
ABSTRACT
The long history of research on Paul's style has neglected to a large extent the question of the (semiotic) meaning of the various rhetorical devices used in his letters. Instead of merely listing and classifying the rhetorical devices, an attempt is made in this essay to define their meanings in respect of two relations which they serve to mark, namely the relationship of parts of a text to one another, and of the text to the participants in the communication.

Romans 8:31-9 is analysed according to a method of stylistic analysis which takes into account the broader and more inclusive units normally related semantically, as well as the rhetorical features which serve to increase the impact and appeal of these broader units. In determining the meanings of these rhetorical devices, rhetorical principles in Hellenistic times are considered, as well as certain techniques used in modern literary analysis.

Two questions have dominated the research on Paul's style for centuries, namely:

1. Where did he get his rhetorical training: from the Greek rhetoricians, from contemporary philosophers with their discussion style (diatribe), from his Jewish background, or from some other source? Or was his rhetorical skill the combined result of all these influences? (For an in-depth discussion of this topic and the representatives of the various theories, cf Zmijewski 1978: 27-40.)

2. What kind of style did Paul use? Can his prose style be characterized as good or bad? Questions of this kind were already under discussion among the early Greek and Latin commentators such as Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, and were again debated during and after the Reformation. (For more detail, cf Du Toit 1982:1-4.)

Although these questions are of some importance, it is doubtful whether they really are the correct ones to ask with regard to Paul's style (as Du Toit 1982:4-5 has already pointed out). The reason is that broad rhetorical issues such as the possible origins of his rhetorical skill or judgments on the aesthetic quality of his writings evade the heart of the matter: We should be enquiring about the basic purpose of his letters. Paul wrote his letters not to provide models of literary excellence, but to convey God's message. The important question to ask, therefore, concerns the (semiotic) meaning of the various rhetorical devices used by Paul. In what way do these devices promote the communication of his message and how do they contribute to the impact and appeal of his argumentations? It is to this important - and at the same time vexingly difficult - subject that I wish to devote my attention in this essay.

CLARIFICATION OF THE TERMS 'RHETORIC', 'STYLE' AND 'MEANING'
Firstly, the relation between rhetoric and style. These two terms are closely related and overlap to some extent. The classical distinction is that rhetoric is the wider subject including argumentation and the divisions of a speech — introduction, statement of the case, the proofs and the conclusion — while style is the technique employed in practice when the author expresses himself in language. Style is thus only a part of the whole rhetorical process and not identical with it (Louw 1982:6). Kennedy (1963:3-4), however, has a wider view
of rhetoric and speaks of the rhetoric of sculpture and other arts in so far as they aim at changing the attitudes of people, while Turner restricts style to the syntactic level when he writes, '... style, in our view, involves the same considerations as syntax' (Moulton 1976:1). Zmijewski (1978:40-8) presents us with no less than seven different definitions of style and their representatives, apart from his own proposal. It seems as if the dispute concerning the relation between, and the definitions of rhetoric and style, is not to be easily solved.

Rather than attempting new definitions, I would like to approach the subject from a different angle. In this approach, which forms part of the publication Style and discourse, no attempt is made to evaluate or classify the various definitions of rhetoric and style. Instead of discussing the subject in terms of this distinction, attention will be paid to the way in which the concepts and thoughts in a discourse are arranged on two distinct levels: the macro- and the microlevel of rhetorical structure. The macrolevel deals primarily with the broader and more inclusive units which are normally related semantically, while the rhetorical features on the microlevel serve to relate units on the macrolevel or to increase their impact and appeal by means of various formal devices. These rhetorical features must be classified in terms of processes, for the process is the actual key to the semiotic meaning of such features.

This brings us to the function or meaning of the rhetorical features. These features are signs which have meaning for the receptors. Anything that serves as a sign of something else, has meaning in the broad semiotic sense of the word. 'Meaning' is therefore not restricted to lexical items or propositions, but the term could also be used whenever a rhetorical feature serves for its readers as a sign of something else. It is in this broad semiotic sense that the term is used in the present article.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

The specific approach to stylistic analysis to which reference has been made, is described in Nida et al (11-18; 22-45). The following summary will be sufficient for our purpose:

1. The macrolevel of rhetorical structure

The two elements on the macrolevel of rhetorical structure are progression and cohesion. Progression involves the following four discourse types:

- The first consists of a set of related events, essentially organized in terms of temporal progression.
- The second type of progression consists of the description of certain objects or events. The description may be given in terms of space or in terms of categories.
- A third type involves a set of discourse elements which are mainly related by virtue of certain logical connections between the parts. These logical relations may be classified as dependent, qualificational and dyadic. (For more detail, cf also Nida 1975:50 ff).
- The fourth basic type of progression consists of dialogue in the sense that an author anticipates the objections of his readers and provides them with solutions in advance.

So much for progression. The second major element on the macrolevel is cohesion, which is attained by the following means:

- The thematic unity within a pericope or chapter.
- The unfolding nature of a sequence.
Situational markers on the micro level such as *here*, *now*, *there*, as well as referential markers including personal pronouns, relative pronouns and so on.

While progression accounts for the diversity of elements within a discourse, cohesion accounts for its unity.

2. The microlevel of rhetorical structure.

The significant rhetorical processes on the micro level include repetition, omission, a shift in expectancies and compactness:

- Repetitions may involve almost any unit of discourse from sounds to series of propositions and are classified in terms of sounds, grammatical constructions, lexical units and propositions.
- As is the case with repetition, there are also numerous possibilities for omission. They are of two major types: omissions that can readily be supplied from the context, and those which cannot.
- Shifts in expectancies account for some of the more effective rhetorical features. The shift may be on the level of word order, of sentence structure or of lexical meaning.
- Compactness involves packing the maximum amount of meaning into the fewest possible words. It is typical of discourse formulas and credal formulations.

Just as important as — or even more important than — the identification of the rhetorical structures on the macro- and microlevels, is their (semiotic) meaning. These meanings can best be understood in terms of the five most important relations which the rhetorical features serve to mark:

- The interrelationship of parts of a text (cohesion).
- The relationship of a text to the participants in the communication (traditionally called the functions of a communication: informative, emotive, performative and the rest).
- The relationship of the text to the setting in terms of time and place.
- The relationship of the text to the real world.
- The relationship of the text to other, similar texts.

The specific method employed in the analysis of a text depends upon the type of text and the purpose of the analysis. In the case of Romans 8:31–9 we have an argumentation, concluding the long section in which Paul explains the basic notion of *dikaiosuνē ek pίstēs* (Louw 1979:94). The main purpose of the analysis is to determine the (semiotic) meaning of the various rhetorical devices used in this pericope. In order to achieve this goal, the following method will be employed: Firstly, the sentences will be broken up into their nuclear structures; secondly, I shall describe the progression in the pericope in terms of the logical relations between the nuclear structures; thirdly, attention will be paid to the cohesion of the pericope by studying its thematic unity. This will complete the description of the rhetorical structure on the macrolevel, dealing with the units which are normally related semantically.

The fourth step will be to identify and describe the various rhetorical features in terms of the processes of repetition, omission and a shift in expectancies.

The analysis will be concluded by a discussion of the meanings of the rhetorical devices identified in step four.

In determining their meanings, only two relations in which they figure will be considered, namely the relationship of parts of the text to one another, and the relationship of the text to the reader.
THE ANALYSIS OF ROMANS 8:31-9

In view of the method described in the previous paragraph, the pericope (and not the sentence or the cluster) seems to be the best unit for stylistic analysis. Romans 8:31-9 is the culmination of a long argument beginning at Romans 1:18 and dealing with the notion dikaiosyne ek pisteos. The section 1:18-3:18 forms the prelude to this central theme, 3:19-4:25 states the theme, while chapters 5-8 comment on it and conclude with the pericope under discussion (Louw 1979:95-6). It may be divided into the following nuclear structures:

1. ti oun eroumen pros tauta; — — — — — 1. Three rhetorical questions
2. ei ho theos huper hemon — — — — — 2.
3. is kath'hemon; — — — — — 3.
4. hos ge tou idiou huiou ouk epheisato — — — 4.
5. alla huper hemon panton paredoken auton — 5.
6. pos ouchi kai sun autoi ta panta hemin charisetai; — 6.
7. tis egkalesei kata eklekton theou; — — — 7.
8. theos ho dikaion — — — 8.
11. mallon de egertheis 11. 2.
12. hos kai estin en dexiai tou theou 12.
13. hos kai entugchanei huper hemon — — 13.
14. tis hemas chorisei apo tes agapes tou Christou; — 14.
15. thilipsis
16. e stenochoria
17. e diogmos
18. e limos
19. e gumnoiws
20. e kindunos
21. e machaira
22. kathos ge grapetai hoti
23. heneken sou thanatoumetha holen ten hemeran
24. elogisthemen hos probata sphagws
25. all en toutos pasin hupernikomen
26. dia tou agapasesantos hemas
27. pepeismai gar hoti
28. oute thanatos
29. oute zoi
30. oute aggeloi
31. oute archai
32. oute enestota
33. oute mellonia
34. oute dunameis
35. oute hupsoma
36. oute bathos
37. oute tis kisis hetera
38. dunesetai hemas chorisei apo tes agapes tou theou
39. tes en Christoi lesou toi kupi poi hemon.
Before describing the relations between the nuclear structures it is necessary to remark on the syntactic structure of the pericope. The syntactic structure is indicated by the couplings on the left-hand side of the text. The participle forms ho dikaión, ho katakrinó̂n and ho apóthanón in items 8-10 are all regarded as constituting separate cola, while 11-13 are embedded into the nominal element in 10, namely Christós. (For a definition of a colon, see Louw 1979:24 ff.) In items 15-21 there is an ellipse of hýmas chórisei (as indicated) and read with each of the items it explains the separate cola. Taking account of this, we may conclude that the pericope consists of 18 cola, into which 39 nuclear structures are embedded. (For a definition of a nuclear structure, cf Nida et al 1983:93 ff.)

With regard to the nuclear structures, some would appear to be too fragmentary, while others could be broken up still further. Examples of the latter are items 7 and 14, where katá eklektón theó̂u and apó tês agá̂pês tou Christó̂u may form separate nuclear structures in that they are equivalent to ‘God elects’ and ‘Christ loves’. In a similar way one may reckon with the possibility of two nuclear structures in item 38, meaning ‘no one can separate us’ and ‘God loves us’. Examples of the first, namely a too fragmentary division of nuclear structures, may be items 28-37. For the purpose of our analysis, however, these divisions are not of crucial importance and are done in this way to facilitate the description of the relations between them.

The relationships between the items listed above may be described as follows: Item 1 is generic, while items 2-6 are specifications of tauta in item 1. The unit 2-6 has important internal relations. Item 2, for example, serves as the condition for 3, with 3 the result of 2. Items 4-6 form a unit, which characterizes theós (in 2) in that it describes what God has done and will do for us. Item 5 stands in contrast with 4, and 6 is the result of 4-5. Items 4-5 provide the means for 6. Item 8 is the reason for 7, and 7 the result of 8: Because God has declared them righteous, no one can accuse them (Louw 1979:93). The same relation exists between items 10-13 and 9: Because Christ died, rose again and so on, no one can condemn God’s people (Louw 1979:93-4). Items 10-13 are all additive-different, while 11-13 are characterizations of Christós in item 10.

Items 15-21 characterize tís in 14 and they are all in alternative relations. Item 22 is added to 15-21, with 23-4 the content of 22 and 23-4 also additive-equivalent. Items 25-6 are in contrast with 14-24, while 26 is the means of 25 and 25 the result of 26. Items 27-39 constitute the reason for 25-6, with 25-6 the result of 27-39: We are more than conquerors, because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. The unit 27-39 has important internal relations. Items 28-39 are the content of 27, with 28-37 additive-different and all of them specifications of the third person singular in 38 dunésetai. Item 39 is a characterization of agá̂pe in 38.

It is certainly possible to describe the logical relations in more detail, but this brief exposition gives us an idea of the progression in the pericope. Progression is also effected by the way in which Paul uses the technique of question and answer: From item 7 onwards the pericope displays a question-and-answer structure, thus dividing items 7-39 in three basic units: items 7-8, 9-13 and 14-39.

The next element on the macrolevel of rhetorical structure is cohesion. According to Louw (1979:93-4), the main theme of the pericope is to be found in items 1-6, while items 7-8, 9-13 and 14-39 repeat and expand the theme. The main theme is: ‘God is on our side: He has given us his Son’. Items 1-3 state the fact that God is on our side, while 4-6 provide a proof for this statement: He has given us his Son. Items 7-8 are a concise restatement of 1-6,
items 9-13 expand on the proof given in 4-6, and items 14-39 are an elaborate restatement of items 9-13: The love of God in Christ is absolutely reliable. Our discussion thus far will suffice for the thematic unity of the pericope, as well as the description of the rhetorical structure on the macrolevel.

Turning now to the rhetorical features on the microlevel it seems best to describe these in terms of the processes of repetition, omission and a shift in expectancies. But before doing so, let us take a brief look at one or two interesting syntactical arrangements in the pericope, which will not be covered in the discussion on the processes mentioned. First of all there is a classic example of an oratorical period in items 4-6, beginning with hos and ending with the main verb charisētai. (For more detail on the period, cf Snyman 1982:2-8.) A similar kind of structure with the same degree of impact is to be found in 27-39, though the verb dunēsetai is not postponed to the very end of the sentence.

A second interesting arrangement is the amplification in items 10-13. The question in 9 is: Who shall condemn us? The answer to the question is given in four nuclear structures, describing in climactic sequence Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension and finally his intercession on our behalf. The possible meanings of these devices will be discussed under a separate heading.

1. The process of repetition manifests itself in various ways.
   1.1 Repetition of single items in structurally significant positions
      1.1.1 Initial position (epanaphora).
      tis in items 7, 9 and 14
      hos in 12 and 13
      ē in 16-21 and ousē in 28-37
      1.1.2 Final position in previous clause and initial position in the next clause (anastrophe).
      Theou/theos in 7 and 8
   1.2 Repetition of single items in structurally non-significant positions (anaphora).
      hēmēs or conjugations with the first person plural in 1 (eroumen), 2 (hēmōn), 3 (hēmōn), 5 (hēmōn), 6 (hēmin), 13 (hēmōn), 14 (hēmas), 23 (thanatoúmetha), 24 (elogisthēmen), 25 (hupernikōmen, a compound word and a hapax legomenon in the New Testament), 26 (hēmas), 38 (hēmas) and 39 (hēmōn)
      chōrīsei in 14, implicit in 15-21 and chōrīsai in 38
      agāpes (14), agapēsantos (26) and agapēs in 38

2. The process of omission.
   2.1 The words ‘no one, because . . .’ are lacking at the beginning of items 8 and 10 (Newman 1973:270)
   2.2 Omission of the same words (zeugma)
      hēmās chōrīsei in items 15-21
   2.3 Omission of words important for the linguistic context (elleipsis)
      esti in items 2, 3 and 39

3. The shifts in expectancies.
   3.1 Exaggeration (hyperbole)
      Item 23: Heneken sou thanatoúmetha hōlēn tēn hēmēran
   3.2 Shifts with regard to the communication function
      3.2.1 Rhetorical questions (erōtēma)
         In items 1, 2-3 and 4-6
3.2.2 Question-and-answer structures (*dialektikon*)
In items 7-8, 9-13 and 14-39

3.2.3 Literal and figurative meaning
In items 15-21 and 28-37 (personification or *prosopopoía*)
Item 24: *elogisthemen hōs próbata sphágēs* (simile)

It seems necessary to make some remarks on the use of personification (*prosopopoía*) in the pericope, and on the distinction between the rhetorical question (*eroíma*) and the question-and-answer structure (*dialektikon*). Firstly, let us consider the two most important devices used here, namely the *eroíma* and the *dialektikon*. Wherein does the shift in expectancy in each case consist? In the case of the rhetorical question, it lies in the question not being asked to obtain, but to give information (see items 1, 2-3 and 4-6). With the question-and-answer structure the shift consists in the speaker or writer answering his own question (as in items 7-8; 9-13; 14-39). In view of this distinction, items 1, 2-3 and 4-6 belong together as rhetorical questions, while items 7-8, 9-13 and 14-39 are examples of *dialektika*. A progression in the length of the units may now be observed. Of the rhetorical questions, item 1 is the shortest, items 2-3 are longer and items 4-6 the longest. The examples of *dialektika* exhibit a similar progression: 7-8 is the shortest unit, 9-13 is longer and 14-39 the longest.

Concerning the personifications in 15-21 and 28-37 the following: All the terms used here are regarded as active agents, that is 'persons' capable of separating us from the love of Christ. This is the reason why *tis* is used in item 14 instead of *ti* -- a rhetorical device in Greek causing some problems for translators (Newman 1973:172).

THE MEANINGS OF THESE RHETORICAL DEVICES
In determining the possible meanings of the various devices listed in the foregoing discussion, two scholarly viewpoints will be taken into account. The first is a study of the influence of rhetorical principles in Hellenistic times. These principles are reflected in the theoretical works of Demetrius, the Auctor ad Herennium, Longinus and others, and they are important indicators of how the various rhetorical devices functioned in the writings of the Hellenistic period. The second approach is the broader framework of modem literary analysis in which rhetorical features are studied and described in terms of their (semiotic) meanings. These meanings will be described in just two relations which they serve to mark, namely the relationship of parts of the pericope to one another and the relationship of the text to the reader.

The first relationship is actually an aspect of cohesion. Repetition is the most important way in which cohesion is attained, and this process is very active in Romans 8:31-9. It serves to strengthen the ties between the larger units in the discourse, and also between the nuclear structures. A few examples:

The repetition of *tis* has a cohesive function in 7, 9 and 14, where it introduces three *dialektika* (7-8, 9-13 and 14-39). The repetition of the first person plural -- both in pronouns and in conjugations -- throughout the pericope also serves cohesion (items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 13, 14, 23-6, 38 and 39). Cohesion is also attained in items 14-39 by the repetition of *chōrēsei* and *agápēs* in 14 and 38. Occurring both at the beginning and at the end, they mark items 14-39 as a separate unit. (Strengthening this demarcation is the chiasm: What can separate us from Christ's love (14) -- list of possibilities (15-21) -- list of possibilities (28-37) -- nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ (38-9).) In items 1, 2-3 and 4-6 we have
three rhetorical questions, followed by three *dialektika* in 7-8, 9-13 and 14-39. The repeated use of the same kind of rhetorical device on this broad level also serves a cohesive function, and at the same time reinforces the thematic cohesion on the macrolevel in that the main theme of the pericope is stated in terms of three rhetorical questions, while the expansion of the theme is done in the form of question and answer.

Turning to the logical relations between nuclear structures we may note the following: The relation between items 7 and 8 is strengthened by the repetition of *theos* at the end of 7 and the beginning of 8. The additive-different relation between 12 and 13 is strengthened by the repetition of *hos* at the beginning of both items, as are the alternative relations in 16-21 by the repetition of *e*. In the same way the additive-different relations in 28-37 are strengthened by the repetition of *oûte* at the beginning of each item.

Omissions may also serve a cohesive function, though it is doubtful whether the ellipse of *esti* in items 2 and 3 does so. It is more probable that the omission of 'no one, because ...' at the beginning of items 8 and 10 is cohesive, while *hêmas chôrîsei* omitted in 15-21 may tie these to item 14.

It is also possible that the conciseness of these items – owing to omission – gives force to them, especially in 8 and 10. But the forceful quality of this pericope is indicated by various other rhetorical devices – especially in view of what Demetrius has to say on the subject of forceful style in his *peri hermêneias*. Of ancient writers on rhetorical theory, Demetrius presents us with the most information concerning the features of this type of style. He considers the following devices to be particularly forceful: (For more detail see Cronje 1982:7-14; paragraph numbers below correspond to those in the Loeb edition of *On style*.)

The oratorical period (par 20).
Similes (par 273).
Compound words (par 275).
*Epanaphora* (par 268).
Climax (par 270).
*Eroîma* (par 279).
*Hyperbolê* (par 283).
*Prosopopoïia* (parr 265-6).

These devices are all used in Romans 8:31-9 (several of them described above under 'shifts in expectancies'). The possible meanings of the rhetorical devices discerned so far, may thus be summarized as

- To strengthen the cohesion in the pericope as a whole;
- to strengthen the demarcation of the larger units in the discourse;
- to reinforce the thematic cohesion on the macrolevel;
- to strengthen the ties between the nuclear structures on the macrolevel;
- to characterize the discourse as forceful.

In what way do the rhetorical devices mark the relationship of the text to the reader?

Firstly, the frequent use of the first person plural throughout the pericope – in contrast with the preceding pericopes where the first and second persons alternate – is a sign of the association between writer and reader.

A second possible meaning is the creation of tension between text and reader. The period (4-6) at the end of the series of questions (1-6), as well as the period (27-39) at the end of the question-and-answer series (7-39) create tension in the reader – a tension that is kept till the end of both periods and dissolved by the last word or words. The progressive
lengthening of the questions in 1-6 and the question-and-answer units in 7-39 may also contribute to the building-up of tension and its dissolution at the end.

The three rhetorical questions with which the pericope begins, in addition to the question-and-answer structures used in the rest of it, may signal a strong emotive appeal. Emotion is also created by amplification (according to Quintilian VIII, 4) as in items 10-13, while the Auctor ad Herennium in IV, 66 regards a figure like *prosopopoeia* as strongly emotive. Various rhetorical features are thus used to influence the emotions of the readers.

A final possible meaning emanates from the previous one. By stirring up their emotions the author could persuade his readers to share his own thoughts and sentiments. According to Demetrius persuasion is one of the primary objectives of forceful style (Cronje 1982:6), while the function of the rhetorical question— to convince the readers— is also stressed by Longinus in his *On the sublime* XVIII, 1.

To summarize: With regard to the relationship of the text to the reader, the various rhetorical devices in Romans 8:31-9 may signal any or all of the following:

- An association of the writer with his readers;
- strong emotions;
- tension;
- persuasion.

**CONCLUSION**

In my introduction, the purpose of this investigation was described as an attempt to determine the meanings of the rhetorical devices used in Romans 8:31-9 by means of a comprehensive approach to stylistic analysis—a method that is not content with the mere listing or classification of rhetorical devices, but which aims at defining their meanings in terms of certain processes. Several meanings were identified with the aid of techniques used in modern literary analysis, and by applying the rhetorical principles of the Hellenistic period, reflected in prominent theoretical works of the time. There may be more meanings for the rhetorical devices listed above, but those mentioned seem to be the most obvious ones in view of the subject matter under discussion and the concluding and summarizing nature of the pericope.

Certain problems, however, require further investigation. Is it proper to refer both to the views of Hellenistic theorists and those of modern literary analysts in describing the semiotic meanings of ancient texts? If this is acceptable practice—as I have assumed in the present article—must one aim at identifying universal rhetorical devices and their meanings, or are the rhetorical devices language-specific, while their meanings are universal? It seems—even at this early stage—as if at least some of the devices and meanings listed above are universal, but this provisional conclusion must be tested by a broader comparative study of style and meaning in ancient and modern writings.

**WORKS CONSULTED**


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