

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS, PART 1*

Walter B. Russell

In recent years several new hermeneutical approaches to the Scriptures have arisen. One of the most promising, yet formidable and sometimes inscrutable, approaches is that of "rhetorical analysis" or "rhetorical criticism." The barrage of Latin terminology used in rhetorical analysis is enough by itself to deter most exegetes who were deprived of a classical education. Add to this difficulty some exposure to extreme applications of rhetorical analysis in a few biblical books, and evangelical exegetes may be totally deterred from investigating this interpretive tool.

This two-part series seeks to present rhetorical analysis within a positive, yet discerning light. This first article introduces rhetorical analysis by describing this interpretive tool, specifying the procedure of rhetorical analysis, illustrating this procedure by applying it to the Book of Galatians, and analyzing previous rhetorical analyses of Galatians. The second article will offer a full-orbed rhetorical analysis of Galatians.

While rhetorical criticism¹ and epistolary criticism are

Walter B. Russell is Associate Professor of New Testament, Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, California.

* This is part one of a two-part series.

¹ See Vernon K. Robbins and John H. Patton, "Rhetoric and Biblical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 327-50, for the history and development of modern rhetorical criticism in biblical studies through 1979. See Wilhelm Wuellner, "Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 448-63 for a stimulating overview of the two competing versions of rhetorical criticism and of the direction rhetorical criticism is taking in biblical studies. The rhetorical analysis given by the present writer seems to be closer to the version preferred by Wuellner "in which rhetorical criticism is identical with practical criticism" (453). The specific model followed is the classical model of rhetorical criticism advocated by George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

normally applied in separate processes, these two hermeneutical tools need to be integrated in a single analysis. In responding to Brinsmead's analysis of Galatians,² Aune has noted the necessity of such integration.

The chief value of this book lies in the author's persuasive argument that the letter form (in view of the flexibility of its use) cannot be used as the hermeneutical key for understanding compositions like Galatians. One must, of necessity, turn to other genres taken into the letter form (such as those from oratory) in order to understand adequately NT letters.³

As many have noted, the apologetic nature and persuasive intent of Galatians indicates that it can be analyzed and described according to the canons of ancient rhetoric.⁴ It is the first of the New Testament epistles to be submitted to such a hermeneutical process. Assuming that rhetorical analysis is appropriate for Galatians, one should expect that it will reveal the extent to which Paul wed oratorical or rhetorical genres with the epistolary genre in Galatians. Rhetorical analysis should thereby provide some additional hermeneutical keys for understanding the argument of Galatians. However, in seeking to integrate rhetorical and epistolary analyses, one faces the question, "Which schema is the dog and which is the tail and which wags which?"⁵ For this study, the rhetorical analysis provides the primary schema.

² Bernard H. Brinsmead, *Galatians—Dialogical Response to Opponents*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 65 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1982).

³ David E. Aune, "Review of Galatians—Dialogical Response to Opponents," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 147.

⁴ For an up-to-date and valuable bibliography on ancient rhetorical theory, rhetoric in the Greco-Roman world and its modern legacy, and the rhetoric of the New Testament see Duane F. Watson, "The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: A Bibliography," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (1988): 465-72, and idem, "The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: A Bibliographical Update," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (1990): 513-24. For a helpful introduction to rhetoric and the New Testament, in addition to Kennedy's work listed in note 1, see Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1990) and his section on Galatians (66-73).

⁵ The hermeneutical question here is really one of form versus function. Rhetorical analysis emphasizes the latter and the pragmatic dimension of texts, while epistolary analysis focuses on the literary form of the text. In Galatians the rhetorical traits are both more obvious and numerous than the epistolary traits. Therefore the following analysis will enter through what seems to be the easier door and will seek to shed light on the epistolary form. This will perhaps be more fruitful than seeking to understand Paul's argument by first emphasizing the epistolary form of Galatians. A review of some of the major commentaries centering on the epistolary analysis of Galatians reveals how little insight this approach has yielded and how little structural consensus has been achieved. See Bernard Lategan, "Is Paul Defending His Apostleship in Galatians?" *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 411-16, for helpful comments on these methodological considerations in the study of Galatians.

A DESCRIPTION OF RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Rhetoric was crisply described by the ancients. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever."⁶ In *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (sometimes attributed to Cicero), the author similarly described the task of rhetoric: "The task of the public speaker is to discuss capably those matters which law and custom have fixed for the uses of citizenship, and to secure as far as possible the agreement of his hearers."⁷ Quintilian, an ancient expert in rhetoric, noted, "Finally, those critics who hold that the aim of rhetoric is *to think and speak rightly*, were on the correct track."⁸

These early descriptions of rhetoric reveal that it was viewed essentially as the art of persuasive thinking and communicating. Quintilian's helpful survey of the views of rhetoric within the handbooks of his day reveal that this persuasion was generally in the form of an oration.⁹

Modern works on rhetoric recognize that while classical rhetoric was not as monolithic in its rationale as some histories' have led us to believe, the system of rhetoric that prevailed in the schools for the next 2,000 years was remarkably uniform in its main orientation and in a good many of its accidental features.¹⁰

Because of this uniformity, modern scholars still define rhetoric as "the art of persuasive oratory"¹¹ or as "a communicator's intentional use of language and other symbols to influence or persuade selected receivers to act, believe, or feel the way the communicator desires in problematic situations."¹² "Rhetoric is that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes."¹³ Therefore "rhetorical analysis" is the at-

⁶ Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library, Aristotle, vol. 22, no. 193 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926) 1.2.1. (p. 15).

⁷ *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1, no. 403 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954) 1.2.1. (p. 5).

⁸ Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols., Loeb Classical Library, nos. 124-27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920—1922) 2.15.37 (1:317).

⁹ *Ibid.* 2.14-15 (1:297-319).

¹⁰ Edward P. J. Corbett, ed., *Rhetorical Analyses of Literary Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), xii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹² Robert Cathcart, *Post Communication: Rhetorical Analysis and Evaluation*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1981), 2.

¹³ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 3.

tempt "to understand *how* or *why* a message was effective."¹⁴ This hermeneutical analysis "takes the text as we have it, whether the work of a single author or the product of editing, and looks at it from the point of view of the author's or editor's intent, the unified results, and how it would be perceived by an audience of near contemporaries."¹⁵

Given these descriptions of rhetoric and rhetorical analysis, the question of the Apostle Paul's exposure to rhetoric and rhetorical training is often raised. Is it appropriate to use classical rhetorical canons to evaluate an epistle written by a Jewish Christian missionary? Questioning the value of rhetorical analysis on Paul's epistles, Russell raises four objections to Betz's¹⁶ application of rhetorical analysis to Galatians.

1. The strange terminology of rhetorical analysis seems to obscure rather than illumine the text. In other words, at the pragmatic level it does not seem to be helpful to the reader.
2. Did Paul really sit down and dictate Galatians with the carefully shaped apologetic structure already in place? Does not the passionate, deeply concerned, fierce, uninhibited language of the epistle militate against Paul's preoccupation with the literary and rhetorical concerns?
3. Did Paul really make use of a Greek or Latin apologetic genre? Betz can offer no single instance of an apologetic genre with which to compare Galatians. Also, this genre ignores elements in the epistle that are not apologetic at all.
4. As Wayne Meeks has pointed out elsewhere, Betz treats his theory of apologetic genre as if it were accepted fact in his later arguments. If this theory fails, then much of his argumentation will have to be seriously qualified.¹⁷

On the other hand, in view of the broad, pervasive, and foundational nature of rhetorical training in the Mediterranean world, it is extremely likely that Paul was trained rhetorically in Tarsus or Jerusalem.¹⁸ Even if this is not the case, he may have

¹⁴ Cathcart, *Post Communication: Rhetorical Analysis and Evaluation*, 4.

¹⁵ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 4.

¹⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, "2 Cor 6:14—7:1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973): 88-108.

¹⁷ E. A. Russell, "Convincing or Merely Curious? A Look at Some Recent Writings on Galatians," *Irish Biblical Studies* 6 (1984): 157-61. .

¹⁸ See Hans Dieter Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul," in *L'Apotre Paul*, ed. A. Vanhoye, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 73 (Leuven: Peeters/Leuven University Press, 1986): 16-21, for a brief, but well-documented survey of the 1,800-year history of the study of Paul's use of rhetoric. Betz notes that the question of Paul's study of rhetoric was debated as early as Clement of Alexandria and Augustine. Apart from the likelihood that Paul was well trained in rhetoric, his use of rhetoric may perhaps be posited because his readers would have expected it. He would have had little

"picked up his rhetorical skills during his career as an itinerant preacher and disputant, in debate and possibly by self-tuition."¹⁹

Both Forbes and Brinsmead launch passionate arguments that Paul had a full education in formal Greek rhetoric.²⁰ Such rhetoric had already penetrated the Jewish system of education.

The question of Paul's educational level is probably less clear-cut than often thought, but the answer is simpler. It has traditionally been posed in terms of Tarsus or Jerusalem, with the balance now tipped strongly in favour of the latter. But this choice may have set a false trail. To have been brought up in Tarsus need not have committed Paul to a full rhetorical education, let alone a philosophical one (both of which were a matter of tertiary training involving much time and money), while being in Jerusalem need not have excluded him from at least a general acquaintance with the Greek cultural tradition. Half of Gamaliel's pupils are said to have been trained in the wisdom of the Greeks.²¹

Respected Jewish scholar David Daube has gone much further in admitting the influence of Greek rhetorical education on early rabbinical thought. He has argued that by 30 B.C., when Hillel set forth his seven main ideas and seven hermeneutical rules,²² these fundamental expressions of Judaism had already been derived from Hellenistic rhetoric.²³ Daube's paralleling of these hermeneutical rules with amazingly similar rules from Greek rhetorical sources is particularly persuasive.²⁴ Even as a rabbinical student Paul may have been exposed to Hellenistic rhetoric as a foundational element of his training.

Another argument for the legitimacy of the rhetorical analysis of Galatians is philosophical in nature.

choice, in a real sense, due to his readers' anticipation, except to use rhetoric. These kinds of cultural conventions and expectations favor rhetorical argumentation. However, in the absence of further evidence, such expectations can only be deemed likely, not definitive, at this point. Admittedly the use of rhetoric is more obvious in epistles such as 1 Corinthians (esp. chaps. 1-3).

¹⁹ C. Forbes, "Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony: Paul's Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 22, 24, and Brinsmead, *Galatians*, 45-46.

²¹ E. A. Judge, "St. Paul and Classical Society," *Jahrbuch fur An-ti-he and Christentum* 15 (1972): 29.

²² Neusner, however, strongly questions the traditional Jewish view that attributes these ideas and rules to Hillel ("The Use of the Later Rabbinic Evidence for the Study of First-Century Pharisaism," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. William Scott Green [Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1978], 215-25).

²³ David Daube, "Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 22 (1949): 239-64.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 251-60.

Though rhetoric is colored by the traditions and conventions of the society in which it is applied, it is also a universal phenomenon which is conditioned by basic workings of the human mind and heart and by the nature of all human society. Aristotle's objective in writing his *Rhetoric* was not to describe Greek rhetoric, but to describe this universal facet of human communication.²⁵

If, in fact, the use of rhetoric and the analysis of such use is a universal and transcultural phenomenon, then Russell's criticism of such use is undercut. Two concessions must be made in drawing this conclusion, however. One is that the universal nature of rhetoric is greatly clouded when only the classical Greek and Latin rhetorical terms are used. If one persists in using this somewhat esoteric terminology, then he should explain that this is simply one cultural expression of universal patterns of thought. This admission avoids an overdependence on the historical justification of Paul's training in rhetoric, even though it is probably legitimate. A second concession is that the supposed "universal" nature of rhetoric may also somewhat cloud the issue. The limitation of the rhetorical phenomenon to Western culture and those cultures greatly influenced by Western culture may be a safer and less ethnocentric way to express the widespread appearance of rhetoric until its true universal aspect can be validated.²⁶ Even with this limitation, however, the influence of the Greek educational system on Jewish culture is well established.²⁷

THE PROCEDURE OF RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

On the logical procedure of rhetorical analysis Greenwood writes, "The first concern of the rhetorical critic is to define the limits of the literary unit, his second is to recognize the structure of a composition and to discern the configuration of its component parts, noting the different rhetorical devices that it contains."²⁸ While showing good sensitivity to the circular process of any hermeneutical analysis, Kennedy expands Greenwood's suggested procedure for rhetorical analysis to six stages.

1. Determine the *rhetorical unit* to be studied, which corresponds to the pericope in form criticism.
2. Define the *rhetorical situation* of the unit. This roughly corresponds to the *Sitz im Leben* of form criticism.

²⁵ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 10.

²⁶ See Wuellner, "Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 449, ns. 4-5 for some attempts in this direction.

²⁷ Cf. Judge, "St Paul and Classical Society," 30, n. 60.

²⁸ David Greenwood, "Rhetorical Criticism and *Formgeschichte*: Some Methodological Considerations," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 418.

3. In many rhetorical situations the speaker may face one overriding *rhetorical problem* that may be particularly visible at the beginning of the discourse.
4. Determine which of the three *species of rhetoric* the rhetorical unit fits judicial, deliberative, or epideictic.
5. Consider the *arrangement of material* in the text in terms of its subdivisions, persuasive effect of the parts, their coordination, devices of style, etc.
6. *Review the process* of analysis by looking back over the entire unit and reviewing its success in addressing the rhetorical situation and what the implications may be for the speaker or audience.²⁹

This six-step process will be employed in the following analysis of the Book of Galatians.

STAGES 1-4 IN THE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF GALATIANS: DETERMINING THE RHETORICAL UNIT, SITUATION, PROBLEM, AND SPECIES

Obviously the Book of Galatians is the rhetorical unit to be analyzed. However, in following the first stage of rhetorical analysis a brief word about the nature of this unit of text is needed. Paul addressed the Galatian epistle to the ἐκκλησία (Gal. 1:2) of Galatia. This almost certainly means that he designed it to be read aloud in those assemblies.³⁰ In this sense Galatians functions like a speech and thereby emphasizes linear presentation. "The audience hears the words in progression without opportunity to review what has been said earlier, and an

²⁹ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 33-38.

³⁰ Various authors have argued that Paul's letters were meant to be read orally to their first recipients. See especially Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic and the Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 245; Lars Hartman, "On Reading Others' Letters," in *Christians among Jews and Gentiles*, ed. George W. Nickelsburg and George W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 139; and James D. Hester, "The Use and Influence of Rhetoric in Gal 2:1-14," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 42 (1986): 387-92. Stowers shows how close epistolary theory and ancient rhetoric are by demonstrating how the basic classification of types of epistles was borrowed from the three types of rhetoric (Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, *Library of Early Christianity*, vol. 5, ed. Wayne A. Meeks [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 51-57). Even though this had limitations, it provided the fundamental structure for epistolary typology. See Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, ed. Bernard Brandon Scott (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 2-11, and John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 189-93, for helpful discussions of the relationship between epistolary theory and rhetoric. Also see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Methuen, 1982), and Paul J. Achtemeier, "Omne Verbum Sonta: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990): 3-27 for strong advocacy of the oral nature of the New Testament in light of the oral environment of the first century.

orally received text is characterized by a greater degree of repetition than is a text intended to be read privately."³¹

While the rhetorical unit of Galatians has some of the features of an epistle, particularly in its prescript and postscript,³² the bulk of the epistle (1:6-6:10) has more of the features of a speech. In fact modern rhetoricians view Galatians and all or parts of other Pauline Epistles from this oration perspective and work within the framework of tracing the "argumentation," rather than from within the traditional perspective of literary theory.³³ In their analyses argumentation is viewed as the use of discourse "to influence the intensity of an audience's adherence to certain theses."³⁴ These features of argumentation within Galatians and its obvious public and oral nature make it a prime candidate for rhetorical analysis. The rhetorical situation of Galatians underscores this fact.

The second stage in rhetorical analysis is defining the rhetorical situation or essentially the *Sitz im Leben* that gave rise to the discourse. Bitzer defined the rhetorical situation as "a complex of persons, events, objects and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence."³⁵ Bitzer then defines any "exigence" as "an imperfection marked by urgency."³⁶ A rhetorical exigence must be capable of being modified only by means of the discourse and not by action other than that advocated in the discourse. Also there is generally "at least one controlling exigence which functions as the organizing principle: it specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected."³⁷ Determin-

³¹ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 37.

³² Cf. Brinsmead, *Galatians—Dialogical Response to Opponents*, 57-67.

³³ See, for example, Wilhelm Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans: An Alternative to the Donfried-Karris Debate over Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 152-53.

³⁴ Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 14. Also see Watson, "The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: A Bibliography," 470-72, and idem, "The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: A Bibliographical Update," 520-23, for bibliographies on the eight Pauline Epistles that have been rhetorically analyzed so far.

³⁵ Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 6.

³⁶ Ibid., 7.

³⁷ Ibid. For varying responses to Bitzer's article, see James D. Hester, "The Use and Influence of Rhetoric in Galatians 2:1-14," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 42 (1986): 391, n. 16.

ing this controlling "imperfection marked by urgency" corresponds to the third stage of Kennedy's rhetorical analysis, namely, determining the rhetorical problem.

When applying these insights to Galatians to determine the rhetorical situation that called forth this discourse and the rhetorical problem that functions as an organizing principle, the conclusions reached in an earlier article about the identity of Paul's opponents come to bear.³⁸ Specifically the rhetorical situation is the entry into Galatia of Jewish Christian "teachers," apparently from Jerusalem or Judea, who advocated the long-held Jewish model of Gentile attachment to ethnic Israel by becoming proselytes. In the words of Galatians these Gentiles were being "Judaized" or taught that they must *Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆν* ("live as Jews") if they were to be considered a part of God's people (Gal. 2:14). These teachers also must have overtly taught or at least inferred that Paul's apostolic credentials were inadequate and his gospel was a distortion of the tradition that had been handed down to him from the Jerusalem apostles. He was therefore untrustworthy, for he distorted and contradicted the "true gospel" represented by the Twelve and themselves.³⁹ Therefore the Judaizers had come to supplement Paul's trimmed-down gospel and to bring to completion the Galatians' salvation (3:3).⁴⁰ Their appeal to the Jerusalem apostles was, of course, fallacious (Acts 15:24), but the Galatian Christians apparently did not know that.

The rhetorical problem of Galatians that functions as an organizing principle is twofold. Paul was responding to the problems of identity and behavior created by his Judaizing opponents. This understanding means that the traditional view of the problem of Galatians as being primarily one of justification by faith versus justification by works, (Martin Luther's view) should be altered somewhat. While emphasizing justification by faith, Paul was addressing the broader issues of Gentile incorporation into the church and how the behavior or ethics of these Gentile converts was to be constrained. Others have differed from the traditional understanding of the main problem in Galatians.⁴¹

³⁸ Walt Russell, "Who Were Paul's Opponents in Galatia?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (1990): 329-50.

³⁹ Daniel H. King, "Paul and the Tannaim: A Study in Galatians," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 349-61.

⁴⁰ John M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987): 86-90.

⁴¹ Examples are Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches of Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 28-33, and W. D. Davies, *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 172-88.

While this is frequently overstated, it is necessary nevertheless.⁴² A helpful compromise is suggested by Gordon.

One can now see that Paul's polemic at Galatia may best be understood as a polemic regarding identity symbols. Shall the people of God be identified by Torah or by Christ? Which symbol is appropriate for the present redemptive-historical circumstances? The polemic is not in the first place soteriological (that is, faith or works as instrument of justification) but eschatological (whether God has fulfilled the promises to Abraham by means of the Christ-event) and, by consequence, ecclesiological (whether the believing Gentiles are in fact full members of the covenant community).⁴³

Barclay echoes this understanding of the problem and appropriately adds the second aspect of the rhetorical problem.

The issues at stake in the Galatian crisis were the identity of these Galatian Christians and their appropriate patterns of behaviour: should they regularize and confirm their place among God's people by getting circumcised and becoming proselytes? And should they adopt the ritual and ethical norms of the Jewish people? Our investigation has demonstrated how attractive and reasonable the agitators' proposal in these matters appeared.⁴⁴

Succinctly stated, the rhetorical problem of Galatians caused by the rhetorical situation of the Judaizing opponents' teaching is the newfound confusion among the Galatian churches about their identity (Should they adopt Jewish practices of circumcision and Torah observance to become a part of the true people of God?) and about their pattern of behavior (Should they take up the yoke of Torah to pattern and constrain their behavior?). Paul responded to this rhetorical problem with a specific rhetorical purpose for the Epistle to the Galatians: to persuade the Galatians to reject the Judaizers' nongospel and to continue in the true gospel which he had preached to them because it alone was legitimately confirmed, and had placed them among the true people of God through faith in Christ, and it alone gave true deliverance from sin's powers through receiving the Holy Spirit.

The question now becomes, In responding with this purpose to the overriding rhetorical problem of confused identity and con-

⁴² Whiteley writes, "I believe St. Paul in Galatians was concerned primarily not with sin as such but with the Jew/Gentile tension in the Christian Church, which is simply one case of the inter-group tensions which now fill the headlines. Since this particular tension, the tension between Jews and Gentiles within the Christian Church, soon became a dead issue, the epistle was redeployed and made to apply to the problem of sin, one of the topics which can never be wholly out of season" (D. E. H. Whiteley, "Galatians: Then and Now," *Studia Evangelica* 6 [1973]: 619).

⁴³ T. David Gordon, "The Problem at Galatia," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 40.

⁴⁴ John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 73 (italics his).

flitting patterns of behavior/ethics, which of the three species of rhetoric did Paul exhibit in Galatians? Aristotle described the three species as follows.

The *deliberative* kind is either hortatory or dissuasive; for both those who give advice in private and those who speak in the assembly invariably either exhort or dissuade. The forensic kind is either accusatory or defensive; for litigants must necessarily either accuse or defend. The *epideictic* kind has for its subject praise or blame.

Further, to each of these a special time is appropriate: to the deliberative the future, for the speaker, whether he exhorts or dissuades, always advises about things to come; to the forensic the past, for it is always in reference to things done that one party accuses and the other defends; to the epideictic most appropriately the present, for it is the existing condition of things that all those who praise or blame have in view. It is not uncommon, however, for epideictic speakers to avail themselves of other times, of the past by way of recalling it, or of the future by way of anticipating it.⁴⁵

In light of the persuasive purpose of Galatians and Paul's desire to exhort the Galatian believers to make a decision about their identity and pattern of behavior, the deliberative species seems to be the most appropriate of Aristotle's labels for Galatians.⁴⁶ Such a choice is not without its opponents, as the following brief survey of previous rhetorical analyses of Galatians reveals.

PREVIOUS RHETORICAL ANALYSES OF GALATIANS

This survey focuses on two aspects of the analyses of others: first, the determination of the Galatians' rhetorical problem and species (stages 3-4); and second, the rhetorical arrangement of the material within the epistle (stage 5). As will be seen, these aspects tend to stand or fall together in rhetorical analysis.

Pride-of-place for the first and still-definitive rhetorical analysis of Galatians goes to Betz and his works on Galatians.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Aristotle, The "Art" of Rhetoric 1.3.3-4 (pp. 34-35, italics added).

⁴⁶ Aristotle further described the deliberative species as follows: "We must first ascertain about what kind of good or bad things the deliberative orator advises, since he cannot do so about everything, but only about things which may possibly happen or not. Everything which of necessity either is or will be, or which cannot possibly be or come to pass, is outside the scope of deliberation. . . . But it is clear that advice is limited to those subjects about which we take counsel; and such are all those which can naturally be referred to ourselves and the first cause of whose origination is in our own power" (ibid., 1.4.1-3 [p. 39]). Paul seems to have been persuading the Galatians to decide what their identity as the people of God should be and what their pattern of behavior or ethics should be.

⁴⁷ Betz's first work on Galatians was "Spirit, Freedom, and Law: Paul's Message to the Galatians," *Svensk exegetisk arsbok* 39 (1974):145-60, and his most recent is the

His determination of both the rhetorical problem and species has been followed with only minor deviations by Brinsmead and Hester.⁴⁸ These scholars view Galatians as "an apologetic letter," and therefore of the judicial or forensic species.⁴⁹ In a courtroom setting Paul is said to have viewed the Galatians as the jury, the opponents as the accusers, and himself as the defendant.⁵⁰

Betz views the rhetorical problem as primarily ethical.

Thus in their midst "transgressions" have occurred and the claim to live "in the Spirit" (ἐν πνεύματι) came into conflict with the realities of daily life. From Paul's words we may conclude that the problem with which the Galatians felt they were confronted was this: how can the "pneumatic" (ὁ πνευματικός) live with "trespasses" in his daily life?⁵¹

Therefore Paul needed to launch an apologia, defending himself against the Judaizers' accusations that he preached a deficient gospel and that the Gentile Christians of Galatia needed circumcision and the Torah to be delivered in their battles against the σάρξ.⁵² Brinsmead bases his whole identification of Paul's opponents as Christians associated with apocalyptic and sectarian Judaism (particularly Qumran) on reading Galatians as an apologetic and dialogical response to them.⁵³ Betz, Brinsmead, and Hester appeal to the judicial or forensic species of rhetoric to provide the specific five-part argumentative structure of Paul's defense. The rhetorical arrangement of the material within Galatians (stage five in the rhetorical analysis procedure) is essentially the same for these writers except for these works with only small variations, as the following chart demonstrates.⁵⁴

1987 German edition of his 1979 English commentary in the Hermenia Series (*Der Galaterbrief: Ein Kommentar zum Brief des Apostels Paulus an die Genaeinden in Galatien* [Munich: Kaiser]). In this last work he discussed the various reactions to his approach and essentially reiterated his original views (1-4).

⁴⁸ Brinsmead, *Galatians--Dialogical Response to Opponents*, and James D. Hester, "The Use and Influence of Rhetoric in Galatians 2:1-14," and idem, "The Rhetorical Structure of Galatians 1:11-2:14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 223-33.

⁴⁹ Betz, "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," 354-55.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 377.

⁵¹ Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches of Galatia*, 8.

⁵² Ibid., 8-9.

⁵³ Brinsmead, *Galatians--Dialogical Response to Opponents*, 195-96.

⁵⁴ Russell provided the model for the following comparison (Russell, "Convincing or Merely Curious?" 156-57).

<p>Betz, <i>Galatians</i>, 16-23</p> <p>1:1-5 Epistolary prescript (with typical sequence of <i>superscriptio</i>, <i>adscriptio</i>, and <i>salutatio</i>) 1:6-11 <i>Exordium</i> (<i>orprooemium</i> or <i>principium</i>) (This is the introduction/prologue that states the <i>causa</i>, the main reason for writing; Betz sees 1:10-11 as the <i>transitus</i> or <i>transgressio</i> [smooth transition] into the following narrative section.) 1:12—2:14 <i>Narratio</i> (This is the persuasive "statement of the facts of the case"; generally given with as much clarity, brevity, and plausibility as possible.)</p> <p>2:15-21 <i>Probatio</i> or <i>Partitio</i> (This is the outline summarizing the legal content of the <i>narratio</i> and also providing a smooth transition into the <i>propositio</i>).⁵⁶ 3:1-4:31 <i>Propositio</i> (This is the proof, the most decisive and important part of the letter; it is composed of six arguments and a digression [3:19-25], according to Betz) 5:1-6:10 <i>Paraenesis</i> or <i>Exhortatio</i> (5:1-12 is a warning against acceptance of Jewish Torah; 5:13-24 is a warning against corruption by the "flesh"; 5:25-6:10 presents recommendations in the form of <i>sententiae</i> with regard to ethical praxis.) 6:11-18 Epistolary postscript (This also serves rhetorically as <i>peroratio</i> or <i>conclusio</i>, concluding the apologetic speech, which is the body of the epistle.)</p>	<p>Brinsmead, <i>Galatians</i>, 49-54</p> <p>1:1-5 Epistolary prescript 1:6-11 <i>Prooemium</i> or Exordium 1:12—2:14 <i>Narratio</i> 2:15-21 <i>Probatio</i> of <i>Partitio</i> 3:1-4:31 <i>Propositio</i> (3:1-5 is the <i>interrogatio</i> or an examination of witnesses.) 5:1-6:10 <i>Refutatio</i> (5:1-12 is the classic <i>refutatio</i>; and 5:13-24 and 5:25-6:10 are the continued forensic refutation in terms of ethical exhortation.) 6:11-18 Epistolary postscript</p>	<p>Hester, "Rhetorical Structure," 233 1:1-5 Epistolary prescript 1:6-10 <i>Prooemium</i> 1:11-12 <i>Stasis</i> (=thesis for the <i>Narratio</i>) 1:13-14 <i>Transitio</i> 1:15-2:10 <i>Narratio</i> 2:11-14 <i>Digressio</i> or <i>Egressus</i>⁵⁵ 2:15-21 <i>Probatio</i> or <i>Partitio</i> 3:1-4:31 <i>Propositio</i> 5:1-6:10 <i>Refutatio</i> 6:11-18 Epistolary postscript</p>
---	---	---

⁵⁵ In "The Use and Influence of Rhetoric in Galatians 2:1-14," Hester develops the nature of this concluding digression as a mixed *chreia* (a literary form containing an epigram or a pointed statement of general significance).

⁵⁶ Hester does not specifically deal with Galatians 2:15 and following, but "in general" he "finds this [Betz's] outline of the letter very satisfying, and it seems to me

As one might expect, the above rhetorical analysis has not met with total acceptance. In particular, there has been a strong reaction from those primarily trained in rhetorical studies. Leading this group and providing a rather different rhetorical analysis of Galatians is George A. Kennedy and one of his students, Robert G. Hall.⁵⁷ They have determined that the rhetorical problem and the rhetorical species are somewhat different than Betz has concluded. Regarding the rhetorical problem, Hall asserts, "The major purpose of Galatians is not to defend some past action (judicial) or to praise some and to blame others (epideictic) but to persuade the Galatians to cleave to Paul and his gospel and to reject his opponents and their gospel (Gal. 1:6-9; cf. 6:12-16)."⁵⁸ Kennedy had earlier reached the same conclusion about the rhetorical problem of Galatians.

The letter looks to the immediate future, not to judgment of the past, and the question to be decided by the Galatians was not whether Paul had been right in what he had said or done, but what they themselves were going to believe and to do. Since Betz wrongly identifies the question at issue, he is led wrongly to identify the stasis as qualitative (p. 129). Insofar as stasis theory can be applied to deliberative rhetoric, the stasis is one of fact: What gospel is true? What should the Galatians do?⁵⁹

While Betz had essentially defined the rhetorical problem as dealing with the struggle with the flesh,⁶⁰ Kennedy and Hall have framed the problem so that it encompasses this ethical issue and also includes the issue of which gospel is true, and consequently, which resulting identity is correct. This more encompassing determination of the rhetorical problem seems correct and it does not lessen in the least the ethical concern that Betz has raised, as Hall rightly observes.

Since the debate requires the Galatians to decide between two antithetical modes of life and behavior and since the participants in the debate are not primarily concerned about Paul's past action but about what future action the Galatians will take, Galatians is most naturally classified as a deliberative work.⁶¹

to hold up well under scrutiny" ("The Rhetorical Structure of Galatians 1:22-2:14," 224).

⁵⁷ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, and Robert G. Hall, "The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians—A Reconsideration," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 277-87.

⁵⁸ Hall, "The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians—A Reconsideration," 279.

⁵⁹ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 146-47.

⁶⁰ Betz, "Spirit, Freedom, and Law," 153-59.

⁶¹ Hall, "The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians—A Reconsideration," 279.

Kennedy argues strongly that the rhetorical species of Galatians is deliberative.⁶² Hall agrees and gives seven reasons why Galatians is deliberative, not forensic or judicial in species.

1. Galatians 3:1-6:18 does not fit with the judicial species and the rightness or wrongness of a past action, but rather with a choice between Paul's gospel and his opponents' "gospel."
2. The choice facing the Galatians is obviously not in the past, but in the future. The judicial species focuses on the rightness or wrongness of a past action according to justice. Paul is seeking to exhort and dissuade the Galatians to or from some future action, claiming the action is expedient or harmful (e.g., Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 1.3.3-5). Where doubt exists (i.e., between two opinions), deliberation is necessitated.
3. Paul evidences aspects of what Quintilian described as "popular deliberative style" (3.8.58-60).
4. The narrative section of Galatians (1:10-2:14) is not a reminder of the facts central to the case surrounding the offense, but this narrative introduces relevant matters external to the case (Quintilian 3.8.10). A narration in a deliberative speech functions as a part of the proof taken.
5. The essence of Galatians and deliberative oratory is persuasion between choices. The Galatians have not decided definitely yet between Paul and the Judaizers (e.g., Gal. 5:10; 6:17). Paul's appeal to the Galatians is that choosing his gospel (the gospel) is to their advantage. This is the main appeal of deliberative oratory.
6. Galatians 5:1-6:10 is an exhortative section, but this does not fit well within the judicial species. It does fit well within the deliberative species (e.g., Quintilian 3.6.47).
7. Paul's defensive tone and defensive arguments in Galatians 1-2 are best explained as ethical proof supporting his credibility that has been attacked, rather than as a statement of the facts of the case. Betz has misunderstood Paul's purpose for this narrative and has wrongly concluded that its inclusion in the epistle makes it a judicial species.⁶³

Kennedy's and Hall's arguments for categorizing Galatians as a deliberative rhetorical species rather than a judicial species seem more than adequate. Their conclusions reinforce the conclusions reached in the first four stages of rhetorical analysis in the previous section.⁶⁴

Because this second cluster of rhetorical analyses has

⁶² Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 144-47.

⁶³ Hall, "The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians—A Reconsideration," 278-82.

⁶⁴ Also see Francois Vouga, "Zur rhetorischen Gattung des Galaterbriefes," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 79 (1988) 291-92 for a brief argument supporting the deliberate species by arguing from parallels found in Demosthenes' **ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΕΙΡΗΝΗΣ**.

yielded what this writer believes to be a more accurate understanding of the basic issues Galatians addresses and the basic manner in which it addresses them, the arrangement of material (stage five) in these analyses should prove more helpful also. This is exactly the case, as the brief rhetorical outlines of Kennedy and Hall reflect.

Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation, 147-51

Hall, "Rhetorical Outline," 282-87⁶⁵

1:1-5 Salutation

1:1-5 Salutation/Exordium

1:6-10 Proem (a general statement of the proposition of the letter)

1:6-9 Proposition (makes clear what the letter as a whole wants to prove)

1:11-5:1 Proof (corresponds to the theological section in most of Paul's epistles and has two "headings" here)

1:10-6:10 Proof (gives reasons why the audience should accept Paul's proposition)

1:11-2:21 Narration and *Epicheiremene* (Heading #1)

1:1-2:21 Narration (Heading #1)

1:11-12 Restatement of the topic of the salutation

1:10-12 Proposition for the Narration (to develop Paul's ethos)

1:13-2:14 Extended Narrative

1:13-2:10 Thesis #1

2:15-21 *Epicheiremene* (an argument with the parts fully stated; conclusion to first heading)

2:11-14 Thesis #2

2:15-21 Transition to the next section

3:1-5:1 Argument from Galatians' Experience (Heading #2)

3:1-6:10 Further Headings

5:2-6:10 Specific Ethical Commandments (the practical purpose of the letter)

6:11-18 Epilogue (final attack and recapitulation of the most important point)

6:11-18 Epilogue (a recapitulation of and summary of the main arguments)

⁶⁵ Hall's analysis of Galatians 3:1-6:10 is not developed at all. Kennedy's analysis becomes equally sketchy from Galatians 5:2 through 6:10. These are the most difficult parts of the epistle to analyze rhetorically, as Betz has admitted ("The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," 369).

One other rhetorical analysis of Galatians worthy of brief notice is the work by Hansen.⁶⁶ This epistolary and rhetorical analysis of Galatians is of the highest quality.⁶⁷ He follows the views of John L. White in his use of epistolary formulae,⁶⁸ but especially follows Nils A. Dahl in his rhetorical analysis of Galatians.⁶⁹ In addition Hansen's association with Richard N. Longenecker can be seen in the latter's rhetorical analysis of Galatians.⁷⁰ Hansen's, Dahl's, and Longenecker's analyses have two major distinctives: They view Galatians as a "real," "more private," "rebuke-request" letter,⁷¹ and they view Galatians as composed of mixed rhetorical genre, including forensic rhetoric in 1:6-4:11 and deliberative rhetoric in 4:12-6:10.⁷² With this reading Hansen's analysis is similar to Betz's approach in Galatians 1:6-4:11 but deviates from it in 4:12-6:10.

Interestingly, while Hansen's labeling of Galatians as a rebuke-request type of epistle and his corresponding outlining of the structure of the epistle⁷³ differ significantly from the present writer's in these two areas, many of the same exegetical conclusions within the smaller units of the epistle are reached. In particular, Hansen underscores the continuity in Paul's argumentation from Galatians 4:12-6:10 in a forceful manner. Hansen finds that there is no libertine threat in 5:13-6:10 and that the Hagar-Sarah application in 4:21-31 makes untenable such a turn in Paul's argument. "In light of the freedom-slavery antithesis in the allegory, it would appear that the imperatives in 5:1 and 5:13 are aimed against the same threat to freedom in Christ: the threat of nomism which boasts in the flesh."⁷⁴

⁶⁶ G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians—Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989). See also Joop Smit, "The Letter of Paul to the Galatians: A Deliberative Speech," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 1-26.

⁶⁷ See Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians—Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts*, esp. 21-93.

⁶⁸ John L. White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 2 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1972).

⁶⁹ Nils A. Dahl, "Paul's Letter to the Galatians: Epistolary Genre, Content, and Structure" (Unpublished paper, SBL Paul Seminar, 1973).

⁷⁰ Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), c-cxix. Hansen wrote his doctoral dissertation under Longenecker.

⁷¹ For example Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 27.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

The strength of Hansen's analysis is that he consistently relies on Paul's use of epistolary formulae to structure and interpret the individual units of the letter. This leads him to emphasize rightly Paul's tendency to cluster these formulae at transitional points in the epistle.⁷⁵ However, Hansen's choice of the rebuke-request type of letter seems somewhat artificial for a letter the length of Galatians. This is because all the corresponding examples in the papyri that he cites⁷⁶ are much shorter epistles. To subsume all Paul's argumentation in Galatians 1:6–4:11 under the rubric of "rebuke" and all his rhetoric in 4:12–6:10 under the corresponding rubric of "request" seems forced, and a meaningful descriptive genre becomes artificially prescriptive. It would seem that broader categories for an epistle the length of Galatians would be more desirable and workable. This is not to deny that a part of Galatians is "rebuke" and a part of the epistle is "request." Regardless of this one criticism, Hansen's work makes, a significant contribution to the epistolary and rhetorical analysis of Galatians.

CONCLUSION

This survey of rhetorical analyses of Galatians reveals the diversity of opinion in applying this tool to Galatians, thereby indicating scholarship's rudimentary stage in using this interpretive instrument. Some might conclude that rhetorical analysis is fraught with "isogetical" temptations as a somewhat alien, external template is placed on the biblical text. There is some validity to such a conclusion. However, the possibility of abuse in using rhetorical analysis no more negates its potential benefit to the biblical student than overeating negates the potential benefit of food to the body. The true value of rhetorical analysis is in the use of the tool to explain the biblical text. If Paul's rhetoric or persuasive strategy in Galatians is illumined in a more helpful way than previous interpretive tools have accomplished, then the value of rhetorical analysis is established. Coming to a better understanding of the argument of Galatians is the determinative factor. Therefore the reader is asked to defer final judgment until reading the full-orbed rhetorical analysis of the argument of Galatians in the second article in this series.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 27-54.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 34-42.

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

Dallas Theological Seminary

3909 Swiss Ave. Dallas, TX 75204 www.dts.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu