



## A text-centred rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12

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### Abstract

This article analyses 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12 from a rhetorical perspective. Instead of the typical approach 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 this pericope. 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 critical to note Paul's already favourable relationship with the congregants. Therefore, his authority does not need to be confirmed. In light of the accusations of the outsiders, he nevertheless finds it necessary to reaffirm his integrity or ethos.

### Keywords

*Text-centred rhetorical analysis; 1 Thessalonians; Pauline Literature; narratio.*

## 1. Introduction

When comparing existing rhetorical analyses of Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, scholars usually assume that it is best to analyse 1 Thessalonians by means of schemes based on classical rhetoric. From the current state of scholarship, it has become clear that 2:1–12 is often identified as the *narratio*, as is the case in, for example, Jewett (1986:73–74) and Witherington (2006:60). However, the function of the *narratio* is not always interpreted in the same way: 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 a description of 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, whereas Hughes (1986:89) relates the *narratio* to an explanation of changes in Paul’s fortune.

Furthermore, there is no agreement on the demarcation of the *narration* as evident in, for example, Cho (2013:169) and Witherington (2006:60): 1:4–3:10; Jewett (1986:73–74): 1:6–3:13; Hughes (1986:89) and Wanamaker (1990:90–91): 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. However, it becomes more important to consider that if this section were to be identified as the *narratio*, then its rhetorical function could, by definition, be reduced to a preparation for the argument that follows later in the letter (Mack 1990:41–42). In this article, I use another approach to show that it is best not to classify this section as *narratio*; but rather to approach it as an integral 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 demonstrated, 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 phase before applying 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 third pericope: 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12.

## **2. Thessalonians 2:1–12: An autographic apology to affirm the integrity of Paul and his co-workers**

The pericope can be demarcated as 2:1–12. Verse one indicates the beginning of the letter body. Verses one to four describe Paul and his co-workers’ first visit to the congregation. In the following four verses (2:5–8), Paul and his co-workers’ dignified actions during the visit are articulated.

In the last four verses (2:9–12), the congregation is encouraged to live their new identity with dignity (Bruce 1982:24). Paul’s overall strategy involves affirming his / their<sup>1</sup> integrity through a claim to divine authority that refutes the implied charges against them.<sup>2</sup>

Paul’s overall rhetorical strategy can be described as the use of an autographic apology.<sup>3</sup> An apology involves a defence in response to specific accusations that are rejected. In the Hellenistic world, an autograph was used to convey unknown facts, refute accusations, offer commendable self-assessment, and persuade followers to follow their leader’s example. The specific use varied depending on the relationship between the leader and followers. The content of an autograph included descriptions of the prerogatives of the leader, his character, his life’s work, and his example. An autographic apology can be defined as an apology characterised by the typical characteristics of an autograph. Therefore, Paul uses an autographic apology to confirm his / their moral character or ethos to ensure the congregation’s trust as recipients (Jewett 1986:102; Donfried 2000:31–60; Still 1999:142–143).

Although he indicates nowhere that he responds specifically to any charges, it can rightly be inferred from his use of antithetical formulations.<sup>4</sup> If

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- 1 “his/their” refers with “his” primarily to Paul’s conduct as apostle but “their” includes the conduct of his co-missionaries which he reaffirms.
  - 2 *Contra* Weima (2014:120). Weima accepts that Paul does not affirm his/their integrity but “defends” it, considering the implied charges. To confirm the grounds for the rejection, “defend”, see Malherbe (2000:134).
  - 3 *Contra* Lyons (1985:27, 182–185). Lyons is aware of the definition of “autographic apology” but questions its applicability in the case of 2:1–12. From his comparison of 1 Thessalonians with Galatians, he notes that the absence of a more direct reference to the identity of the opponents in 1 Thessalonians (unlike in Galatians) renders an apologetic function unlikely. However, in this case, Galatians cannot be used as a criterion as 1 Thessalonians was written prior to Galatians. Lyons is correct; Paul does not need to affirm his authority but rather his integrity or ethos but denies that it functions as a counter-reaction. See Hiebert (1992:83) for a further discussion of the applicability of apology as a description of this pericope.
  - 4 *Contra* Boring (2015:79); Donfried (2000:46); and Lyons (1985:184–185, 189–190, 195). Boring denies that Paul is using an apologetic defence of real accusations against him, although he does believe that he is trying to confirm his integrity here. According to Donfried, these are only hypothetical accusations. Lyons denies that Paul responds to any charges. He argues that through his antitheses he wants to encourage his followers to imitate him and his associates. In light of the demarcation of the pericope (2: 1–12), this seems highly unlikely to be the sole function of the pericope, apart from Paul’s detailed

the charge is reconstructed in light of the antithetical formulations, the following becomes clear: Paul was depicted as a coward who fled in response to opposition without warning the congregation about the persecution that awaited them. He was equated with the philosophers of the day, people who pursued human honour and financial gain and acted with deceptive motives (Crook 1997:154–155; Marshall 1983:60–61; Winter 1993:56). Although he responds to these charges in his letter, it is of critical importance to note that it is not the congregation but outsiders who are responsible for the charges (Still 1999:143–148). Given Paul's already favourable relationship with the congregants, his authority does not need to be confirmed. In light of the accusations of the outsiders, he nevertheless finds it necessary to reaffirm his integrity or ethos. In this way, he ensures that the congregation will accept the remainder of the letter with the requisite seriousness and will be able to reject any external accusations against him (Hiebert 1992:83; Roose 2016:35; Weima 2016:107–108).

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 are:

1. divine control/initiative;
2. exhortation;
3. ethos – confirmation of their reliability;
4. experience;
5. oath; and
6. emotion Type 1<sup>5</sup> – Paul's desire to see the congregants again.

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description of their dignified conduct and encouragement of the congregation to act with dignity, since *μνηταὶ ἐγενήθητε* first appears in the second chapter (2:14). See Du Toit (1994:349); Still (1999:139–143); Weima (1997:73–74); and Weima (2014:128–129) for a further discussion about the idea that Paul responds to real accusations, as well as for a responsible assessment of his use of antitheses.

- 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.

## 2.1 1 Thessalonians 2:1–4: Paul and his co-missionaries visit the congregation

The first dominant argument that Paul uses is *experience*. Note 2:1: αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν, "For you know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain". Apart from the fact that ἀδελφοί, "brothers" used as a form of address, indicates the beginning of the new pericope, note: αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε, "you know". With this introduction, an appeal is made to the existing knowledge of the congregation; they are reminded of the first visit (Kim 2005:541; Malherbe 2000:135). The repetition of the familial language used earlier (1:4) in his correspondence enables Paul to assume his favourable, yet hierarchical, relationship with the new believers in his opening statement of Chapter 2 (Prinsloo 2022:8). A statement in 2:1b οὐ κενός, "not fruitless," serves to confirm that their initial visit was not without effect (Best 1972:89; Donfried 2000:47). In the ancient world, the first visit (εἴσοδος) of a public speaker or orator was a notable event. Thus, Paul can assume that the congregation considered their first visit so crucial that these memories remain fresh (Ascough 2014:72–74). Also, note 2:2a: ἀλλὰ προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες, καθὼς οἴδατε, ἐν Φιλίπποις, "But as you know, after we were afflicted and humbled in Philippi earlier." As is the case in v. 1, an appeal is again made to the existing knowledge of the congregation, καθὼς οἴδατε, "just as you know" (Bruce 1982:24). It is not only connected to the memory of the initial visit but also to their knowledge of the suffering that Paul and his associates experienced (Kim 2005:541). The suffering is only mentioned, but one can deduce this from some details in Acts 16:16–40, which probably correspond to his recounting of the events shared with the congregation (Johnson 2016:60). With this in mind, Paul presumably refers to physical persecution, including his unfair treatment as a Roman citizen, ὑβρισθέντες, "mistreat" (Best 1972:90).

The second dominant argument that Paul uses is *ethos*. Consider 2:2b: ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι, "As you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God despite great opposition." He argues that their visit was a success, despite the opposition, suffering, and humiliation they were experiencing in Philippi, as well as the critique that their efforts were in vain (v. 2a). The actions of Paul and his associates serve to confirm

that their obedience to their calling is closely linked to God’s ratification (Johnson 2016:60). Paul and his co-workers were able to have courage in God; they were able to preach the gospel to the people of Thessalonica, while they were experiencing many struggles, considering ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, “we have courage in our God” (Crook 1997:155). Their perseverance in preaching the gospel despite opposition reaffirms their character and trustworthiness (Donfried 2000:48).

His dominant argument of ethos is also evident in v. 3: ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι, “For our calling was not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor deceit.” Considering the antithetical formulation in v. 3, an indictment against Paul and his co-workers is implied (Weima 2014:129). The accusations can be summarised as (a) οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης, “not from deceit,” intellectual deception in order to incite people to pursue a heresy intentionally; (b) οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας, “not from impure motive,” exaggerated self-centredness in pursuit of popularity; and (c) οὐδὲ ἐν δόλῳ, “not from treachery,” proclaiming their financial gain (Best 1972:94; Horbury 1982:506; Johnson 2016:61). In denying these accusations, Paul is trying to distance himself from the typical traveling philosophers or orators of the time. Also, note. v. 4b: οὕτως λαλοῦμεν, οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωποις ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ θεῷ, “So we share it, we do not please people, but God.” Unlike the philosophers of the day, they did not try to please people because they did not pursue their fame and glory (Crook 1997:155). For emphasis, antithetical sentence construction is utilised *not* to stress people *but* God (Weima 2014:36). In accordance with his claim that the gospel message was entrusted to them by God (v. 4a), their actions also please God (Schreiber 2014:137). With such a credible representation of the apostle and his co-workers, their sincerity, character, and trustworthiness are placed above suspicion.

Paul also uses a supportive argument, namely *divine control*, or *initiative*. Note v. 4a: ἀλλὰ καθὼς δεδοκιμάσαμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, “But we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.” Without explaining his statement in further detail, he can claim divine initiative. The usage of the passive verb underscores this, δεδοκιμάσαμεθα, “be approved,” as well as the passive infinitive πιστευθῆναι, “to be entrusted,” intrinsically linked to the prepositional phrase ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, “by God” (Weima 2014:136–137). In contrast to the philosophers who

recommended themselves, Paul explains that he and his co-workers are chosen by God and entrusted with the gospel message (Richard 1995:80). Their obedience should be understood in response to the divine initiative to establish their service (Malherbe 2000:140–141). Also, note v. 4c: θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν, “God who tests our hearts.” Regarding Paul’s self-understanding, he compares himself to a prophet of God in the Old Testament as someone in God’s service who is tested (Schreiber 2014:137). He may be referring indirectly to Jeremiah 11:20 (LXX): κύριε κρίνων δίκαια δοκιμάζων νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας (Steele 1984:12). The present participle δοκιμάζοντι, “to test,” indicates the continuing divine act of the God who not only evaluates their intentions but also knows them intimately (Johnson 2016:62). Thus, the supportive argument of divine control or initiative links with the dominant argument of ethos.

Paul supports his overall rhetorical strategy with various rhetorical techniques. The first of these is the use of a clichéd metaphor: ἀδελφοί, “brothers” (v. 1). By repeating this form of address, he assumes a favourable yet hierarchical relationship (Aasgaard 2002:515; Aasgaard 2004:285).

The second technique involves the use of inclusive language in the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, “in our God” (v. 2). In this way, he strengthens his/their claim to divine authority to underscore the sense of community in portraying God as “our God” (Donfried 2000:46–47).

The third technique is the use of antithetical formulation: οὐκ ... οὐδὲ ... οὐδὲ ... ἀλλά, “not ..., nor ..., nor ..., but ...” (vv. 3–4). Through this antithetical formulation, Paul identifies the accusation against them (Malherbe 2000:157).

The fourth technique concerns the use of alliteration: οὐκ ... οὐδὲ ... οὐδέ, “not ..., nor..., nor”. Considering that the letter had been read aloud to the congregants, the alliteration would have effectively emphasized his denial of the implied accusations (Tolmie 2005:253).

The fifth technique comprises the use of a stacking effect; the words πλάνης, ἀκαθαρσίας, δόλω, “deceit, impure motives, and deception,” which constitute aspects of the implied accusations, are successively stacked. This technique emphasizes Paul and his associates’ integrity (v. 3).

The sixth technique relates to echoing the Old Testament prophetic tradition: θεᾶ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν, “But for God who tests our hearts.” He may be alluding to Jeremiah 11:20 in the LXX. By selecting words, he succeeds in intensifying the authority of his claim (v. 4) (Steele 1984:12).

### 2.2 1 Thessalonians 2:5–8: Paul and his missionaries’ worthy actions

The first dominant argument concerns experience. Note v. 5b: καθὼς οἴδατε, “Just as you already know.” A characteristic practice of orators at the time was that they relied on the recollections of their audience rather than recounting an event in detail. Recalling the events of the past through their own memories enables them to hear the past, which is absent in the present, not only as an interpretation but to experience it for themselves (Heath 2009:7–10). Paul seems to be doing something similar. He presents specific events and highlights individual elements of the initial experience in a new context (Roose 2016:26). In assuming these shared memories, the believers are reassured about their positive relation to Paul and his co-missionaries (Schreiber 2012:234). Based on their memories, Paul can refute the implied charges against him (Reinmuth 1998:122). From their memory of the first visit and based on their own first-hand experience, they remember the motives that inspired Paul and his co-missionaries’ actions.

The second dominant argument concerns *ethos*. First, note v. 5a: οὐτε γὰρ ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας ἐγενήθημεν, “because we never acted with flattery.” The statement is formulated as a denial. Flattery was a typical feature of Greco-Roman writers and orators. Flattery not only consisted of winged and sophisticated words, but it also focused on intentional or selfish addiction. (Bruce 1982:29; McNeel 2014:48). The absence of flattery in Paul and his co-workers’ ministry thus confirms their reliability; they did not use flattering words to deceive the hearers of their gospel preaching. Second, note v. 5b: οὐτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας, “neither with false motives of greed”. Greed was often an essential characteristic of writers and orators of that time (Hiebert 1992:95). Thus, Paul can assume such actions and indicate that they did not preach the gospel for their financial gain (Haufe 1999:36). He denies any suggestion that they acted to their advantage or from a desire for more (McNeel 2014:49–50).



Third, note v. 6: οὔτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν, “not seeking the honour of men”. This sentence is further explained in the phrases formulated as a denial: οὔτε ἀφ’ ὑμῶν ἐν οὔτε ἀπ’ ἄλλων, “not from you, nor from others.” Paul understood his gospel preaching differently from the Greco-Roman philosophers or orators of that time who sought honour and recognition from people (Holtz 1986:77; Marxsen 1979:45). He states that he and his associates were not seeking to receive honour from the congregation or recognition from outsiders. The insertion of the two short phrases removes uncertainty; there was no exception. Their actions and integrity are affirmed through their consistent rejection of being honoured by people (McNeel 2014:50–51). Fourth, it is essential to note v. 7a: δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι, “Although we were able to make weighty demands as apostles of Christ.” The literal meaning of βᾶρος, “burden,” translates as being weighty, not in the sense of a financial burden,<sup>6</sup> but in making heavy demands; for example, in being treated with dignity as important persons (Malherbe 2000:144). Paul justifies their position against the accusations (2:5–6) that they were in a position to throw their weight around. However, they did not do so, despite their status as ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι, “apostles of Christ” (Marxsen 1979:45). The latter does not necessarily imply that Silvanus and Timothy, like Paul, are identified as apostles (Holtz 1986:77). However, ὡς, “like” it does serve as a comparison to include them in the authority with which Paul acts as an apostle. They are, after all, identified in the letter-opening (1:1) as the co-senders. Without being apostles themselves, they share in his authority as collaborators. They all act together as representatives of Christ (Schreiber 2014:139). Fifth, his argument is also visible in vv. 7b: ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα, “But we were in your midst as little children, as when a mother cares for her own children.” In vv. 5–6 he introduced his statements with οὔτε, “not ...”, but now he introduces them with ἀλλά, “but ...” to complete the antithetical formulation. Consider ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, literally translated as “we were babies in your midst.”

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6 *Contra* Donfried (2000:52). Donfried identifies the interpretation of a financial burden as appropriate.

In contrast to throwing their weight around, Paul and his co-workers were among the Thessalonians (like) νήπιοι<sup>7</sup> “babies and/or small children” to express the absolute innocence and sincerity of their actions (Weima 2000:564). It is important to note, however, that this does not imply immaturity nor total dependence – the immediate meaning that could be associated with the metaphor (McNeel 2014:55). In using νήπιοι, “babies,” Paul and his co-workers are depicted as babies and/or small children, pointing to their innocence as well as to their sincerity. It distances them from the accusations to confirm their integrity (Sailors 2000:96).<sup>8</sup> Also, note the phrase: ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέκνα, “like a nursing mother caring for her children.” Paul compares him and his associates to a τροφός, “nursing mother,” caring for someone else’s babies/toddlers. He adds the following description to use the concept more appropriately: θάλπη τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέκνα, “taking care of her own children.” The latter τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέκνα, “her own children,” does not introduce a new metaphor but is used with the τροφός, “nursing mother,” to complete the comparison. Considering the verb θάλπω, “take care of,” the church is typified as Paul’s own children of whom they take care (Fowl 1990:472). It testifies to an intimate relationship between Paul, his co-workers, and the congregation. Therefore, he emphasizes the innocence and sincerity of his/their motives (νήπιοι) like “babies” but also points out the mature and caring nature of their actions (τροφός) like those of a “nursing mother”. In doing so, he refutes the accusations brought against them by including a positive self-description (Gaventa 1990:205–207).

On the one hand, it should be noted that the concept of νήπιοι, “babies,” in verse 7b could possibly be identified as a weak spot in Paul’s overall rhetorical strategy, bearing the following three considerations in mind: (1) how the recipients would initially have interpreted the concept νήπιοι,

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7 In some manuscripts, ἥπιοι, “soft”, is found instead of νήπιοι “babies/children”. To compare the two options, the position in the sentence is to be considered: ἐγενήθημεν (v) ἥπιοι: ἥπιοι was due to haplography or νήπιοι to dittography. Textual critics agree that νήπιοι is the most likely, appropriate, and difficult reading. Refer to the following sources for confirmation: Fowl (1990:469–473); Gaventa (1990:205–207); McNeel (2014:35–39, 42); Sailors (2000:81–83, 88).

8 *Contra* Crawford (1973:69–72). Crawford argues that νήπιοι should be considered as a vocative in the sentence construction and identifies the young congregation, not Paul and his associates, as νήπιοι. For confirmation see Weima (2000:547–564).

“babies” during the first hearing, affected its effectiveness. They could have misunderstood the implied meaning if they had associated the metaphor with immaturity and dependence rather than sincerity and innocence. (2) If the recipients of the read letter had heard ἡπιοι instead of νήπιοι, it would have had the opposite effect that Paul wanted to communicate. He wanted to distance them from other orators of the time, who presented themselves as ἡπιοι by typifying themselves as νήπιοι. (3) If the congregation, in light of the word order, ἐγενήθημεν (v) ἡπιοι, had not heard the second “v,” it could have weakened its rhetorical strategy. (3) Whether or not they heard the second “v” in -θημεν ὑπιοι, further influences how the relationship of νήπιοι to the other metaphor τροφός (v. 7b) would be understood. Suppose they had not heard it, they would have interpreted ἡπιοι only as a description to illuminate the metaphor τροφός, they were “gentle” (v. 7b) and “like a nursing mother” (v. 7b). If they had heard νήπιοι, they would instead have thought that Paul wanted to emphasize his or their innocence and sincerity, as opposed to the accusations, before describing his positive self-description with τροφός.

On the other hand, in light of the dominant argument of experience, the apparent limitations of Paul’s overall strategy can be relativized. The prepositional phrase “in your midst” should be considered, given its position next to νήπιοι. This reduces one of the limitations of νήπιοι in Paul’s overall strategy. Based on their own experience, they know that Paul and his associates did not act immaturely and dependently like babies and/or minor children in their midst; on the contrary, they acted sincerely and innocently. Thus, considering the dominant experiential argument, the probability increases that they would understand νήπιοι correctly, regardless of how they would hear the reading.

The first supportive argument is an *oath*. Note v. 5c: Θεὸς μάρτυς, “God is a witness.” The claim of their selfless actions is not limited to the testimony of their memories. An oath substantiates his argumentative experience. In using an oath, he can rely on God’s testimony about them (Haufe 1999:36). In doing so, he echoes a text from the Old Testament (Gen. 31:50) which also identifies God as a witness (Shogren 2012:97). Since it is more complex to evaluate someone’s motives than their spoken words, Paul does not only appeal to their memory but also to God, the One who evaluates their hearts (v. 4) (McNeel 2014:50). If God is the witness that they have indeed

acted with dignity, they effectively refute the accusations. Suppose they have acted with the authority that characterizes apostles of God. In that case, they confirm that they have acted innocently, sincerely, and with concern (Shogren 2012:97). This shows how they use their claim to divine authority to refute the implied charges against them in order to confirm their integrity (Weima 2014:41). So, Paul uses this supportive argument to strengthen his dominant argument of ethos.

The second supportive argument is *emotional*, namely *emotion – type 1*. It describes Paul and his co-missionaries' desire to see the congregation again. Note v. 8: οὕτως ὀμειρόμενοι ὑμῶν εὐδοκοῦμεν μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς, διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε, “Longing for you, we were pleased to share not only the gospel of God with you but also our own souls because you had become dear to us.” In v. 8 the implication of v. 7b unfolds. With the participatory phrase: οὕτως ὀμειρόμενοι ὑμῶν, “longing for you,” Paul and his co-missionaries' deep inner attachment to and love for the congregation, when they were initially with them, is expressed (Heidland 1967:176). However, their love is not only limited to the initial visit but also continues. It serves to reaffirm his/their desire to see the congregation again (Marshall 1983:71). The imperfect tense, εὐδοκοῦμεν, “be pleased,” emphasizes his continuous determination to give himself to the congregation (Malherbe 2000:147). Note v. 8a: οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς, “Not only the gospel of God but also our own souls.” In formulating this statement antithetically, he substantiates his previous claims, namely the denial of the accusations and the positive self-description (vv. 5–7) (Schreiber 2014:141). Thus, he confirms that they obeyed God by sharing his gospel and shared their deepest selves/souls unconditionally. In other words, Paul's preached word is also visible in their lives (Weima 2014:148). In verse 8c: διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε, “because you have become very dear to us,” it is confirmed that Paul and his co-workers were so profoundly concerned about the congregation that they could rightly describe them as ἀγαπητοί, “beloved.” This statement reaffirms their intense desire to see the beloved Thessalonians again and confirms God's love for them (Knoch 1987:34).

Paul supports his overall rhetorical strategy with various rhetorical techniques. The first technique is his usage of metaphor in vv. 7b–c: νήπιοι,

“babies,” and τροφός, “nursing mother.” Through these metaphors, he portrays the relationships and emotions to strikingly confirm their actions to the congregation (McNeel 2014:11).

The second technique uses the *inclusio* between vv. 4 and 6: οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωποις ἀρέσκοντες, “not pleasing men” (v. 4) in relation to οὐτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν, “not seeking honour from men” (v. 6). In using *inclusio*, he repeats his claim that they were not seeking the favour of men. In this way, he can distinguish himself and his collaborators from other philosophers and/or orators at the time (Weima 2014:142).

The third technique concerns the contrast between νήπιοι “baby” and τροφός “mother” in v. 7b–c. In using two conflicting metaphors together, he draws attention to the innocence, sincerity, and loving care for the congregation (Baumert & Seewann 2014:21; Fowl 1990:471–473; Gaventa 1990:203–207; Weima 2000:563–564).

The fourth technique applied is antithetical formulation (vv. 5–7). Paul uses antithetical formulation to refute the implied accusation against him by repeatedly introducing the accusations with οὐτε and by introducing the positive self-assessment with ἀλλά (Malherbe 2000:159; Weima 2014:138).

The fifth technique used is alliteration (vv. 5–6), referring to οὐτε ... οὐτε ... οὐτε. It refers to the repetition of the “ou” sound. This reinforces the denial of the implied accusations against Paul and them.

The sixth technique concerns the usage of anaphora, which means repeating the same word to introduce a sentence or phrase. This repetition also relates to οὐτε ... οὐτε ... οὐτε in vv. 5–6, together with the alliteration, helps emphasize the denial of the accusations (Sailors 2000:96).

The seventh technique applied is the usage of an oath; God is mentioned as a witness: θεὸς μάρτυς. This helps Paul place his claim’s credibility above suspicion (v. 10) (Tolmie 2005:251).

### 2.3 1 Thessalonians 2:9–12: Paul’s encouragement to live worthily

The first dominant argument that Paul uses here concerns experience. Note v. 9a: μνημονεύετε γάρ, ἀδελφοί, “For you remember, brothers.” An appeal is made to the believers’ existing knowledge introduced by the conjunction γάρ, “for;” a memory they share as siblings based on their recollection of

the experience of the initial encounter. This memory is shared as siblings (Holtz 1986:85). The repeated usage of ἀδελφοί again assumes a typical familial relationship's favourable and hierarchical nature, as “brothers.” On the one hand, it confirms their positive relationship with the congregation in being so connected to them that he can identify with them as his brothers. On the other hand, Paul never describes himself and his associates as the congregation's brothers; it presupposes a lofty yet praiseworthy position regarding the apostle and his associates in the congregation's memory (Aasgaard 2004:285–303). Also note v. 10a: in stating: ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες, “You (are) witnesses,” Paul assumes they still remember their first encounter and presupposes their collective memory as a testimony. Thus, their previous experience of Paul and his co-missionaries' exemplary actions are a testimony in favour of their character (Schreiber 2014:144). In the same vein, v. 11a: καθάπερ οἶδατε, “just as you know” could be noted. Based on the experience of their initial encounter, they know how Paul and his co-missionaries behaved towards them, more specifically, like a πατήρ, “father”<sup>9</sup> towards his own children. Thus, their memory reaffirms the loving solidarity that characterizes the relationship between Paul and the congregation and, at the same time, the favourable exalted position of a father towards his children (Johnson 2016:69). Thus, Paul uses their previous experience to clarify his/their reliability based on their collective memory.

The second dominant argument uses ethos. Note v. 9b: τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον· νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινὰ ὑμῶν ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, “... our labour and toil. While we worked day and night not to burden any of you, we preached the gospel to you”. Two almost identical concepts are included to describe the specific memory of their initial visit: τὸν κόπον, “labour,” and τὸν μόχθον, “toil.” Thus, Paul's hard work and effort become a focal point. Their selfless way of working is confirmed by νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, “day and night” (Walton 2011:222). They did not necessarily continue working during every available hour; instead, they were committed to working continuously for an indefinite period (Boring 2015:88). Taking the participle ἐργαζόμενοι,

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9 For further discussion on the political and/or cultural-background of the notion “father”, see Malina & Pilch (2006:31–32).

“working” into account, this activity is sketched parallel to his/their evangelization – Paul’s life task, ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, “we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.” The simultaneous action of ἐργαζόμενοι, “working” and the main verb, ἐκηρύξαμεν, “we proclaimed,” indicates a possible situation in a workshop. Such a set-up enabled him to preach the gospel verbally (Hock 2007:27). The motivation for their selfless labour is also broader, namely πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν, “not to burden any of you.” The infinitive ἐπιβαρῆσαι can literally be translated as “to be weighty.” Here, it refers to being dependent on livelihood (Schreiber 2014:143). Within the Greco-Roman world, the social class who did manual labour was often looked down on, whereas in the Jewish tradition, it was precisely expected of someone to learn a trade to provide for his livelihood (Best 1972:103). Since the congregation mainly consisted of non-Jewish members, Paul kept in mind that they, like other philosophers and orators at the time, could claim support from the congregation. Contrary to the charges of selfishness and greed (vv. 3 and 5), Paul mentions that he has provided for his subsistence (Roose 2016:33). In this way, he further distances himself from philosophers who acted for their financial gain, thereby confirming that he preached the gospel above suspicion (Malherbe 2000:148–149). Also note v. 10b: ὡς ὀσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν, “How holy, righteous and blameless are we towards you who have acted faithfully.” Paul probably presents this formulation in response to a charge against his/their integrity. Three consecutive adjectives serve to dismiss the charge by affirming how eschatologically blameless their actions are, how holy they are before God, and how righteous they are before men (Weima 2014:153). Paul appeals to the memory of those who responded with faith to their preaching. Also, note v. 11: ὡς ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ, “We dealt with each one of you like a father with his children.” After he denied an implied accusation (v. 10), he adds a commendable self-characterization (v. 11). He uses a metaphor to compare the integrity of their actions with those of a typical father. His comparison is completed in the phrase τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ, “his own children,” which identifies the congregation as Paul’s children. In ancient times, a child was distinguished from an adult as physically and intellectually inferior. In this way, Paul and his associates are favourably portrayed in solidarity with the congregation yet hierarchically superior to them (Burke 2000:59–80; Burke 2012:269–287; Gerber 2005:301).

The first supportive argument involves an oath. Note v. 10a: μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός, “God is witness.” Now, Paul re-emphasizes the integrity of their actions. Before refuting any charge, he identifies the witness(es) who will confirm his version, namely God! The congregation’s testimony (v. 10a) is insufficient (Whitenon 2012:22–23). Earlier in this pericope, he appeals to God’s selection and assessment (v. 4). Now, God – the One who called the congregation and will also judge him eschatologically – is identified as his witness. The emphasis on witnesses means that one cannot help but interpret his description in verse 10 as a reaction to an accusation, something that he rejects with an oath (Crook 1997:156; Marshall 1983:73).

The second supportive argument comprises an exhortation. Take note of v.12a: παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ, “While we exhort, encourage and urge you to live a life worthy of God.” This statement emphasizes Paul’s fatherly involvement (v. 11); “he admonishes, encourages, and urges each of his children in this congregation,” note ὡς ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν, “with each one of you.” As to the relationship of this element, the second παραμυθέομαι, “encourage,” and the third μαρτύρομαι, “urge,” seems to explain the first one, παρακαλέω, “admonishes” (Burke 2012:276). These characteristics, typical of a father in Paul’s time, describe the pastoral involvement of teaching and guidance. Like a father, they are personally involved with everyone in the congregation (Fee 2009:81).

The third supportive argument focuses on *divine control* or *initiative*. Note v. 12b: θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν, “God who calls you to his own kingdom and glory.” The infinitive περιπατεῖν, “to walk,” takes on a metaphorical meaning: “to live.” The adverb ἀξίως, “worthily,” completes this infinitive to indicate the way according to which they should live (Holloway 1992:29). Earlier in the pericope, Paul reminded the young believers about their worthy conduct (vv. 4–8). By presenting God as the one calling upon them, he manages to urge them to live worthily, for they are called to do so. Underlying God’s call is the Jewish depiction of God as the Creator, who created through his act of calling (Holtz 1986:91). Paul used the present participle καλοῦντος, “calling,” here to assure the young believers that this God is continuously present and involved in their lives (Johnson 2016:70). Although the members of the congregation used to worship idols and were subject to Roman rule, God eschatologically



called them to another βασιλεία, “kingdom.”<sup>10</sup> Through their faith in Jesus Christ, they share in God’s δόξα, “glory,” and glorious presence, which will materialize as a reality when they are resurrected from the dead in the future at the *parousia* (4:13–5:11) (Nicholl 2004:82).

Various rhetorical techniques complete Paul’s rhetorical strategy in this pericope. The first technique involves the usage of metaphor. The repeated usage of ἀδελφοί, “brothers” (v. 9) provides an example. At the time, Paul used the characteristics of a family to confirm the close bond between him and the congregation and to highlight the hierarchical structure of their relationship. The congregation is portrayed in solidarity with Paul and his co-workers as their brothers, although neither Paul nor his co-workers are equaled as the brothers of the congregants. Another example is the usage of πατήρ, “father,” and τέκνα, “children,” as familial metaphors to characterize Paul and his associates as fathers of the congregation (Aasgaard 2004:288; Burke 2000:72; Burke 2012:279).

The second technique is the usage of a *comparison*: By comparing the familial roles of πατήρ, “father,” and τέκνα, “children,” Paul portrays his and his co-workers’ fatherly and, therefore, the traditional role of teaching the congregation as their children (v. 11) (Aasgaard 2004:288; Burke 2012:286).

The third technique concerns *hyperbole*. The hyperbole, νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι, “we worked day and night,” is thirdly used to emphasize Paul’s/their dedication to their work (v. 9).<sup>11</sup>

Paul’s fourth technique is an oath; he mentions μάρτυς ὁ θεός, “God as (a) witness.” This helps him place his claim’s credibility above suspicion (v. 10) (Tolmie 2005:251).

The fifth technique uses a stacking effect to describe Paul and his co-worker’s actions: ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπως, “pure upright and blameless.” By stacking the positive descriptions of their behaviour in this

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10 For further discussion on the political and/or cultural background of the notion “kingdom”, see Malina & Pilch (2006:35).

11 *Contra* Weima (2014:150). Weima denies the applicability of hyperbole as relevant to νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας. Considering that Weima does not mean this literally, it seems highly unlikely that hyperbole is inappropriate here.

sequence, he emphasizes the praiseworthiness of their actions' nature (v. 10) (Weima 2014:153).

Paul finally uses the technique of anacoluthon by omitting the main verb in v. 12 and by only using infinitives to focus attention on the content of this verse (Holtz 1986:82; Verhoef 1998:112; Weima 2014:153, 155–156).

To summarise: Paul's overall strategy involves confirming his/their integrity by using a claim to divine authority to refute the implied charges against them. He implements this strategy in several supporting arguments. His dominant arguments are based on experience and ethos. His supporting arguments include an oath, emotion-type 1, inducement, and divine control/initiative. Rhetorical techniques further support his overall strategy: metaphor, comparison, hyperbole, oath, stacking effect, and anacoluthon.

## Conclusion

A reading of the current state of scholarship has indicated that existing rhetorical analyses are typically based on ancient rhetorical categories. However, it is also true that none of these studies agree on describing Paul's letter's rhetoric. This article has presented another methodology, namely a text-centred rhetorical analysis, which focuses on presenting a rhetorical analysis of the text instead of merely applying ancient theoretical principles. The text was demarcated as one pericope, 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12, an autographic apology. This text-centred analysis has confirmed Paul's rhetorical objective of reaffirming his integrity or ethos in the light of external accusations. He included various arguments, some dominant and others supportive, for example, divine control and initiative, ethos, experience, oath, emotion – type 1, exhortation. He used several rhetorical techniques: antithetical formulation, anacoluthon, anaphora, alliteration, stacking effect, metaphor, inclusive language, comparison, contrast, echo of the Old Testament Prophetic tradition, and *inclusio*. A text-centred rhetorical analysis of Paul's letter does not merely repeat the use of ancient rhetorical categories in identifying this pericope as *narratio*; rather, it enhances the application of a persuasive strategy in Paul's first correspondence to the Thessalonians. Further, some limitations in his overall strategy have also

been identified that previous scholars have overlooked. Thus, from this article, it seems clear that the vocabulary of ancient rhetorical categories, in the absence of a close reading of the text, is insufficient to outline his rhetorical strategy and to highlight his persuasiveness. A close reading of Paul's letter is also adequate to deepen one's understanding of the text before any responsible attempt of appropriation in contextual reading could follow.

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