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The rich and the poor on the spectrum in 1 Timothy 6:17–19: A text-centred interpretation

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This article applies a novel rhetorical approach, 'text-generated persuasion interpretation' (TGPI), to 1 Timothy 6:17–19, exploring its relevance to South Africa, particularly the national poverty line (NPL). Rooted in South Africa's socio-economic realities, the interpretation reflects the fluid nature of wealth and poverty, requiring regular updates to the NPL by Statistics South Africa (STATS SA) because of the evolving cost of living. This fluidity is also evident in the socio-economic context of ancient Ephesus, to which 1 Timothy 6:17 pertains. The directive to Timothy to 'instruct those who are rich in this present world' suggests that the categories of rich and poor are not fixed. The article challenges the view that the 'rich' form a distinct, hegemonic group, arguing that anyone with more than basic necessities (Tm 1 6:8) should be considered above the NPL. While the NPL is crucial for measuring welfare in South Africa, this study interprets the 1 Timothy 6:17–19 passage in the South African context, suggesting that wealth extends beyond traditional definitions and calls on individuals with surplus resources to contribute to social welfare, fostering a more inclusive understanding of wealth and stewardship.

Contribution: This makes a unique contribution through the utilisation of a novel text-generated persuasion-interpretation (TGPI) to 1 Timothy 6:17–19, filling a lacuna in scholarship on the wealthy's identity. It demonstrates that the author's dominant rhetorical objective and persuasion devices can be directly derived from the text, without reliance on ancient rhetorical Greco-Roman rhetoric, revealing new rhetorical insights and techniques. The article argues that the wealthy in 1 Timothy 6 are those described by Paul in verse 8, with verse 6 defining true wealth as godliness with contentment. This suggests that those with food and clothing are best positioned to fulfil 1 Timothy 6:17–19.

Keywords: national poverty line; statistics South Africa; text-generated persuasion-interpretation; socio-economic; spectrum; rich; poor; 1 Timothy 6:17–19.

Introduction

This article offers an interpretation of 1 Timothy 6:17–19 by concentrating on a mode of rhetorical persuasion distinct from conventional methodologies. The interpretation employs a novel rhetorical-critical exegetical approach, termed 'text-generated persuasion-interpretation' (TGPI), which is text-centred. Rather than preselecting a rhetorical model to impose upon the text, or adhering to speech parts or classical Greco-Roman rhetoric, this methodology, initially developed by Tolmie (2004:37) as a minimal theoretical framework, is utilised. Genade (2015:26) proposed renaming it to 'text-generated persuasion-analysis' (TGPA), and Kukuni (2024:1) subsequently revised it to 'text-generated persuasion interpretation' (TGPI).[1] The concept of 'text-generated' is based on the premise that the text itself sufficiently provides the rhetoric to be derived. Interpretation, in this context, implies that the persuasiveness extracted from the text will elucidate the author's original intent and extend further to interpret its application in contemporary settings.

Thus, the rhetorical methodology commences by pinpointing the dominant rhetorical objective within a specific pericope, elucidating how the author utilises various rhetorical arguments and techniques to enhance the efficacy of his communication. When utilising this methodology, the ultimate aim is to address two pivotal questions: (1) What is the primary rhetorical objective of the author in this section? (2) How does the author accomplish this intended objective? Integral to this interpretive process are two main features: Identifying the

1.Hereinafter referred to as TGPI.

types of arguments the author employs to achieve the dominant rhetorical objective, and discerning and interpreting the rhetorical techniques the author uses to enhance the persuasiveness of his communication.

Encountering paradox: Who are the rich?

In 2015, a transformative encounter unfolded when an individual from a rural village in the Free State ventured into an affluent church in Johannesburg for the first time. This visit was prompted by a gathering of pastors convened to deliberate on pressing pastoral issues within their ecclesiastical association, namely Sola 5 (2024). Among the various concerns articulated, one issue resounded with particular urgency: the perceived reluctance of the wealthy within the church to financially support the work of the gospel and the poor.

The keynote speaker, in a bid to galvanise action, referenced 1 Timothy 6:17, urging the pastors to admonish their affluent church members not to place their hope in their riches. The subsequent verse, which calls for generosity and a willingness to share, serves as a clarion call to action: 'command them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share' [ἀγαθοεργεῖν, πλουτεῖν ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς, εὐμεταδότους εἶναι, κοινωνικούς]. Yet, as the researcher observed the electronic gadgets, vehicles and homes of the pastors present, a paradox emerged: why were these individuals, seemingly affluent, excluded from the category of the 'rich'?

This observation raises profound questions: Who truly constitutes the 'rich' in a society like South Africa, marked by stark socio-economic divides? What are the implications of our definitions of wealth for the church's mission in addressing social inequality? As an academic, the researcher also questions why discussions about the impoverished dominate elite academic circles while the affluent remain an abstract otherness. Furthermore, to whom does the admonition of 1 Timothy 6:17–19 genuinely apply in the contemporary church and the broader South African context?

This article endeavours to engage with these pressing inquiries through a text-centred rhetorical interpretation of 1 Timothy 6:17–19, set against the backdrop of South Africa's socio-economic realities, particularly in relation to the national poverty line (NPL). The fluidity of wealth and poverty in South Africa necessitates a dynamic understanding of these categories, much like the socio-economic landscape of ancient Ephesus to which 1 Timothy was addressed.

Challenging the prevailing notion that the 'rich' are a distinct and hegemonic group, this article posits that anyone possessing more than basic necessities, as delineated in 1 Timothy 6:8,[2] should be regarded as above the divine poverty line (DPL).[3] While the NPL serves as a crucial metric for assessing health, welfare and livelihood in South Africa, the interpretation of 1 Timothy 6:17–19 transcends mere contemporary statistical frameworks, cautioning against anachronistic understanding of the text. This article advocates for a broader understanding of wealth that encompasses ethical responsibility, urging all individuals with resources beyond basic necessities to contribute to social welfare.

In light of this, readers are encouraged to critically reflect on their own contexts and assumptions regarding wealth and generosity, fostering a more inclusive understanding of stewardship that transcends traditional boundaries. By engaging deeply with the ethical implications of the text, it is possible to collectively challenge perceptions of wealth and responsibility within both scripture and contemporary socio-economic realities.

Rhetorical situation of 1 Timothy

The concept of the 'rhetorical situation', as articulated within the rhetorical methodology of this study, is delineated as distinct from the 'historical background or context', as elucidated by Genade (2007:55–56) and Snyman (2016:2). In order to interpret the rhetorical situation, it is essential for the reader to first ascertain whether the text articulates the exigency to which the author responds. This interpretation is inherently text-oriented; if the text itself directs the interpreter towards an understanding of the author's dominant rhetorical objective or provides sufficient information regarding the author's intent, then the rhetorical interpretation may rightfully focus on that aspect, presuming that no external historical context is requisite for a text-centred rhetorical interpretation (Genade 2007:55).

Nonetheless, this focus on the rhetorical situation does not obviate the necessity of examining the historical context of the text. As Virkler and Ayayo (2007:81) assert, 'the meaning of a text cannot be interpreted with any degree of certainty without historical-cultural and contextual analysis'. Ultimately, it is the text that will determine whether its internal information is adequate for interpretation or if a comprehension of the historical context is imperative for a nuanced understanding of the text's meaning. Thus, an interdisciplinary approach that integrates both rhetorical and historical analyses will provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the text.

Transitioning from this theoretical framework, the epistle of first Timothy exemplifies the intricate interplay between rhetorical and historical contexts, addressing a complex milieu characterised by behavioural and theological challenges. Some of its texts include personal addresses to Timothy, revealing an undertone of a deeply personal letter while also conveying messages intended for the entire church (Porter 2016:360–361). Thus, Paul[4] writes to the whole church. Genade (2015:21) supports this view,

2.'And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content' [ἔχοντες δὲ διατροφὰς καὶ σκεπάσματα, τούτοις ἀρκεσθησόμεθα]

3.An alternative to the NPL as coined by this author. Hereinafter referred to as DPL.

4.For a detailed discussion on the Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy, see Porter and Fewster (eds. 2013).

arguing that the pastors who received the letters would have read them aloud, given the oral-aural structures present in the text. There seem to be individuals who theologically challenged the church with erroneous teachings, but Paul appears more concerned with ensuring that those in the faith remain steadfast, particularly Timothy, who is entrusted with executing the Timothean mandate. Ryken (2007) asserts that:

> Paul's purpose in 1 Timothy is to help his spiritual son remain true. In the opening verses of the letter, he exhorts him to hold on to the true faith (1 Tim 1:2), to defend the true doctrine (1 Tim 1:3–4), to uphold the true use of the law (1 Tim 1:6–11), and to cherish a true love (1 Tim 1:5). (p. 15)

The primary aim of the letter is to address specific circumstances relevant to its immediate audience, as illustrated in 1 Timothy 1:3. In this verse, the author, identifying himself as Paul (Παῦλος Tm 1 1:1), reminds Timothy: 'as I exhorted you when going to Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may command certain ones not to teach a different doctrine' [καθὼς παρεκάλεσά σε προσμεῖναι ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, πορευόμενος εἰς Μακεδονίαν, ἵνα παραγγείλῃς τισὶν μὴ ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν]. Additionally, in 1 Timothy 3:15, he clarifies his purpose for writing:

> But in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. [ἐὰν δὲ βραδύνω, ἵνα εἰδῇς πῶς δεῖ ἐν οἴκῳ θεοῦ ἀναστρέφεσθαι, ἥτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος, στῦλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας]

The purpose of the writing of 1 Timothy, the social setting and the wealthy in Ephesus

The social context of the wealthy in 1st-century Ephesus presents challenges in defining who qualifies as 'wealthy'. While 1 Timothy provides teachings on riches (Collins 2013:169–172; Hoag 2015:1), it lacks clear criteria for identifying wealth, making it difficult to ascertain who the rich addressed in 1 Timothy 6:17–19 are. However, Hoag (2015:2–9) outlines three scholarly perspectives on the relationship between 1 Timothy's teachings and those in the broader New Testament:

Consistency

Some scholars argue that 1 Timothy aligns with New Testament teachings. Prominent early Christian figures such as Polycarp, Clement and Chrysostom used texts like 1 Timothy to advocate for generosity and charity (Hoag 2015:2). This perspective persists today, with modern scholars like Blomberg (2001:212) suggesting that 1 Timothy calls believers to live sacrificially, regardless of socio-economic status. Punt (2004:263) supports this by stating that Paul expected churches to alleviate poverty through generous sharing.

Inconsistency

Others claim that 1 Timothy is inconsistent with broader New Testament teachings. Critics highlight the tendency of wealthy church members to seek honour based on their affluence, potentially disrupting social cohesion within diverse congregations (Chow 1992:43). Conzelmann et al. (1989:39–41) argue that 1 Timothy 6:17–19 is paraenetic, addressing a specific moral situation in Ephesus and neglecting a theology of the poor. Hoag (2015:7) challenges this perspective, suggesting it lacks rigour.

Alternation

Some scholars propose a nuanced view, indicating that while 1 Timothy's teachings sometimes conflict with New Testament principles, they also encourage a reassessment of wealth in light of eternal values (Hoag 2015:8–9). Kidd (1990:193) notes that the text's emphasis on temporal living may undermine preparation for the parousia, but it also corrects the wealthy's attitudes towards their social status.

In conclusion, Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy serve as a foundational framework for understanding wealth, urging believers to engage with riches in a manner consistent with the ethical teachings of the New Testament, transcending specific socio-economic issues in Ephesus.

The socio-economic reality in South Africa

It is widely acknowledged that socio-economic crises are increasingly becoming global phenomena (Wotango 2023:iv). South Africa, in particular, is poised to be one of the countries facing significant economic challenges, which are likely to exacerbate poverty levels among its population. Recent statistics on poverty in South Africa present a grim picture, with women disproportionately affected. According to STATS SA, the current population of South Africa stands at approximately 62 million, with a poverty headcount of 58.6% for females, compared to 54.9% for males. Cumulatively, the overall poverty headcount is 56.8%, accompanied by a poverty gap of 27.9% (STATS SA 2023). These figures underscore the reality that a substantial number of individuals are living in abject poverty as a direct consequence of the ongoing economic crises in South Africa.

Rooi (2021:82) identifies several factors contributing to the chronic and endemic economic crises in South Africa. He notes that while unemployment rates were already high and increasing prior to the onset of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the effects of the pandemic have exacerbated the situation, elevating it to a level of chronic poverty. This phenomenon is not confined to South Africa; it is part of a global crisis. Consequently, the socio-economic recovery of South Africa may hinge on efforts to reverse the catastrophic effects that the pandemic has inflicted worldwide (Wotango 2023:1).

In addition, corporate failures associated with various aspects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) have emerged as significant contributors to chronic poverty in South Africa. This perspective is supported by Martin and Osberg (2007:35) and Mosselini (2013:40). Business dishonesty, corruption and the misappropriation of resources have left victims of these failures grappling with the harsh consequences of the culprits' actions (Rooi 2021:83).

The statistics cited earlier in the text, along with the chronic poverty arising from human actions, paint a profoundly tragic reality. It is staggering to consider that millions within the population cannot rely on either the public or private sectors for poverty alleviation. This socio-economic erosion appears to be indelibly embedded in our existence. In light of the socio-economic challenges confronting individuals, can we still ascertain who 1 Timothy 6:17–19 applies to and expect those it addresses to follow its commandment?

Rhetorical interpretation and application of 1 Timothy 6:17 as a contributing solution to South Africa's socio-economic challenges

Chow (1992:17–18) cautions that reading ancient texts through a modern lens may lead to viewing the historical situation of the 1st-century world as identical to contemporary contexts. To understand the context of early Christian communities, it is essential to explore and construct their background as thoroughly as possible (Chow 1992:18). Based on the constructed picture of the socio-historical context surrounding Christian letters in antiquity, it becomes evident that even among the wealthy of that time, there were distinctions (Chow 1992:20). Therefore, when considering the rich or the poor today, it is crucial to avoid rigid hegemonic categories as described by the NPL. Social-status categories must be perceived fluidly in identifying whom texts apply to when they delineate socio-economic boundaries.

In this regard, Schreiner (2016:168) raises doubts about the application of Timothean texts to contemporary issues, asserting that there is reasonable uncertainty regarding the normative application of 1 Timothy across all churches. Consequently, it is essential to maintain a constructive tension: while the specific context of 1 Timothy does not negate its relevance for the modern church, particular communities with unique circumstances may find it necessary to adapt the normative directives within the letter to better suit their specific contexts. Thus, there is a responsibility for contemporary exegetes to provide interpretations that acknowledge the incontestable principle that some biblical texts are normative while their applications are relative to the situations in which they are applied.

Central to this study is the exegesis of 1 Timothy 6:17, which instructs the wealthy in every context 'not to be haughty or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy' [τοῖς πλουσίοις ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι παράγγελλε μὴ ὑψηλοφρονεῖν μηδὲ ἠλπικέναι ἐπὶ πλούτου ἀδηλότητι ἀλλ' ἐπὶ θεῷ τῷ παρέχοντι ἡμῖν πάντα πλουσίως εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν]. This verse forms part of a rhetorical unit comprising Tm 1 6:17–19. If the rhetorical situation is accepted, then the dominant rhetorical objective can be understood as *commanding the rich to demonstrate philanthropy:*

- By not being arrogant [μὴ ὑψηλοφρονεῖν Tm 1 6:17b].
- By not setting their hope on the uncertainty of riches [μηδὲ ἠλπικέναι ἐπὶ πλούτου ἀδηλότητι Tm 1 6:17c].
- By setting their hope on the certainty of God [ἀλλ ἐπὶ θεῷ τῷ Tm 1 6: d].
- By doing good [ἀγαθοεργεῖν Tm 1 6: a].
- By being rich in good works [πλουτεῖν ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς Tm 1 6: b].
- By being generous [εὐμεταδότους εἶναι Tm 1 6:18c].
- By being ready to share [εἶναι, κοινωνικούς Tm 1 6:18d].

These seven ways of displaying philanthropy hinge on the imperative present verb 'command' [παράγγελλε] in 1 Timothy 6:17. The subsequent infinitives serve to modify this verb; although there are six infinitives, it can be argued that an additional infinitive may be supplied for 1 Timothy 6:17c. These modifiers encompass both positive and negative injunctions (Pao 2023:397–398). The first injunction instructs the wealthy not to be haughty. Spencer (2014:176) conveys that this term embodies the notion of high-mindedness, where the individuals perceive themselves as superior to others. This mindset not only fosters a sense of superiority but also leads to judgemental disdain for those who possess less (Caldwell II, 2017:134). In this context, the wealthy may mistakenly believe that accumulating wealth can offer them protection, while the contrasting argument posits that true security should be placed in God, who, as stated in 1 Timothy 6:13, provides all things.

Several rhetorical arguments enhance the effectiveness of this persuasion. Firstly, there is an *argument based on inclusivity*: the 'command' [παράγγελλε] implies that those above the DPL are included within the class of the wealthy. This DPL encompasses all those referred to by Paul in 1 Timothy 6:6–8. Hutson (2019:161) accurately notes that the text convincingly asserts this in verses 7–8, 'we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content' [οὐδὲν γὰρ εἰσηνέγκαμεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ὅτι οὐδὲ ἐξενεγκεῖν τι δυνάμεθα· ἔχοντες δὲ διατροφὰς καὶ σκεπάσματα, τούτοις ἀρκεσθησόμεθα]. This contentment arises from the recognition that the fundamental provisions needed for survival are basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter, even though some are not explicitly mentioned in the text. Anything beyond these essentials can be classified as wealth, thus categorising anyone who possesses more than these basic needs as wealthy. Consequently, such individuals are also included in the command of 1 Timothy 6:17 and are expected to adhere to the injunctions outlined in 1 Timothy 6:18–19.

Secondly, a contrast is drawn between the inherent limitations of wealth as a provider and the superlative ability of God to supply needs. Paul strengthens this 'argument by invoking the concept of divine provision', emphasising that the basic necessities of life do not originate from us but from God, who is the ultimate provider. The phrase 'we will be satisfied' is derived from the future indicative passive verb [ἀρκεσθησόμεθα]. As Hutson (2019:161) notes, this passive construction can be understood as 'if we have food and covering, with these we shall be sufficed' [ἔχοντες δὲ διατροφὰς καὶ σκεπάσματα, τούτοις ἀρκεσθησόμεθα]. 'Sufficed' [ἀρκεσθησόμεθα] is passive, implying that the necessities come from outside of ourselves; in this context, the antecedent is only God, who suffices his people.

Thirdly, the temporariness of earthly possessions is juxtaposed with the eternity of divine provisions. Furthermore, this argument highlights the continual opportunities for generosity, asserting that as there will always be individuals who are less fortunate, the wealthy – entrusted by God as stewards of his provisions – must seize these opportunities to share. Such actions exemplify their commitment to embodying the principles outlined in verse 1 Timothy 6:19.

It is reasonable to presume that this injunction applies to the wealthy of the present world, as it is not time-bound. However, reasonable conjecture suggests that the wealthy in the Ephesian context were not identical to those considered wealthy today. Moreover, the definition of who qualifies as 'rich' [πλουσίοις] can vary significantly across different contexts. In some cases, it may even be nearly impossible to classify individuals as wealthy if they do not meet the criteria established within that specific context. Stott (2001) argues that:

> [*W*]ealth and poverty are relative terms. Neither can be neatly defined. Among the poor, some are poorer than others, and among the wealthy, some are wealthier than others. Nevertheless, in every culture, there is a recognised difference between them. (p. 109)

The dominant rhetorical objective by Paul is to urge the wealthy to demonstrate philanthropy. He then tells them the seven different ways and the eternal incentives that come with obeying the commandment to be philanthropic. He uses various rhetorical arguments to enhance his persuasion. To further elucidate and enhance the effectiveness of his persuasion, he also employs rhetorical techniques. These techniques will be briefly explained and shown how they enhance the dominant rhetorical objective of being philanthropic[5].

Repetition

Paul employs a deliberate play on words in this passage, repeatedly using the terms 'πλουσίοις' [rich], 'πλούτου' [riches], 'πλουσίως' [richly] and 'πλουτεῖν' [generous]. Genade (2007:38, 46) posits a hypothesis regarding the stylistic composition of the pastoral epistles, suggesting that this repetition functions as a mechanism through which the author cohesively binds his theological themes. In the current text, the term 'πλούσιος' is particularly prevalent. Beyond fostering cohesion, this repetition aids the reader in grasping the significance and distinctiveness of the terms employed, ensuring that the underlying theology remains both accessible and comprehensible.

The theological framework that Paul advances revolves around faith, which is demonstrated through good works. In this context, two additional terms are used repeatedly. The first is the adjective 'good' [καλός], found in verses 12, 13, 18 and 19. The second is the noun 'faith' or 'faithfulness' [πίστις], which signifies the manifestation of one's convictions through actions and lifestyle; it appears in verses 10, 11 and 12. Louw and Nida (1996:378) interpret [πίστις] in this context as the saving truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which believers uphold as evidence of their Christian identity. Thus, cumulatively, these repetitions cohesively encourage followers of Jesus to engage in philanthropy with their riches, as this is the means by which they demonstrate their faith in him.

Antithesis

The wealthy should not place their hope in the uncertainty of riches but rather in the certainty and faithfulness of God, who abundantly provides for their needs. Several contrasts emerge in this discourse: riches are inherently uncertain for various reasons, including their inability to guarantee eternal life and their impermanence, especially at death or during the parousia. Paul employs a strong and emphatic marker of contrast in the Greek text with the term 'but' [ἀλλά]. Antithetically, hope must be anchored in God, the true provider of both wealth and the essentials necessary for making ends meet.

The preposition ἐπὶ [in] indicates that riches come from God for those who are in him. Unlike earthly wealth, God remains active in one's life, continually providing everything richly for enjoyment [τῷ παρέχοντι ἡμῖν πάντα πλουσίως εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν Tm 1 6]. His provision is comprehensive, signified by the term 'everything' [πάντα Tm 1 6:17a], which implies that he never exhausts his resources and has the capacity to provide for everyone. This argument underscores the superlative ability of God to supply and his unwavering trustworthiness as a provider.

Enargia

Enargia refers to the ability to create vivid imagery in someone's mind using only words. The writer uses words like an artist who paints using paint to present a resemblance of what they are describing (Lanham 1991:89, 189). This picture that is presented should appeal to the audience as precious and valuable. The phrase 'treasure of a good foundation for the future' [ἀποθησαυρίζοντας ἑαυτοῖς

5.The rhetorical arguments and techniques identified here are not exhaustive owing to the word limit set by the journal guidelines.

θεμέλιον καλὸν εἰς τὸ μέλλον] in 1 Timothy 6:19a presents itself as something in the *parousia* to invest in as it is precious and valuable.

Ethos

Cornelius (1998:48–49) explains that the rhetorical strategy of *ethos* is employed by the orator to appeal to moral character. For this strategy to be effective, the orator must select admirable qualities that persuade the audience regarding the standards by which goodness is measured. In 1 Timothy 6:17–19, Paul appeals to several moral virtues, including generosity – where being ready to share reflects selflessness and a benevolent spirit – and good works, which are evidenced by the positive impact one's generosity has on others. He also emphasises the importance of trusting in God as the source of provision, demonstrating a humble reliance on divine sufficiency for life. Additionally, he highlights the value of enjoying and being content with what one has, suggesting that true fulfilment transcends material wealth, and that joy is found in God's abundant provision.

Peroration

Peroration is a rhetorical technique that concludes an argument not merely by summarising the persuasion but by delivering an impassioned plea, as though it were the final and most important appeal aimed at achieving the overall objective (Lanham 1991:114, 171). In this context, the six-pronged command to demonstrate philanthropy leads to the goal articulated in 1 Timothy 6:19. There, Paul states that adhering to this command is akin to 'storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life' [ἀποθησαυρίζοντας ἑαυτοῖς θεμέλιον καλὸν εἰς τὸ μέλλον, ἵνα ἐπιλάβωνται τῆς ὄντως ζωῆς]. Furthermore, Paul's persuasion concludes with a tone of deliberative rhetoric. According to Cornelius (1998:42), when a rhetor seeks to persuade the audience to alter their actions in light of future realities, they employ deliberative rhetoric.

Wall and Steele (2012:127–128) offer valuable insights into the ultimate goal of the generosity expected from the congregation. They suggest that the act of giving mirrors God's own rich and generous nature, as depicted in 1 Timothy 6:17–18. Wealth, they argue, should be regarded as a means of public worship, particularly when shared among believers within congregations. Followers of Jesus engage in this practice because they understand what constitutes true life, as outlined in 1 Timothy 6:19 – a life lived according to God's ways, imbued with eternal significance.

Furthermore, Wall and Steele (2012:128) interpret this injunction as an acknowledgment of the diversity of social classes within congregations, affirming that God ensures there will always be individuals capable of bridging social divides and enhancing the community through their generosity. Fiore (2009) succinctly summarises the assurance offered to believers who lead a philanthropic life grounded in God, stating:

> [*T*]he epiphany of Jesus Christ is brought about by God, who alone is immortal and supreme in power. God, then, is a reliable basis of hope and the only guarantor that a converted life of generous good deeds will be rewarded. (pp. 124–125)

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to construct and interpret Paul's persuasive strategy, specifically his dominant rhetorical objective, from 1 Timothy 6:17–19, without relying on classical or Graeco-Roman, nor modern rhetorical categories. The construction and interpretation of the author's dominant rhetorical objective were derived from the scriptural text itself, serving as proof that the persuasive means the author utilises to persuade the audience to accept her or his point of view can be based predominantly on the text alone. After defining the author's dominant rhetorical objective, it was interpreted from the text. Additionally, how the author employed rhetorical means to achieve his dominant persuasive perspective was analysed. This article discovered that Paul's dominant rhetorical objective can be understood as commanding the rich to demonstrate philanthropy. The article further showed that Paul used arguments based on inclusivity, argument based on invoking the concept of divine provision and juxtaposing the temporariness of possessions. To enhance the persuasiveness of his objective, the author used rhetorical techniques including: *repetition*, *antithesis*, *enargia*, *ethos* and *peroration*. Cumulatively, the command to the rich, considered against the spectrum of the rich and the poor in 1 Timothy 6:17–19, with special application to the socio-economic reality in South Africa, is communicated as a clarion call for addressing socio-economic realities.

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T.J.K. declares that they are the sole author of this research article.

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