

D.F. Tolmie

THE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS: 1995-2005

ABSTRACT

Since the publication of Betz's article (1975) and his commentary on Galatians (1979) much research has been done on the rhetorical analysis of the Letter to the Galatians. This article presents an overview of the rhetorical analyses of Galatians from 1995 to 2005. It concludes by highlighting five characteristics of such analyses: 1. The rigid application of "the" ancient rhetorical system is on the decline; 2. Scholars who still use insights from ancient rhetoric do so in a much more nuanced way, quite often presuppose a wider background, and are more interested in functions than in categories; 3. There has been a notable increase in the use of rhetorical approaches that were not based on ancient rhetoric; 4. The fact that Galatians is a letter has received more serious consideration; 5. A new issue that has been raised is the applicability of an "evaluative" approach to Paul's argumentation and persuasive strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to set the stage for this conference. The theme of the conference is "Exploring new rhetorical approaches to Galatians", which implies that we should have a good grip on the research that has been carried out in this regard during recent years. As we are all aware, the renewed interest in the rhetorical analysis of Galatians began more than 30 years ago with Betz's article, "The literary composition and function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians" (1975), followed by his commentary on Galatians in the *Herme-neia* series four years later. Since then, the interest in the rhetorical analysis of this letter has never declined. For example, in 2005 alone, at least five new scholarly books devoted to this issue were published.¹

¹ See p. 17ff. for details.

In this paper a selection of the research that was carried out on the rhetorical analysis of Galatians from 1995 to 2005² will be presented, followed by a brief conclusion at the end of the paper in which some evaluative remarks are made. The particular time frame was selected on an arbitrary basis; it would have been better to discuss the whole era from 1975 to 2005. However, this would have entailed too much material for one paper. Furthermore, since the conference focuses on *new* rhetorical approaches to Galatians, I resolved to restrict the overview to recent publications.

The contributions of scholars are presented in chronological order; and in alphabetical order within each particular year. I originally considered another approach, namely that of grouping the approaches of scholars into categories, but owing to the diversity of approaches, this was not possible.

In the presentation of the approaches of various scholars, I have tried to be as impartial as possible. This is also why I have quoted scholars in this paper to a greater degree than is my usual custom, in an attempt to give them an opportunity to speak for themselves. Nevertheless, what is ultimately presented here remains a very brief summary of the characteristics of each scholar's approach. If one really desires to gain a full understanding of a particular approach, it is best to read the book/article oneself.

2. OVERVIEW OF RHETORICAL APPROACHES TO GALATIANS: 1995-2005

In 1995 Troy Martin published an article, entitled "Apostasy to paganism: the rhetorical stasis of the Galatian controversy," in which he utilises ancient *stasis* and argumentation theory for the rhetorical analysis of Galatians. Following rhetorical handbooks, for example, *Ad Herennium*, *Institutio Oratoria* and the work of Hermogenes, he distinguishes between four *stases*: conjecture, definition, quality and objection (Martin 1995:439). Applying this framework to Galatians, Martin (1995:440-445) then identifies two accusations against the Galatians, that they exchanged the gospel for a different gospel (1:6-9) and that they were apostatising to paganism (4:8-11). Of these accusations, the second one is identified by him as the principal stasis and classified as a *stasis* of quality. Martin (1995:445ff.) then goes on to show how this *stasis* is propounded throughout the letter.

2 I have restricted this overview to studies that have been published for the first time in the indicated time span. Reprints of articles that originally appeared for the first time before 1995 (for example, most of those in Nanos 2002) have thus been omitted.

In the final part of the article, Martin (1995:459-460) also considers the issue of the species of rhetoric to which Galatians belongs. Following Seneca the Elder, who distinguishes between *controversiae* (issues that may be contested in a court of law) and *suasoriae* (issues which cannot be contested in a court of law), Martin classifies Galatians as an example of *controversiae*, thus implying that it falls into the category of forensic rhetoric. Martin (1995: 460) also points out that Galatians is not actually a speech, but a letter, which can be best described as “a pre-trial letter written to an offending party to summon that party back to the original agreement.”

Kjell Arne Morland's study, entitled *The rhetoric of curse in Galatians. Paul confronts another gospel* (1995), focuses primarily on the way in which the anathema in Galatians 1:8-9 and the curses in 3:10 and 13 function rhetorically. For our purposes, the chapter in which Morland discusses the rhetoric of Galatians in a more general sense is important. His approach can be described as the employment of insights from ancient rhetoric, but in a cautious way. As he explains it himself: “I found it necessary to argue for a rather flexible approach that concentrates on the most widespread and conventional rhetorical patterns” (Morland 1995:236). For example, with regard to the issue of the *genus* of Galatians, Morland (1995:113-114) opts for a combination of deliberative and judicial rhetoric, although he does not consider the issue of the *genus* as such to be of decisive importance (1995:113-114). Furthermore, issues such as figures of diction and thought, the theory of *topoi*, and *stasis* theory are highlighted — all in terms of the information found in ancient handbooks (1995:115-126). In the analysis of the rhetorical outline of the letter he also uses concepts from classical rhetoric, for example *exordium* and *narratio* (1995:127-138).

Morland's approach illustrates one of the problems that must be faced if one relies too heavily on ancient rhetoric. Since *stasis* theory plays an important part in Morland's interpretation of Galatians 3, he is obliged to link it in some way to Paul. He does so by assuming that Paul “knew these conventional modes of argumentation, and that he acknowledged their persuasive force” (1995:121). Even the reception on the part of the audience is believed by Morland to have been governed by this framework (1995:127).

Dean Anderson's study, *Ancient rhetorical theory and Paul* (1999 [1996]), is highly critical of the way in which ancient rhetoric has been utilised by New Testament scholars since the 1970s. Anderson begins his study with a discussion of the available sources for ancient rhetorical theory. Three important issues are highlighted at the outset: First, that there was no uniform systematic set of rhetorical dogmata in antiquity; secondly, that actual rhetorical practice was much more pliable than ancient rhetorical theories imply; and thirdly, that only a very limited number of sources in respect of Greek rhetorical theory from the Hellenistic period until the end of the first century AD are available (1999:35).

With regard to the way in which New Testament scholars utilise ancient rhetoric, Anderson (1999:96ff.) raises several points of criticism: firstly, the classification and definition of the *genera* were not as uniform as is sometimes presupposed by New Testament scholars; secondly, it is rather pointless to classify something in terms of these *genera* without an investigation of the argumentative techniques that were associated with each *genus*, and particularly the *topoi* specific to each genre; thirdly, the intricate details of *stasis* theory are usually of little relevance for Paul's letters; and fourthly, ancient rhetorical treatises were written in order to help someone to prepare a speech, not to analyse existing speeches.

Anderson is also highly critical of the way in which scholars such as Betz and others have applied ancient rhetorical criticism to Galatians. For example, Betz's (1979) use of the forensic model has "inescapable weaknesses"; one "obvious difficulty" being that the paraenesis of chapters 5-6 cannot be incorporated into a forensic scheme (Anderson 1999:129). The same applies to Kennedy (1984) and Hall (1987), who insist that the *exhortatio* can only be explained by the fact that it is an example of deliberative rhetoric. According to Anderson (1999:131), this argument offers no solution, since rhetorical theorists simply never discussed *exhortatio* at all, whether the *genus* was deliberate or not. Another example: Anderson criticises Hester's (1991)³ attempt to classify Galatians 1:11-12 as the "*stasis* statement" of the letter. According to Anderson (1999:135), Hester does not understand the nature and purpose of the *stasis* doctrine; ancient rhetorical theorists never expected anyone to include a "*stasis* statement" in their speeches.

The question thus arises as to whether ancient rhetoric can be used at all for the analysis of a letter such as Galatians. According to Anderson (1999:144), it can be done (and he illustrates this for Galatians 1:1-5:12); but

[t]he application of rhetorical theory terminology to what Paul does in this letter should not necessarily be taken to mean that Paul himself thought in these terms. Many methods of argumentation and figures were (and are) commonly used without theoretical consideration. The approach is therefore maximalist, and more akin to how Paul's letter may have been interpreted by a contemporary professor of rhetoric (with some goodwill!).

Chinedu Amadi-Azuogu (*Paul and the law in the arguments of Galatians. A rhetorical and exegetical analysis of Galatians 2,14-6,2*) is aware of the criticism raised against the way in which Betz and others use ancient rhetorical criticism in their interpretation of Galatians (1996:36), but finds himself

3 See Hester (2002) for a further development of his argument.

to be in agreement with Betz. In fact, he finds the rhetorical structure proposed by Betz “quite appealing” (1996:24) and uses it with some minor adaptations; for example the *exordium* is demarcated as Galatians 1:6-12 instead of Betz’s 1:6-11, and the *probatio* as 3:1-5:12, as against Betz’s 3:1-4:31. Amadi-Azuogu’s discussion of the rhetorical structure of Galatians is mostly based on the work of Betz and Quintilian, with some references to Lausberg (1960).

The title of *Robert Hall’s* (1996) contribution, “Arguing like an apocalypse: Galatians and an ancient *topos* outside the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition”, indicates that he prefers not to restrict the rhetorical analysis of Galatians to ancient rhetoric. Hall (1996:435) believes that rhetorical critics have underestimated the diversity that characterised the actual practice of Mediterranean rhetoric, because they have relied too heavily on the handbooks. In particular, he calls attention to what he calls a *topos* found in ancient apocalyptic works, namely the fact that some apocalyptists “claimed inspiration, revealed God’s judgement distinguishing the righteous from the wicked, called readers to join the righteous, and showed how joining with God entailed particular courses of action” (Hall 1996:436).

As examples of the use of this “revelatory *topos*” Hall (1996:435) discusses specific instances found in 1 Enoch and Jubilees. In Galatians, Hall (1996:442ff.) finds similar examples of a claim to inspiration, revealed judgements, a call to join the righteous realm and a call for specific actions. His conclusion is that attempts to understand the rhetoric of Galatians require more than comparisons with Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks; in fact, they require “venturing beyond the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition to rhetorical practices of ancient Judaism” (Hall 1996:453).

Walter Bo Russell III, author of *The flesh/Spirit conflict in Galatians*, acknowledges that the “rhetorical tail” should not wag “the exegetical dog” (1997: 52), but nevertheless finds it necessary to include a chapter presenting his own rhetorical analysis of Galatians. He follows the six stages for rhetorical analysis proposed by George Kennedy⁴ (1984). Russell (1997:44; 53-65) classifies Galatians as an example of the deliberative *genus*, and presents the following rhetorical outline for the letter:

4 The six stages proposed by Kennedy (1984:33-38) may briefly be summarised as follows: 1. Determine the rhetorical unit; 2. Define the rhetorical situation; 3. Identify the rhetorical problem; 4. Determine which of the three genera the rhetorical unit falls into; 5. Consider the arrangement of material; and 6. Review the entire process of analysis, the success of the rhetorical unit and the implications for the speaker/audience.

Prescript/Salutation (1:1-5)

Prologue/Proem/*Exordium* (1:6-10)

Proof/*Probatio/Confirmatio* (1:11-6:10)

Heading 1: A historical argument proving the superiority of Paul's gospel via *narratio* (1:11-2:21)

Heading 2: An experimental argument proving the superiority of their sonship-through-faith via Scripture fulfilment in six external proofs (3:1-4:31)

Heading 3: A causal argument proving the superiority of their present deliverance in Christ via community observation (5:1-6:10)

Postscript/Epilogue/*Conclusio* (6:11-18).

Philip Kern's (1998) contribution to the Galatians debate is titled *Rhetoric and Galatians. Assessing an approach to Paul's epistle*. Like Anderson, Kern is highly critical of the way in which scholars have used classical rhetoric in the rhetorical analysis of Galatians. His basic thesis is that Galatians cannot be viewed as a sample of classical rhetoric; that it neither should be interpreted by means of ancient rhetorical handbooks. For example, Kern (1998:90ff.) rejects the rhetorical outline for Galatians as proposed by Betz and others. According to him, the letter simply does not conform to the descriptions based upon ancient handbooks. The same applies to attempts to label the letter in terms of one of the three *genera*. As Kern (1998:166) points out in the summary of this part of his study:

So, then, I conclude that (1) Galatians does not manifest the structural elements which have been claimed for it, and (2) it does not fit any of the three species of rhetoric as described by the handbooks.

Furthermore, Kern (1998:167ff.) argues that early Christians (for example, Chrysostom) did not regard Paul as a skilled rhetorician, and were even embarrassed by his style. It was only in the era of the Reformation that Pauline texts were analysed on the basis of rhetoric and even then scholars were aware that external categories were being projected onto the letter. Lastly, modern studies on Paul's background, on the level of his language usage and on his mode of discourse confirm the picture of a writer who is not employing the language appropriate to oratory (1998:204-255). Kern's conclusion: "Paul wrote Galatians independently of the rules of Graeco-Roman rhetoric, which ought to discourage analysis based on the handbooks" (1998:257-258).

If we cannot use classical rhetoric for analysing Galatians rhetorically, what other options are there? Kern (1998:260-261) makes several suggestions, of which I would like to highlight the following: Rhetorical studies of Pauline texts should focus on Paul's *topoi*, the devices he uses and how the shape

of his letters adds communicative force; the proofs that Paul uses in his letters should be given more attention — and in particular, the premises on which he constructs his syllogisms; and recent developments in disciplines such as psychology, pragmatics and sociology of knowledge should be utilised alongside methods such as discourse analysis and reader-response criticism in order to develop a “new rhetoric”.

Ben Witherington III (1998) organises his commentary on Galatians, *Grace in Galatia*, in terms of a rhetorical layout. In the introduction, Witherington (1998:25ff.) discusses the *genus* of Galatians. He disagrees with Betz’s assertion that the letter should be classified as an example of forensic rhetoric, and provides several arguments as to why it should be classified as an example of deliberative rhetoric. As he puts it himself:

Suffice it to say that this entire Galatian discourse can be analyzed as an effective and powerful example of deliberative rhetoric, following Asiatic conventions and style which tended to be more abrupt, bombastic and emotive.

Witherington’s (1998:34-35) own division of the letter correlates to a large degree with that of Betz:

- 1:1-5: Epistolary prescript
- 1:6-10: *Exordium*
- 1:11-2:14: *Narratio*
- 2:15-21: *Propositio*
- 3:1-6:10: *Probatio* (consisting of seven arguments)
- 6:11: Paul’s autograph
- 6:12-17: *Peroratio*
- 6:18: Epistolary closing.

Dieter Mitternacht’s contribution is titled *Forum für Sprachlose* (1999). The sub-title of this work already indicates the wide scope of this author’s approach: *Eine kommunikationspsychologische und epistolär-rhetorische Untersuchung des Galaterbriefes*. Mitternacht (1999:25-59) begins by indicating that the issue of the identity of Paul’s opponents in Galatia has not yet been dealt with adequately — a result of the ambiguity (“Doppelgleisigkeit”) of the text. The first issue that Mitternacht tackles is that of the dynamics of communication in the letter. He believes that one should not only listen to Paul, but also to the “other side”:

Wie soll sich ein Ausleger gegenüber einem solchen Text verhalten? Ist er der Polemik der Verfassers/Anklägers ausgeliefert? Oder kann er aus der Polemik einen relevanten Kern extrahieren? Kann er Wege finden die Rhetorik zu durchschauen, Argumente an ihrem Situations-

bezug zu unterscheiden und den Charakter der Argumentation sichtbar zu machen? Kann den im Text Sprachlosen ein Forum bereitet werden? (Mitternacht 1999:63).

In order to achieve this objective, he first concentrates on the “How?” and the “Wherefore?” (“Wie”/“Wozu”) by developing a communication model to successfully describe the dynamics of confrontation in Paul’s persuasive strategy in terms of authorial intent and reader expectation. The result of this phase is an overall impression that Paul uses all the means available to him in order to create and strengthen his readers’ trust in him (Mitternacht 1999:61-107). The next issue that is addressed, is the “Why?”. In order to answer this question, he uses “Attributionstheorien” from the field of psychology. This shows that the real conflict in Galatians comprises a clashing of perspectives. Paul took a “high perspective” (“Hochleistungsperspektive”) which was motivated by his view that circumcision could not be linked to following the crucified Christ. On the other hand, the Galatians adopted a “normal perspective” (“Normalleistungsperspektive”) on this issue, resulting in an almost total lack of cognitive dissonance in their case (Mitternacht 1999:109-152).

This is followed by an investigation of rhetorical practices. Mitternacht (1999:167) believes that attempts to classify Galatians in terms of the three *genera* do not solve any problems; instead, they create more problems. Therefore, he opts for an epistolographical approach, classifying Galatians as a semi-official, freely-composed letter of petition. Furthermore, he points out the “thematic chiasm” in the letter, according to which Galatians 4:12-20 forms the central and most important part of the letter (Mitternacht 1999:153-232). In the last chapter he discusses four strategies of persuasion that are very important in Galatians, namely the use of autobiography; diatribe; vilification; and enthymeme (Mitternacht 1999: 233-312).

Mitternacht’s analysis brings him to a different conclusion with regard to the background of, and reasons for writing Galatians, namely that Paul’s opponents should not be characterised as legalistic. Instead, according to Mitternacht, they had pastoral motives: they attempted to help the Galatians to avoid unnecessary conflict. Furthermore, the theological issue at stake in Galatians should not be described in terms of the law, but rather in terms of the *imitatio Christi crucifixi* — which had been threatened by the Galatians’ wish to be circumcised — a decision that had not been made in order to be obedient to the law, but actually because the Galatians wished to avoid persecution (Mitternacht 1999:314-320).

In his *Rhetorical criticism of the New Testament*, Joachim Classen (2000), a classical scholar, discusses the way in which New Testament scholars have applied ancient rhetoric to the New Testament. With regard to the way in which such rhetoric has been used in the rhetorical analysis of Galatians, he begins

by noting several questions raised by Betz's commentary. He then provides a general observation on an alternative way to use the categories derived from ancient rhetoric:

When one turns to the categories of rhetoric as tools for a more adequate and thorough appreciation of texts, their general structure and their details, one should not hesitate to use the most developed and sophisticated form, as it will offer more help than any other. For there is no good reason to assume that a text could and should be examined only according to categories known (or possibly known) to the author concerned. For rhetoric provides a system for the interpretation of all texts (as well as of oral utterances and even of other forms of communication), irrespectively of time and circumstances ... (Classen 2000:5).

To prove this point, Classen (2000:5ff.) proceeds to show how Melancthon, who wrote three rhetorical handbooks, treated Galatians. Classen quotes various examples which show clearly how Melancthon made abundant use of the tools provided by ancient rhetorical criticism (thus proving the usefulness of the system), yet he did not hesitate to introduce new categories and new terms if he deemed them necessary.

I would like to highlight the three concluding remarks towards the end of Classen's article: First, oratory and epistolography were regarded as two separate fields in antiquity; therefore, it is best to consider them separately. The theory of epistolography can be used for matters relating to style and oratory (within limits), for the consideration of issues such as *inventio* and *elocutio*. Secondly, the example of Melancthon shows that one should not necessarily restrict oneself to ancient rhetoric, but should also use modern insights where applicable. Thirdly, with regard to the issue of Paul's education, it may be assumed that Paul had probably read a fair amount of Greek literature, thus coming into contact with applied rhetoric; and, furthermore, that he must have been familiar with the way in which the Old Testament was interpreted in Rabbinic traditions (Classen 2000:26-27).

In his article "*Narratio* and *exhortatio* in Galatians according to Marius Victorinus Rhetor", *Stephen Cooper* (2000:107-135) draws attention to the way in which Marius Victorinus, a professor in rhetoric in Rome, who was converted to Christianity in around AD 355, approached Galatians. In particular, Cooper (2000:110) points out that patristic commentators such as Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, Augustine and Chrysostom never draw up full rhetorical outlines of Pauline letters like the one proposed for Galatians by Betz and others. As Cooper (2000:111) puts it:

It is sobering to observe how Marius Victorinus' eagerness to read all elements of Paul's letters as persuasive parts of a persuasive mis-

sive does not lead to a similar willingness to analyze Galatians according to the formal outlines of ancient rhetorical theory. Victorinus' disinclination in this regard must be taken as an indication of his professional judgement: that while elements of rhetorical theory can be used profitably to understand individual aspects of the Pauline epistles, full-blown rhetorical outlines are not to be discovered in his letters.

Cooper (2000:112ff.) then shows how Victorinus interprets Paul as using rhetorical figures and argumentative conventions in Galatians, but never identifies or classifies the letter as a speech. Cooper thus proceeds to describe Victorinus' approach as one based on a "functional correspondence": Victorinus could use the terms and language of the deliberative rhetoric to describe what Paul is doing in Galatians, without identifying Paul's letter as a rhetorical speech (Cooper 2000:133).

The approach chosen by *Dieter Kremendahl* (2000) is indicated clearly in the title and subtitle of his book: *Die Botschaft der Form. Zum Verhältnis von antiker Epistolographie und Rhetorik im Galaterbrief*. The main thesis of his book is that a combined epistolographical and rhetorical approach should be followed and that both approaches should be applied to the whole text, and not only to parts of it (2000:3-4). Kremendahl's epistolographical analysis yields a contradictory result. He points out that, on the one hand, one can clearly discern typical letter elements; but on the other hand, the adaptation of several juristic characteristics ("juristische Formularmerkmale") is also notable. This can be explained by the fact that Paul presents his letter in the form of an "official" document in order to emphasise his claim of being an apostle (2000:116-117).

The next issue that is tackled is that of genre. Kremendahl (2000:120) notes that Betz's (1988:121) proposal that Galatians should be regarded as an ancient apologetic letter has been criticised by other scholars. After an examination of ancient letters of defence ("Verteidigungsbriefe"), Kremendahl concludes that Galatians can indeed be described as an apologetic letter. However, he adds that two modifications should be made. First, this description only applies to the letter as it was originally conceived, i.e., 1:1-5:6, and not to the *post scriptum* (5:7-6:18). What occurs between 5:6 and 5:7 is a "Metabasis εἰς ἄλλο γένος", in the sense that Paul finishes his defence in 5:6 and, believing that he has successfully reinforced his authority, then continues with a paraenesis in letter form ("briefliche Ermahnung"). Secondly, "apology" should not be defined as narrowly as Betz defines the term. Instead of associating it with a court of law, one should think in more general terms. The concept that Kremendahl (2000:149) prefers is "Selbstdarstellung", albeit in an emphasised form — to such an extent that he refers to it as a staging of the Pauline "I" (2000:149: "eine Inszenierung des paulinischen Ichs").

For the rhetorical analysis, Kremendahl utilises ancient rhetoric. The most conspicuous difference between his analysis and those of others before him, is that he divides Galatians into two speeches (correlating with the division made between 5:6 and 5:7), each with its own *exordium* and *peroratio*:

- 1:6-12: *Exordium*
- 1:13-2:21: *Narratio*
- 3:1-5:1: *Argumentatio*
- 5:2-6: *Peroratio*
- 5:7-12: Second *exordium*
- 5:13-6:10: *Paraenesis*
- 6:11-18: Second *peroratio* (2000:160).

Lauri Thurén (2000) introduces a new concept into the debate, namely that of “derhetorizing” Paul. In fact, the title of his study on Pauline theology and the law is *Derhetorizing Paul. A dynamic perspective on Pauline theology and the law*. In the introduction of this work, he makes two important observations. First, he proposes that new approaches should be combined with old ones. Literary, rhetorical and epistolographical analyses of Pauline texts should be combined with a “theological and ideological interest” (2000:3). Secondly, he opts for a “dynamic” instead of a “static” view of Pauline texts (2000:3). When applied to the particular issue of the law in Pauline thought, this entails the following:

Instead of searching for harmonization, theological rationalization, or unnatural systematization (be the result a chaos or a neat system), we ought to recognize the dynamic nature of Paul’s expressions concerning the law, derhetorize them, and search therein for a possible invariant system of thought (2000:57).

For the purposes of this paper, what Thurén says about the rhetorical nature of Galatians is of interest. He seems to take the results obtained by Betz and Longenecker and others for granted, as can be seen in the way in which he employs concepts such as *exordium*, *narratio* and *vituperatio* (2000: 59ff.). This approach is used as a basis for interesting perspectives, of which the following one seems to be the most important: Thurén raises the question as to whether Paul was too angry to use “proper” theology when he wrote Galatians. He responds negatively to this question. Although it is indeed true that the letter is highly emotional, Thurén nevertheless does not believe that Paul was overcome by emotions when he wrote the letter. The overall tone of the letter was only a “purposeful impression” that was “consciously produced by utilizing effective contemporary rhetorical means”, “aimed for maximum effect among the addressees” (2000:63). Paul’s use of rhetoric in

Galatians is called “dramatizing rhetoric” (2000:70), which is explained as follows by Thurén:

Paul meets the exigency with oppressive rhetoric, polarizing and dramatizing the situation. He paints a stark picture and forces a choice between the alternatives. This requires him to alienate the addressees from the antagonists as effectively as possible ... and to widen the theological gap as much as he can (2000:70).

At the beginning of his *The risen crucified Christ in Galatians*, Robert Bryant (2001:52-53) notes the wide divergence of opinion among scholars practising rhetorical criticism relating to the letter’s genre. He provides several possible reasons for this situation: that some scholars tend to force the letter into a rhetorical or epistolographical pattern; that they fail to take into account the emphasis on flexibility in antiquity with regard to rhetorical and epistolographical practices; that other dimensions of the text, such as *inventio*, are not addressed adequately; and the fact that the letter’s prescript is so frequently dismissed (2001:52-54). The last-mentioned issue serves as the point of departure for his study:

[D]oes it not seem reasonable to suspect that the strange expansions in the prescript might also express a clear and intentional rhetorical and interpretive function? (2001:54).

Against this background, Bryant (2001:55-110) then investigates ancient Greco-Roman sources and identifies important principles, namely that the communication should progress in a linear fashion, and that the most important points should be placed as early, and as late as possible. Applied to Galatians, this means that Galatians 1:1-10 (a “salutation-*exordium*”) can be identified as the “thematic overture” of the letter; and three “rhetorical cords” are then identified, namely the reality and significance of the resurrected Jesus, the significance of Jesus’ self-giving, and the depiction of God as the One who calls people in the grace of Christ (2001:140-142). In the rest of the study these rhetorical cords are traced throughout Galatians (2001:143ff.)

As the title of Robert Keith Rapa’s (2001) work, *The meaning of “works of the law” in Galatians and Romans*, indicates, he focuses primarily on the concept “works of the law”. However, he does include a chapter on the rhetorical analysis of Galatians. Bearing in mind the criticism raised against Betz, he opts for a combination of rhetorical and epistolographical approaches, and accepts Richard Longenecker’s (1990) outline: 1:1-5 (Salutation); 1:6-4:11 (Rebuke section; forensic rhetoric prominent; including *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio* and *probatio*); 4:12-6:10 (Request section; deliberative rhetoric prominent; *exhortatio*) and 6:11-18 (subscription) (Rapa 2001:109-119).

In his study *The irony of Galatians. Paul's letter in first-century context*, Mark Nanos (2002) proposes something totally new with regard to the identity of Paul's opponents — or the “influencers” as he prefers to call them — in Galatia. According to Nanos, they were not Jewish Christians who opposed Paul's version of the gospel; nor were they outsiders. Instead, he believes that they belonged to Jewish communities in Galatia and that they viewed the Gentile Christians in Galatia as potential proselytes. Thus they attempted to integrate them into the larger Jewish community in Galatia by means of proselyte conversion, which included circumcision.

For our purposes the way in which Nanos approaches the letter is important. Sceptical of the way in which ancient rhetorical criticism has been applied to the letter in the past, particularly with regard to the attempts to classify the letter in terms of the three *genera* and the rhetorical layouts that have been proposed (Nanos 2002:323-331), he prefers to view the letter as “a letter of ironic rebuke”, owing to the use of θαυμάζω in 1:6 and the constant occurrence of ironic rebuke in the rest of the letter (Nanos 2002:39-51). In this process, Nanos (2002:49-51) refers to ancient handbooks on letters, in which reference is made to letters of irony and rebuke. Among the 21 letter types identified by Pseudo-Demetrius, there is a particular variety called εἰρωνικός. Pseudo-Libanius, who identifies 41 different types of letters, refers to a specific type of letter called εἰρωνικὴ, as well as another type called ὀνειδιστικὴ — both of which contain examples of expressions that are similar or exactly the same as Paul's use of θαυμάζω. Nanos (2002:51-56) also points out several other similarities between Galatians and the examples provided by Pseudo-Demetrius and Pseudo-Libanius. These include Paul's ironic use of εὐαγγέλιον; Paul's emphasis on the fact that the Galatians so “quickly” deserted him, and on their failure to perceive what the opposition was up to; and the particular way in which Paul reproaches the Galatians, namely in terms of the notions of spurned friendship and betrayal.

In his article, “‘Vergeblich bemüht’ (Gal 4.11)?: Zur paulinischen Argumentationsstrategie im Galaterbrief”, Dieter Sängler (2002) acknowledges the validity of the criticism raised against Betz and other scholars following his approach, particularly in respect of the problematic relationship between the speech and the letter genre, as well as the problems encountered when one utilises the three *genera* (Sängler 2002:379-386). Nevertheless, Sängler (2002:387) believes that Paul not only knew the rhetorical *termini technici*, but also how to use them. In the case of Galatians, Sängler (2002:389) then tries to determine which strategy Paul used to achieve his objective. In his view, the fact that Paul addresses his readers as “the congregations of Galatia” is important. This aspect, together with the use of concepts such as “sons of

God” and the repeated occurrence of “we” in the letter, emphasises the close relationship between Paul and the audience. Paul’s strategy is then summarised as “die in den Brief eingeschriebene ekklesiale Einheit von Absender und Empfänger zu stärken oder wieder herzustellen” (Sänger 2002:392). In this regard, Sänger (2002:392) points out an “antithetisch entworfene bipolare Grundstruktur” which can already be seen in the first verses of the letter and which is developed and elaborated on in the rest of the letter, in order to re-establish the relationship between Paul and the Galatians — and also in order to drive a wedge between the audience and the opponents. According to Sänger (2002:394-395), some of the strategies that Paul uses, for example, the way in which he employs emotion in order to draw the audience towards himself and alienate them from the opponents (“Selbst- und Fremdaffektion”) correlate with what was taught by Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. Did Paul actually know these techniques? Sänger’s response is as follows:

Es läßt sich kaum noch sicher entscheiden, ob der paulinische Versuch ... eine Vertrautheit mit diesem Phänomen der *persuasio* verrät. Der Apostel kann sich an die entsprechenden Empfehlungen auch mehr unbewußt gehalten und sie imitiert haben ... Jedenfalls bewegt Paulus sich, indem er sie adaptiert, im Rahmen rhetorischer Gepflogenheiten (Sänger 2002:395).

In his *Die Kunst der Argumentation bei Paulus*, Johan Vos (2002a) takes as his point of departure the notion of sophistic rhetoric in antiquity, pointing out that such rhetoric was repeatedly characterised as τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν or as τοὺς ἥττους λόγους κρείττους ποιεῖν. This notion can be translated as “the attempt to make the weaker argument seem stronger”.⁵ Vos (2002a:11) points out that sophistic rhetoric was not aimed at reflecting truth or even at achieving logical consistency, but rather at winning the argument at all costs. Furthermore, Vos (2002a:14ff.) describes the attempts by Plato and Aristotle to distinguish between the correct use, and the abuse, of rhetoric, as well as how this distinction was reflected in the works of Philo of Alexandria. What does all of this mean for the purposes of attempting to understand the way in which Paul used rhetoric? According to Vos (2002a: 24-26), Paul did not merely proclaim his gospel; he also had to defend it against other apostles and views, often finding himself in a position that was viewed by his opponents as that of the “weaker argument”. In this situation Paul used both “technical” and “a-technical” proofs, often employing persuasive strategies in very effective ways in difficult situations, to such an extent that it seems likely that his opponents would have viewed him as someone “attempting to make

5 My translation of Vos (2002a:3): “die schwächere Rede stärker *erscheinen* zu lassen” (Vos’s emphasis.)

the weaker argument seem stronger". Vos (2002a:26) also believes that the strategies that Paul used were not new as such; in fact, one can find parallels for almost all of these strategies in contemporary literature. Vos describes the aim of his own rhetorical investigation as follows: "[I]ch möchte zeigen, wie sehr die Argumentationsmittel des Apostels in der zeitgenössischen hellenistischen Kultur verankert waren, und andererseits, wie unterschiedlich diese Mittel innerhalb derselben Kultur beurteilt werden konnten."

Vos then follows this approach in analysing several Pauline texts, two of which are taken from Galatians. In the case of Galatians 1:1-2:11 ("Offenbarungsrhetorik"), he first discusses the gospel of Paul's rivals. This discussion is followed by a detailed examination of Paul's own argument and, finally, by a discussion of "Paulinische Antilogistik". In this last section, Vos (2002a: 107-109) summarises three theses underlying Paul's argumentation. These are as follows: 1. Neither apostolic authority nor the appeal to a heavenly revelation can be used to prove the content of the gospel; instead the content of Paul's gospel is the criterion for distinguishing between the true and false gospels; 2. The revelation from heaven proves the content of Paul's gospel; it is thus not necessary for him to receive the approval of Jerusalem; 3. Paul's revealed gospel must be evaluated by Jerusalem so that his mission does not turn out to be in vain. The point that Vos emphasises is that these three theses actually contradict one another, and that Paul uses all of them in spite of the fact that they contradict one another. Furthermore, all three theses can be questioned critically, both in terms of the context of early Christianity and on the basis of Paul's own views in this regard. Vos (2002a:113) believes that the "antilogische" way in which Paul uses the various notions of revelation in order to persuade his audience, is best described as "Offenbarungsrhetorik", an excellent way to make the weaker argument seem stronger.

Galatians 3:11-12 and Romans 10:5-10 are viewed by Vos (2002a:115-134) as additional instances in which Paul makes the weaker argument seem stronger. Both cases can be described as a "hermeneutische Antinomie", since in each case Paul uses two texts that contradict one another. In Galatians 3:11-12 he uses Leviticus 18:5 and Habakkuk 2:4. Vos (2002a:121) believes that Paul's argumentation in both instances exemplifies, to some extent, what was described in rhetorical handbooks as a case of *leges contrariae*, a method of argumentation that is similar to a type of reasoning found in contemporary Jewish literature. The point is that Paul's argumentation as such was not an unknown phenomenon in his time. However, this does not mean that everyone would have agreed with his way of argumentation, or with his conclusions. What was viewed by Paul and his followers as the correct interpretation of Scripture, would have been viewed by his opponents as σοφίζεσθαι τὸν νόμον (Vos 2002a:134).

Michael White's (2003) contribution is titled "Rhetoric and reality in Galatians: framing the social demands of friendship." It focuses primarily on Galatians 4:11-20. According to White (2003:308), Betz is correct in his claim that the passage is based on the ancient *topos* of friendship, but is wrong in his assertion that Paul is merely using it as a rhetorical artifice:

Rather than being an aside, an emotional outburst, or a rhetorical artifice, this passage constitutes one of the principal charges that Paul brings against his Galatian converts for failing to live up to the social demands of friendship and patronage. As such it becomes one of the more important framing elements in the entire letter (2003:311).

White (2003:312ff.) then investigates two examples of speeches in which the friendship motif is used, namely a speech by Dio Chrysostom, and one by Favorinus. White (2003:323) believes that Galatians 4:12-20 is similar to Favorinus' speech, in that it is "not a desperate appeal, but a rebuke couched in terms of friendship." Furthermore, White (2003:343) claims that the overall tone of Galatians can be described as that of rebuke. This view correlates better with the notion of epideictic speech, but suggests that it is better to consider the letter from the perspective of epistolary handbooks as an example of an "oneidistic" ("rebuking") or "epitimetic" ("censuring") letter.

Malcolm Heath's article, "John Chrysostom, rhetoric and Galatians" (2004), examines the influence of contemporary rhetoric on the commentary on Galatians written by John Chrysostom. For our purposes the following issues are important: Heath (2004:372) points out that, whereas modern scholars who read Galatians "are almost obsessively concerned with classifying it in terms of the three classes of oratory", Chrysostom never discusses this issue at all in his commentary on Galatians. Furthermore, Heath (2004:378) argues that the way in which Chrysostom uses his knowledge of rhetoric with regard to the structure of Galatians, demonstrates that, in order to use rhetoric exegetically, one cannot content oneself with simply applying "labels" from a theoretical handbook, or — even less — with forcing the text to fit into a fixed schema. Chrysostom does not operate in this way. He uses concepts from rhetoric, for example, "head" (κεφάλαιον), in order to describe the structure of Galatians. This structure can be summarised as follows:⁶

1:1-5: προοίμιον

1:6-2:21: First head (Concerned primarily with establishing Paul's authority)

3:1-4:20: Second head (Compares faith and law)

6 This is my summary of the discussion of Heath (2004:379-381).

4:21-5:12: Third head (Forceful argument on the fact that the law entails its own abrogation)

5:13-6:10: Ethical discourse

6:11-18: Return to former subject (circumcision).

In his article “Paul’s frank speech with the Galatians and the Corinthians”, *Paul Sampley* (2004) investigates Paul’s use of frank speech (παρρησία) against the background of conventions that were applicable in his own time, as illustrated in the works of Philodemus and Plutarch. His conclusion:

Paul knows and employs παρρησία, frank speech, within the conventions of his time, as a powerful tool of social transaction. Further, just as one would suspect from Philodemus and Plutarch, Paul varies the strength of the frank speech according to his appraisal of the circumstances he addresses (2004:317).

With regard to the Letter to the Galatians, Sampley (2004:301-302) argues that Galatians 4:12-20 is a “rich and crucial passage” that “can be fully appreciated only in the context of frank speech”. It “signals friendship from start to finish”. Compared to Paul’s use of frank speech in 2 Corinthians, the frank speech in Galatians can be classified as “mixed”. 2 Corinthians 1-7 exemplifies the gentlest form, and 2 Corinthians 10-13 the harshest form, of frank speech (2004:316-317).

In his book, entitled *Paul’s argumentation in Galatians*, *Mika Hietanen* (2005) focuses on Paul’s argumentation in Galatians 3:1-5:12. In the subtitle of his book, his approach is summarised as *A pragma-dialectical analysis of Galatians 3.1-5.12*. In the introduction, Hietanen (2005:2) points out that most rhetorical studies of Galatians focus on practical techniques of persuasion used by Paul, and that a possible dialectical perspective has not received much attention. A dialectical perspective is described as an exposition of “how arguments are construed and argued in view of the relationship between claims and premises, argument schemes and argument structures, soundness and fallaciousness” (Hietanen 2005:2).

Furthermore, Hietanen notes that such a dialectical analysis of Paul’s argumentation in terms of a contemporary method has not been attempted as yet. This is what he sets out to do in his book. The method chosen, namely a pragma-dialectical method developed by Van Eemeren and Grootendorst in Amsterdam, is described as “the state of the art of argumentation analysis” (2005:3). Two aspects are important in this regard: the “descriptive” analysis considers “technical” aspects of argumentation, such as structures and schemes; and the “normative analysis” considers the soundness of argumentation against a set of rules for sound reasoning (2005:3). The practical

analysis itself boils down to the following: During the first stage, all the stand-points and premises are gathered together; the important ones are highlighted; and those that are not important for the purposes of dispute are placed in brackets. During the second stage, the strategic manoeuvring is analysed: all the rhetorical moves in the passage are identified and, furthermore, the fallacies and violations of rules in the passage are highlighted (2005:73-74). Following this procedure, all ten passages in Galatians 3:1-5:12 are analysed. In a final chapter, the findings are summarised. On the basis of this chapter, I would like to highlight the following:

First, Paul's main thesis in Galatians 3:1-5:12 is identified and summarised as follows: "The Galatians should not become circumcised" (2005: 176). The argumentation is described as "multiple argumentation" with five main sub-arguments and many ancillary sub-arguments. The five main sub-arguments are:

1. It is not required that the Galatians be circumcised
2. The Galatians' spiritual experiences and the benefit of Christ are nullified if they circumcise themselves
3. All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse
4. Gentiles are freed because God sent his Son
5. Paul has told the Galatians the truth (2005:177).

Secondly, with regard to Paul's argumentative strategy, Hietanen (2005: 180-181) highlights issues such as the degree to which Paul relies on his own *ethos*; the importance of appeal to tradition and authority; as well as the sense of urgency and the affected style that characterise Paul's presentational devices (2005:181).

Thirdly, Paul's argumentation is measured critically against certain rules for argumentation, and is found wanting in several aspects. For example, the "freedom rule" ("Parties should not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or casting doubts on standpoints") and the "relevance rule" ("A party may defend his standpoint only by advancing argumentation relating to that standpoint") are violated (2005:182, 184).

Does Paul argue logically? This is the focus of the contribution of *Moisés Mayordomo* (2005), appropriately titled *Argumentiert Paulus logisch? Eine Analyse vor dem Hintergrund antiker Logik*. After a thorough investigation of the way in which Aristotelian and Stoic logic functioned in antiquity (Mayordomo 2005:27-90), he turns his attention to three Pauline texts, namely 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, Galatians 3:6-14 and Romans 1:18-3:20. In each case the particular text is investigated exegetically before a detailed analysis of its logic is provided. For our purposes, the following summary of his analysis of Galatians 3:6-14 may be highlighted: "Im konkreten Fall von Gal 3,6-12 lässt

sich eine logische Argumentation nur mit unausgesprochenen Hilfsprämissen rekonstruieren. Besonders verwirrend sind die stillschweigenden Gleichsetzungen, die hinter der Argumentation immer wieder vorgenommen werden" (Mayordomo 2005:164-165).

Mayordomo (2005:165-166) points out five problems in terms of the logic of this section:

- The transition between verse 6 ("Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness") and verse 7 ("Those who believe are sons of Abraham") is difficult to make sense of in logical terms ("logisch ... äußerst brüchig").
- Verses 8ff. imply that Abraham's blessing is totally identical to justification by faith, but this does not correspond to the normal interpretation of this section in Genesis.
- The transition from verse 9 ("Those who believe are blessed with the believing Abraham") to verse 10 ("All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse") is unclear. In fact, Paul clearly tries to force out those who rely on the law from the circle of those who are blessed.
- The premise in verse 10 that no person relying on the law can observe the law fully, does not agree with Jewish views on this issue.
- The absolute division between doing and believing in verse 12 is not motivated at all.

At the conclusion of his study, Mayordomo (2005:229ff.) responds to the question if Paul argues logically, as follows: In the light of the results of his investigation of the three sections, the answer cannot be a simple "yes" or "no", because the results of his analysis point in different directions. In the case of 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, one can easily use notions from Stoic logic to explain the coherence of the argument. However, in the case of Galatians 3: 6-14, one runs into problems, because premises are used which were obviously not shared by the recipients. In the case of Romans 1:18-3:20, logical analysis functions only partially ("streckenweise") and on the basis of a general semantic association ("eine generöse semantische Vereinheitlichung"). His conclusion:

Summa summarum kann die Frage generell weder eindeutig positiv noch eindeutig negativ beantwortet werden. Die Analysen zeigen auf der Textebene, dass sich manche paulinische Argumentationen auf logisch gültige Schemata zurückführen lassen. Auf der autorbezogenen Ebene lässt sich m.E. sagen, dass Paulus in der Lage war, logisch zu argumentieren ... Dass aber Paulus logisch argumentiert, ist eine Tatsache, die innerhalb einer Gesamtwürdigung seiner Argumentation angemessen berücksichtigt werden sollte (2005:231-232).

The contribution of *Susanne Schewe* (2005), *Die Galater zurückgewinnen. Paulinische Strategien in Galater 5 und 6*, concentrates on Pauline strategies in Galatians 5 and 6. According to Schewe, the main problem with the way in which ancient rhetoric has been utilised in the past is that issues of *genus* dominate the analysis to such an extent that individual aspects of the text do not receive enough attention (Schewe 2005:40-42). Therefore, she opts for a different approach:

Der oben genannten Schwäche des rhetorischen Analyse-Ansatzes, stärker die gattungstypische als die individuelle Textgestaltung zu erheben, ist mit einer konsequenten textpragmatischen Analyse des *Einzeltextes* zu begegnen. Anstatt sich dem Einzeltext mit den Regeln des „Lehr-System(s) antiker Rhetorik“ zu nähern, empfiehlt es sich, den Einzeltext in seiner individuellen pragmatischen Gestaltung zu analysieren (2005:59; Schewe's emphasis).

In practice, Schewe opts for a pure text-immanent approach. This entails two processes: First, a thematic analysis of each passage, focusing on the content that is conveyed (“was er sachlich transponiert”); and secondly, a text-pragmatic analysis concentrating on how the content is linguistically structured (“sprachlich gestaltet”) and the effect that the passage is likely to have on the addressees (2005:61). For example, in the case of Galatians 5:1-6, the thematic analysis shows that the theme that is addressed is “Obedience to the law and circumcision”, closely associated with the (negative) notion of slavery. All of this is contrasted with the notion of “freedom” which in turn is associated with Christ, the Spirit and faith. Pragmatically, the author directly warns the readers against accepting the notion of obedience to the law and of being circumcised. He tries to reintegrate his readers in terms of a common Christian “we”, so that they can again be in agreement with regard to the convictions shared by these Christians and view their former intentions critically (2005:72-73).

Francois Tolmie, in his book entitled *Persuading the Galatians. A text-centred rhetorical analysis of a Pauline letter* (2005), describes his approach to the rhetorical analysis of Galatians as a “text-centred” approach. Instead of choosing a particular rhetorical model to “apply” to the text, he tries to reconstruct Paul's rhetorical strategy from the text itself, with the text serving as the starting-point (Tolmie 2005:27). Since it is impossible to achieve this without any theoretical framework at all, Tolmie (2005:28) formulates a “minimal theoretical framework” to guide the analysis. This consists of the following: the identification of the dominant rhetorical strategy in a particular section; a detailed analysis of the rhetorical strategy itself (for example, by focusing on the types of arguments or on the way in which Paul argues); a distinction between the dominant rhetorical strategy and supportive rhetorical

strategies in a particular section (if necessary); and, finally, an identification of the rhetorical techniques that are used (for example, rhetorical questions, the use of metaphor and *paranomasia*). On the basis of his analysis, Tolmie (2005:240) summarises Paul's rhetorical strategy in Galatians in terms of the following six rhetorical objectives:

First objective: Convince the audience of his divine authorisation (1:1-2:10).

Second objective: Convince the audience that his gospel is the true gospel (2:11-3:14).

Third objective: Convince the audience of the inferiority of the law (3:15-25).

Fourth objective: Convince the audience that the "gospel" of the opponents represents spiritual slavery and urge them, instead, to remain spiritually free by adhering to his gospel (3:26-5:1).

Fifth objective: Convince the audience to act as he wishes them to: not to succumb to the pressure to be circumcised; to avoid the opponents; and to live according to the Spirit (5:2-6:10).

Sixth objective: Final refutation of the opponents (6:11-18).

In the final chapter, Tolmie (2005:241ff.) also discusses the most important types of arguments used by Paul throughout the letter, identified as follows: the notion of divine authorisation; arguments based on Scripture; arguments based on the experience of the audience; vilification; emotional arguments; and arguments based on shared knowledge in the ancient world.

Sam Tsang's study on Galatians is titled *From slaves to sons. A New Rhetoric analysis of Paul's slave metaphors in his Letter to the Galatians* (2005). As can be gathered from this title, the main focus of his contribution is on the way in which Paul employs slave metaphors in his letter. Nevertheless, rhetoric plays an important part in this study. After taking note of the objections that have been raised against the approach of Betz (e.g., by Kern), Tsang opts for a different approach, namely the use of "recent discussions on metaphors in New Rhetoric to examine the characteristics of Paul's imageries" (Tsang 2005:36), because such an approach provides more freedom for describing Paul's use of the slave metaphor. Tsang thus specifically opts for a modern theoretical approach to the study of persuasion. In the rest of his study this is indeed what he achieves. He divides Paul's slavery metaphors in Galatians into three categories: apologetic usage (1:10, 6:17); polemical usage (2:4; 4:30); and didactic usage (3:23-26; 4:1-10). After investigating issues such as the literary context, the cultural context and the meaning of a particular metaphor, he moves on to the analysis of the metaphor's rhetorical function. The rhetorical function of the metaphor is then described in terms of

concepts borrowed from the New Rhetoric. Two examples can be used to illustrate this. Paul's use of the slave motif in 1:1, 10 is characterised by Tsang (2005:63ff.) as an "apologetic usage"; and Paul's self-description as a "slave of God," along with its rhetorical function, is explained in terms of a category typified by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) as an "argument from authority". Paul's use of the slave metaphor in Galatians 6:17 (another example of "apologetic usage") is explained by referring to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's suggestion that an author would sometimes place the literal and the metaphorical meaning alongside of each other, particularly in the case of "dead metaphors".

3. CONCLUSION

The first impression that comes to mind when one considers what has been achieved with regard to the rhetorical analysis of Galatians during the last few years, is the wide variety of perspectives and approaches. Furthermore, one is struck by the vigour and enthusiasm in this particular field of research. Scholarly discussion has been continually stimulated by new perspectives and innovative ideas!

A more difficult issue to tackle, however, is the question as to how this phase in the rhetorical research of Galatians may be characterised and evaluated. It is difficult to isolate characteristic features when so many diverse scholarly studies are involved; and there is always the danger that such an attempt at characterisation may result in certain unique contributions being overlooked. Nevertheless, I shall highlight five characteristics which, in my opinion, can go a long way towards describing the studies that have been investigated in this paper. I also include some evaluative remarks:

3.1 *The rigid application of "the" ancient rhetorical system is on the decline.* If the studies that we have considered are compared to those that appeared during the first number of years after Betz's new initiative with regard to the rhetorical analysis of Galatians, this characteristic seems to be the most striking. As is well known, the debate on the rhetorical analysis of Galatians was dominated at first by issues such as the identification of the rhetorical genus to which the letter belongs, and the exact identification of the parts of speech.⁷ In the time span that we have investigated, we still encountered attempts to approach Galatians rhetorically in this manner, for example, that of Amadi-Azuogu, who agrees with Betz; that of Russell, who classifies the letter as an example of the deliberative *genus*; and that of Witherington,

⁷ See Tolmie (2005:3-19) for a brief overview in this regard.

who also opts for the deliberative *genus* and presents a rhetorical layout of the letter which is quite similar to that of Betz. However, such an approach was definitely *not* the dominant characteristic of the contributions that appeared during 1995 to 2005. Some scholars explicitly indicated their disapproval of such an approach, for example, Mitternacht, Nanos and Schewe. Moreover, the impressive studies by Anderson and Kern simply cannot be ignored any longer. The warnings sounded by scholars who had investigated the way in which scholars used ancient rhetoric in the past, and who had found that the ancient usage was far less rigid than the methods employed by Betz and those who followed him, also played a role. I am referring specifically to the contributions of scholars such as Classen (on Melanchton), Cooper (on Marius Victorinus) and Heath (on John Chrysostom). Scholars who still wish to follow such a rigid approach nowadays are faced with impressive arguments — even more so if they attempt to link Paul directly to a particular rhetorical system.

3.2 Scholars who still use insights from ancient rhetoric do so in a much more nuanced way, quite often presuppose a wider background, and are usually more interested in functions than in categories. From the overview above, it has become clear that the rather rigid application of “the” ancient rhetorical system has been replaced to a large degree by a more nuanced use of insights in respect of the way in which persuasion was viewed in antiquity, not only in rhetorical handbooks but also in other spheres of life. Some examples: Anderson describes his own analysis of Galatians in terms of notions from ancient rhetoric as an illustration “how Paul’s letter may have been interpreted by a contemporary professor of rhetoric”, but does not presuppose “that Paul himself necessarily thought in these terms”. Hall deliberately moves beyond the boundaries of ancient rhetoric to “the actual practice of Mediterranean rhetoric”. The point of departure adopted by Vos (the notion of τὸν ἥπτω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν or τοὺς ἥπτους λόγους κρείττους ποιεῖν in antiquity) makes much more sense than trying to force a rigid system on the letter. This is also true of certain categories that he introduces such as “Offenbarungsrhetorik”. White and Sampley’s attempts to read Galatians in terms of ancient views on friendship should also be commended. In general, one could say that scholars have become more interested in showing how Paul’s rhetorical strategy functioned (its functionality) than in finding exactly the right “label” (“labelling”) for the strategy.

3.3 There has been a notable increase in rhetorical approaches that are not based on ancient rhetoric. Such approaches were not totally absent during the first two decades after the appearance of Betz’s article and commentary. Two examples: Walter Hansen (1989) selected fifteen rhetorical techniques identified by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca for his analysis of Galatians. Paul Koptak (1990) used the rhetorical principle of identification as formulated by

Kenneth Burke in his rhetorical analysis of Galatians 1:13-24. However, such approaches have increased notably during recent years. Scholars such as Kern and Classen suggested that such approaches could actually be applied fruitfully to Galatians. At this stage several examples of rhetorical approaches not based on ancient rhetoric already exist, based on quite a diverse range of approaches, for example that of Mitternacht (development of a communication model that can be used for describing the dynamics of confrontation; insights from psychology); Hietanen (a “pragma-dialectical” approach); Schewe (a “text-pragmatical” approach); Tolmie (a “text-centred” approach); and Tsang (a “New Rhetoric” analysis). To my mind, such approaches — and others along these lines — need to be encouraged, and also used for the rhetorical analysis of the other Pauline/New Testament letters.

3.4 *The fact that Galatians is a letter has received more thorough consideration.* Naturally, the fact that Galatians is a letter was accepted from the outset. For example, Betz (1979:15) viewed Galatians as an example of the ancient “apologetic letter genre”. In practice, however, the fact that Galatians was approached primarily as a speech, quite often (though not always) resulted in the letter elements being reduced to an opening “prescript” and an “epistolary postscript”. However, among the rhetorical studies that we have considered in this paper, there were several who tried to make more of the fact that Galatians is a letter in their rhetorical approach. Some examples: Mitternacht takes the epistolographical aspects of Galatians seriously, describing Galatians as a “semi-official, freely composed, letter of petition”. Kremendahl views 1:1-5:6 as a “Verteidigungsbrief,” with 5:7-6:18 as a *post scriptum*. Nanos, highlights two types of letters mentioned in ancient epistolary handbooks (εἰρωνικὴ and ὀνειδιστικὴ) and views Galatians as a “letter of ironic rebuke”. White also approaches the letter from the perspective of epistolary handbooks, viewing it as an example of an “oneidistic” or an “epitmetic” letter.

3.5 *An “evaluative” approach to Paul’s argumentation and persuasive strategy?* In general, it could be asserted that rhetorical approaches to Galatians have almost always been dominated by a “descriptive” approach. The term “descriptive” in this context refers to the tendency to merely *describe/explain* Paul’s strategy of persuasion, with the possible inclusion of some occasional evaluative remarks questioning the soundness of Paul’s argumentation. Such a “descriptive” approach also dominated the rhetorical analyses of Galatians from 1995 to 2005, which were investigated in this paper. However, a new perspective has been introduced in some of the studies that we investigated — a perspective which I would like to call an “evaluative” approach, i.e., an approach according to which Paul’s strategy is not merely described, but also scrutinised *critically*. In this regard, I refer briefly to five examples from the studies we have considered: Mitternacht’s attempt to present a forum to the

“speechless” in Galatians; Thurén’s attempt to “derhetorise” Pauline views on the law; Vos’s view on Pauline “Antilogistik” in Galatians 1:1-2:11; Hietanen’s evaluation of Paul’s argumentation against “rules for argumentation” and Mayordomo’s evaluation of Galatians 3:6-14 in terms of a logical perspective.

To summarise: the debate on the best approach for the rhetorical analysis of Galatians is far from over. It is alive, bristling with excitement and vigour!

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