosters the favourable relationship between the missionaries and the young congregation yet again. The laudatory report that Timothy had brought to mind urged the apostle to exhort the congregants by praising them to abound in faith, hope and love

in their work, labour, and steadfastness. The apostle foreshadowed two key themes: ethics (4:1–12) and *parousia* (4:13–5:11) (Weima 2014:86).

1 Thessalonians 1:4–5 – the grounding of the thanksgiving

The notions of *divine control and initiative*, another supportive argument used by Paul, is found in verse 4b. By addressing the congregation as “beloved by God, your election ...”, he portrays the members as being loved by God, grounded in the divine initiative in Christ, which defines them as God’s loved ones. Paul included a reference to their election to further clarify this depiction of being loved by God which presupposes the portrayal of God through imagery of the redemption history of Israel. Contrary to the limited scope of ἐκλογή, which focused on Israel as the Jewish nation, Paul now widens its applicability (Reinmuth, 1998:118). He does so from an eschatological perspective through Christ to include even non-Jews. Thus, irrespective of previous divisions such as Jew and non-Jew, every congregant is considered loved and chosen by God (Johnson 2016:41–42). This argument of divine control and initiative furthers the pastoral aim of his overall rhetorical strategy by reassuring the congregants about God’s providence. In doing so, Paul confirms their favourable relationship with God by portraying the congregation, of which most members are non-Jewish, as chosen in continuity with Israel. Exhortation, another aim of his overall strategy, happens implicitly here; the knowledge of being loved and chosen serves as an exhortation to live worthy of this identification (Weima 2014:91–92).

An argument of *experience* functions as second supportive argument in verses 4a: “you know, brothers” and in 5b: “just as you know”. In verse 4a, Paul presupposes their experience by depicting them metaphorically as brothers, even though he knows that they are not siblings in a social-biological sense. He fosters values of intimacy, loyalty, love, patience, closeness, and even hierarchy that are characterized in such a kinship (Aasgaard 2002:515; 2004:285–286, 303). Calling the fellow believers “brothers”,⁸ presupposes their shared experiences (Burke 2003:227) and

8 See Fatum (1997:183–197). Fatum confirms that the term, “brothers” does not imply that the congregation only had male members but argues for the presence of both males and females.

their shared knowledge, which justifies the inclusion of the verb οἶδατε, “to know”, in verses 4 and 5 respectively. In verse 4a, Paul narrowed the focus to the new identity of the congregants as God’s loved and chosen ones, something that the missionaries and the congregation knew. However, in verse 5b, the focus shifted to their collective memories of the initial encounter – the exemplary conduct of the missionaries. This supportive argument of experience enhances some of the objectives of Paul’s overall rhetorical strategy. In a pastoral sense, calling on their shared experience of being part of God’s beloved elected, comforts them about their relationship with God (Schreiber 2014:99). Including everyone as their siblings, irrespective of previous social structures, strengthens the congregation’s relationship with the missionaries. The objective of exhortation is implicitly. Since the congregants already experience living in Christ, Paul exhorts them to continue orientating their lives to live worthily of their new identity.

A third supportive argument is an argument of *ethos* in verse 5c: “you have known of what sort we became among you because of you”. This argument aims to emphasize the character and trustworthiness of the apostle and his co-missionaries. With the memories of the initial encounter fresh in the congregants’ minds, they can easily recall the missionaries’ exemplary conduct in their midst. This argument also foreshadows a key theme: his integrity and selfless conduct (2:1–12) (See Malherbe 2000:113 and Richard 1995:48).

1 Thessalonians 1:6–10 – the motivation for the thanksgiving

Paul elaborates his thanksgiving by adding a motivation for the preceding verses (1:2–5). The motivation consists of two subdivisions, namely:⁹

- 1:6–8 The congregation’s imitation
- 1:9–10 The congregation’s testimony

9 *Contra* Weima (2014:80). Weima groups 1 Thessalonians 1: 6–10 correctly together but describes this grouping as “additional causes of thanksgiving”, in a threefold distinction, namely vv. 6–7: “the example of the Thessalonians”; v. 8: “the evangelistic activities of the Thessalonians” and vv. 9–10: “The conversion of the Thessalonians”. The rhetorical analysis of 1:6–10 to follow, clarifies why v. 8 is grouped with vv. 6–7.

1 Thessalonians 1:6–8 – The congregations' imitation

An argument of *praise* is firstly used as a dominant argument to elaborate on the imitation of the congregants in verse 6a: “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord”. Paul portrays this reality as a given by using an indicative, namely ἐγενήθητε. He further uses the general understanding of imitation at the time as a moral example; philosophers and teachers used to encourage others to imitate their teaching and behaviour (Martin 1999:41). Imitation implies an asymmetrical and progressive relationship to transform someone to become similar or identical to someone else (Castelli 1991:21). Paul thus wants to create an analogy between the congregation's actions and the Lord Jesus' self-sacrificing actions, as well as his own. The latter implies that the congregation will increase in faithfulness to God and in love for one another (Beale 2003:58–59; Johnson 2016:47).

The argument of praise also becomes apparent in verse 7: “so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia”. The congregation's imitation of Jesus and the missionaries became an example that others could follow. The concept τύπος implies a pattern or model, which drives their ethical conduct collectively (Boring, 2015:66–67). By referring to the areas of Macedonia and Achaia, Paul emphasizes the extent of their example. Therefore, one may assume that imitation characterized the relationship between the missionaries, the congregation, and the other believers (Weima 2014:103).

Verse 8 further clarifies the matter: “For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it”. Paul's clarification includes a description of the congregation's activity and an indirect reference to the missionaries' activity (Beale 2003:60). The congregation's activity consists of two aspects, namely their proclamation of the message and the non-verbal embodiment of their faith. Both actions are described in the perfect tense form, which testifies to their all-encompassing and continuing nature (Schreiber 2014:107). Considering the congregation's imitation and the reach of their example, Paul cannot help but depict the congregation as praiseworthy in accordance with the pastoral aim of his overall strategy; he reaffirms the congregation's favourable relationship with the Lord and with himself (Weima 2014:106).

Another supporting argument is *experience*. Note v. 6b: “you received the word in spite of great suffering” that explains *when* the congregants became imitators. The word, “δεξάμενοι” is a temporal participle, it means “becoming” imitators of Jesus and the missionaries as the immediate outcome of having received the word in much tribulation. Although the oppression implied is not spelled out in clear terms, it probably involved social alienation or physical persecution rather than mere inner anxiety (Still 1999:207–211).¹⁰ With this in mind, Paul’s statement that the church has become their and the Lord’s followers becomes apparent here. According to the gospel tradition, the Lord Jesus Christ suffered and, according to Paul, he, and his traveling companions often experienced persecution, for example, in 2:2 (Haufe 1999:27). Paul therefore uses the argument of experience to enhance one of the objectives of his overall strategy, namely exhortation. Paul would like to encourage the congregants to hold onto the gospel message that they preached by living accordingly. In doing so, the apostle hints at a key theme which later appears in the letter, namely the perseverance of the congregation (2:17–3:10).

Paul uses a second supporting argument, that is, *divine control and initiative* in verse 6b: “with the joy of the Holy Spirit”. The congregation’s perseverance, which is characterized by joy, is the product of the work of the Holy Spirit, who enabled them to direct their focus beyond the immediate unenviable situation (Weima 2014:101–102). In other words, the congregation received the gospel with the joy of the Holy Spirit, which transformed them to become followers of Paul and of the Lord amidst much tribulation. Thus, their imitation and its fruits can only be explained as divine action. Paul thereby underscores the importance of exhortation as a critical theme which he will later address at greater length.¹¹

10 *Contra* Malherbe (2000:127). Malherbe distinguishes between the persecution described in 2:2, as well as in Acts 17:5–9, and the θλίψις described in 1:6. According to him, θλίψις here refers to an inner anxiety that the congregation experienced during their conversion. In my view, however, Malherbe diminishes the extent of the tribulation experienced by the congregation by ignoring social alienation and physical persecution as interpretations. See Still (1999:207–211) and Wanamaker (1990:81) for a more detailed discussion on the problem of translating θλίψις and for a rejection of Malherbe’s interpretation.

11 *Contra* Benson (1996:143–144). Benson accepts that Paul has the parable of the Sower in mind; he refers to people who gladly accept the message when they hear it, without the seed having taken root (Lk 8:13). For relevant arguments, see Roose (2016:25).

1 Thessalonians 1:9–10 – The congregation’s testimony

The dominant argument that Paul uses here to describe the testimony of the congregation is *praise*. verse 9a: “For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you” refers to the successful response to the missionaries during their initial encounter. By including such a commendation, the apostle is not only singing the praises of the congregation, but he is also underscoring his and his co-workers’ integrity (Kim 2005:521, 541–542). Of crucial importance in this regard, note verse 9b: “and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”. The verb ἐπιστρέφω refers to the congregation’s radical conversion in response to the gospel message that Paul and his co-missionaries proclaimed to the Thessalonians. The young congregation consisted of diverse members, including Jews, non-Jews, and God-fearers, of whom the non-Jews and God-fearers were by far in the majority. To all members of this congregation their conversion implied an exclusive commitment to faith in the Son and in the Lord Jesus Christ, serving the living and true God (Blumenthal 2005:97, 104). The exclusive and monotheistic claim of their faith further imply that they had to break previous ties with imperial religious, political, and cultural alliances (Gieschen 2012:39). As part of this faith, they worshipped Jesus Christ exclusively as Lord and not the Roman emperor. The description of God as the true and living God thus belittles any other deity. By using the concept δουλεύειν, Paul implies that as servants of this true and living God, they were in his service and under his protection (Pillar 2016:110–111). Their service to God is characterized by a specific eschatological expectation (1:10a) (Weima (2014:108). Thus, Paul cannot help but praise the congregation in the light of their radical conversion and courage to serve Jesus Christ alone. With this argument of praise, the apostle also achieves two objectives in his overall strategy. As for his pastoral purpose, the testimony of the initial encounter points to the favourable relationship that they continued to have with the missionaries. As far as the mention of their radical conversion is concerned, it also serves as reaffirmation of their favourable relationship with God and Jesus.

A further supporting argument is *divine control and initiative* in verse 10b: “Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming”. Thus, the congregation’s expectation (v. 10a) is the reason for their confession (v. 10b), in other words, the confession of who Jesus is. Paul describes Jesus

here as this eschatological Saviour. It is important to note that 1:9–10 is not a quoted formula but a new formulation that Paul created to identify Christ as this eschatological Saviour (England 1995:58; Zugmann 2012:152).¹² Jesus is the focal point of their new faith: He is the One who will deliver the believers from the judgement to be executed on unbelievers (Boring 2015:76). The preposition ἐκ points to the extent of the converts' exclusion from the future sphere of judgment (Roose 2016:24).¹³ With this, Paul achieves one of the aims of his rhetorical strategy in this part of the letter, that is, to hint at specific key themes in advance. He now hints at a later key theme, namely eschatology (4:13–5:11), which concerns their expectation and confession. The reference to the Son's resurrection points to the apostle's later explanation of the resurrection from the dead (4:13–18). Also, the reference to Jesus' coming from heaven to deliver us from the coming judgment, already points forward to Paul's discussion on the *parousia* (5:1–11) (see Weima 2014:111).

Moreover, Paul uses various rhetorical techniques to support the overall rhetorical strategy in this pericope:

The first technique is the usage of *hyperbole*. Note 1:2a, πάντοτε. The word emphasizes Paul's commitment and that of his fellow missionaries to thank God "always" (Malherbe 2000:106). Further note that 1:2b, ἀδιαλείπτως, is used to describe his own as well as his fellow senders' faithfulness in their prayers. However, this does not mean that they were praying uninterruptedly but that they were praying firmly and regularly for the congregation members (Best 1972:66). Also note 1:7, πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν and ἐν παντί τόπῳ. Using a hyperbolic description, Paul emphasizes the extent of their imitation. By claiming that the congregation have become an example to all believers everywhere, Paul affirms the conviction that they are already the missionaries' and the Lord's followers (Boring 2015:67–68).¹⁴

12 *Contra* Marxsen (1979:40). Marxsen refers to 1:9–10 as "a quotation".

13 *Contra* Pillar (2016:264). Pillar reckons that the judgment in question here is in the present tense and that it will not materialize in the future. He motivates it on the basis of the present tense of ἐρχομένης with the implication that ὀργή does not imply future judgment, but present suffering under imperial powers.

14 See Boring (2015:67–68). Since Paul is writing from Corinth, probably shortly after he met Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18: 1–2), this implies that he may insert the words ἐν

The second technique is the usage of *alliteration*. Note 1:2b, πάντοτε περὶ πάντων. Considering that the letter would be read aloud to the congregation, alliteration would cause listeners to listen attentively (Schreiber 2014:86).

The third technique is *inclusive language* usage. Consider verse 1:3, τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν, which connects τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος to the *parousia* of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the final victory of God the Father. Paul’s use of ἡμῶν emphasizes not only the unity between the congregation and the missionaries but it also serves as an encouragement.¹⁵ Also note 1:5, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν. Utilizing the description of “our gospel”, Paul and his co-missionaries are portrayed as authoritative, as people who act with divine authority. Thus, the confirmation of their character, integrity, and selfless labour is implied (2:1–12) (See Castelli 1991:92).

The fourth technique is the usage of *metaphor*.¹⁶ Note 1:4, ἀδελφοί. At the time Paul when was writing, the use of ἀδελφοί as a form of address was unusual. In this instance, he effectively uses it to place the congregation in a good, yet hierarchical, relationship with him and with his co-missionaries, in line with his pastoral objective (Aasgaard 2002:515). Also, consider 1:9, ἐπιστρέφω, which points to the reality of their conversion, namely that they have been entirely removed from the sphere in which they worshipped idols to the sphere in which they now serve the true and living God, solely through faith in his Son Jesus (Meeks 1993:18–36).

The fifth technique is the usage of *antithetical sentence construction*. Consider 1:5, οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει. The concepts λόγος and δύναμις are contrasted, Paul therefore writes: “our gospel came to you not only in words but also in power”. He emphasizes

παντὶ τόπῳ with them in mind in the light of the location of Thessaloniki on the Via Egnatia, which enabled them to be “followers” beyond their immediate area.

15 *Contra* Weima (2014:88). Weima identifies τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν correctly as a specific eschatological hope, but without considering the function of ἡμῶν. See Tolmie (2005:245). He describes this technique as inclusive language usage, which is illustrated by various examples from Galatians.

16 Lakoff and Johnson (1980:5) provide this definition of a metaphor: To understand and experience one matter in terms of another matter. See also Aasgaard (2004:285; 2002:515), who describes ἀδελφοί as a metaphor.

the congregation's remembrance of his and his fellow missionaries' selfless actions (Weima 2016:65). Also note 1:8, οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ. Paul uses this antithesis to emphasize the extent of their evangelism to highlight his acknowledgement of the congregation's exemplary behaviour (Johnson, 2016:51).

The sixth technique is the usage of *paralipsis*. Note 1:8b, ὥστε μὴ χρειαῖν ἔχειν ἡμᾶς λαλεῖν τι. In doing so, Paul focuses attention precisely on what identifies the statement as seemingly unnecessary. Thus, he emphasizes their actions of sharing this congregation's testimony in Thessalonica with other believers in the surrounding areas. Their gospel proclamation includes the congregation of Thessalonica's testimony (Kim 2005:521–522).

The seventh technique is the usage of a chiasm (Richard 1995:70). Note 1:8:

A: Verb: ἐξήχηται

B: Subject: ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου

C: Antithetical statement: οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ

C1: Antithetical statement: ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ

B1: Subject: ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν

A1: Verb: ἐξελέλυθεν

To summarize: In this pericope Paul utilizes the typical element of thanksgiving by adapting it to achieve the following objectives: to reaffirm, in a pastoral way, the relationship between himself and his co-missionaries, the missionaries and the addressees, and the addressees' positive relationship with God and with Christ; to encourage the addressees to live according to this thanksgiving with dignity; and to mention important themes which will later be elaborated on in the letter. He implements this strategy through several supporting arguments. His dominant argument involves praise. His supporting arguments include encouragement, ethos, experience, and divine control/initiative. He further supports his overall strategy by means of various rhetorical techniques (alliteration, antithetical sentence construction, chiasm, hyperbole, inclusive language use, metaphor, and paralipsis).

3. Conclusion

A reading of the current state of scholarship, has indicated that existing rhetorical analyses are normally based on ancient rhetorical categories. However, it is also true that none of these studies entirely agree in describing the rhetoric of Paul's letter. This article has presented another methodology, namely a text-centred rhetorical analysis, which focuses on describing the rhetorical analysis of the text instead of merely applying ancient theoretical principles. The text was demarcated as two pericopes, namely 1:1 as the letter-opening and 1:2–10 as the thanksgiving. In both pericopes, Paul's rhetorical strategy involves adapting epistolary elements. This text-centred analysis has confirmed Paul's following rhetorical objectives: to portray his rhetorical objectives: to portray the congregation in a favourable relationship with the missionaries, God, and Jesus; to portray the converts as praiseworthy in order to exhort them to persevere in light of the coming *parousia*; and to foreshadow themes of critical importance to be addressed later in the letter-body. He included various arguments, some dominant and others supportive, for example, divine control/initiative, experience, ethos, praise, and exhortation. He also used several rhetorical techniques: hyperbole, alliteration, inclusive language, metaphor, antithetical sentence construction, paralipsis, and chiasm. By analysing the letter with the text-centred rhetorical analysis, does not merely repeat the use of ancient rhetorical categories, but rather enhances the persuasive strategy behind the words in Paul's correspondence to the Thessalonians.

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