

**'LET US HOLD FAST TO OUR CONFESSION': THE ROLE OF THE THEME OF  
FAITHFULNESS IN THE RHETORICAL STRATEGY EMPLOYED BY THE  
AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS TO ADDRESS THE PASTORAL  
PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST HEARERS**

By

Mzayifani Mzebetshana

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

in

BIBLICAL STUDIES

at the

SOUTH AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Supervisor: Dr Annang Asumang

May 2014

The opinions expressed in this thesis do not necessarily reflect those of the South African Theological Seminary.

# DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.

Mzayifani Mzebetshana

Johannesburg, South Africa

May 2014

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Dr Annang Asumang for academic discipleship throughout this study. The seeds of ideas expressed in this thesis were sown and nurtured through my formative interactions with Annang. However, all the mistakes and missteps of the study are mine.

I am also grateful to my wife, Nothando, for her understanding and support during this period.

Lastly and more importantly, I would like to give thanks to the Lord and my Saviour, Jesus Christ for saving me from eternal judgment through His atoning sacrifice. Glory and honour belong to you, Lord.

Mzayifani Mzebetshana

## SUMMARY

The epistle to the Hebrews is a *paranaetic* homily written with the specific purpose of addressing the socio-historical situation of the first hearers. These first hearers started their Christian faith with zeal, determination and a strong commitment to the new-found faith. However, this resulted in their persecution by an unbelieving society to the extent that they even lost their property. Consequently, after an extended period of hardships and sufferings, some succumbed to the social pressures. Hence, they were demoralised, lacked zeal and suffered spiritual malaise.

Therefore, the author of Hebrews' goal was to counteract this situation by refocusing the believers' attention to their eternal destiny and the associated rewards. He exhorted them to renewed commitment to the faith with a hope of better future. They had to endure sufferings and focus on what the eternal future held for them. The objective of this study is, therefore, to establish the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy to address the believers' socio-historical situation. To achieve this objective, insights from classical rhetoric combined with traditional historical-grammatical are adopted as method to investigate relevant passages.

The first task is to establish the theology of faith in Hebrews. This is achieved in two steps. The first step is a grammatical and linguistic analysis of the faith-related words throughout Hebrews. The second step is the detailed exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4, with specific focus on the theology of faith. The overall impression is that the believers' were called to faith and endurance even in the midst of sufferings. They were given two choices coupled with consequences. Either they hold fast to the confession of faith or neglect and/or reject the faith. The first choice would guarantee them inheritance of salvation. The second would result in eternal judgement and possible eschatological death.

Through the interplay of the categories of classical rhetorical handbooks, the author of Hebrews effectively and persuasively argued that it was better for these listeners to recommit to their faith. The author's specific focus on the eternal destiny had rhetorical force to convince the listeners to remain faithful and obedient till the end. Faith and endurance was only their hope for a better eternal future, in the city of God.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iii
SUMMARY .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
CHAPTER 1.....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 The Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 The Hypothesis.....	6
1.4 The Value of the Study .....	8
1.5 Methodology.....	9
1.6 Delimitations of the Study.....	10
1.7 Definitions of the Key Terms .....	10
1.8 Presuppositions of the Researcher .....	11
1.9 Overview of Chapters.....	11
CHAPTER 2.....	13
THE BACKGROUND OF HEBREWS.....	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Authorship.....	14
2.2.1 Who is the Writer? .....	14
2.2.2 His Philosophical Background.....	18
2.2.3 His Use of the Old Testament Text.....	19
2.3 The Date of Writing Hebrews.....	19
2.4 The First Hearers .....	19
2.4.1 Their Ethnicity.....	19
2.4.2 Their Social Location.....	20
2.4.3 Their Social History.....	21
2.5 Genre.....	25
2.5.1 The Literary Genre of Hebrews .....	25
2.5.2 The Rhetorical Genre of Hebrews .....	26

2.6	Literary Structure .....	27
2.7	The Uniting Theme .....	28
2.8	Conclusion .....	29
CHAPTER 3.....		30
METHODOLOGY.....		30
3.1	Introduction.....	30
3.2	Rhetorical Criticism and NT Studies .....	31
3.2.1	Rhetoric Defined.....	31
3.2.2	Rhetorical Criticism in Biblical Studies .....	32
3.2.3	Theory of Greco-Roman Rhetoric.....	34
3.3	The Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews.....	45
3.3.1	The Use of Invention .....	46
3.3.2	The Arrangement of Hebrews .....	47
3.3.3	The Style of Hebrews.....	48
3.4	The Methodological Approach of the Present Study .....	50
3.5	Conclusion .....	52
CHAPTER 4.....		53
FAITH IN HEBREWS: A GRAMMATICAL AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS.....		53
4.1	Introduction.....	53
4.2	Methodology .....	53
4.3	<i>Pist</i> Word Group – A Diachronic Analysis.....	54
4.3.1	<i>Pist</i> within Hebrews.....	55
4.3.2	<i>Pist</i> in the Rest of the NT .....	59
4.3.3	<i>Pist</i> in the LXX .....	61
4.3.4	<i>Pist</i> in the Inter-Testamental Jewish Literature .....	63
4.3.5	<i>Pist</i> in Other Extra-Biblical Literature .....	63
4.4	<i>Peithomai</i> Word Group – A Diachronic Analysis .....	63
4.4.1	<i>Peithomai</i> within Hebrews .....	64
4.4.2	<i>Peithomai</i> from the Rest of the NT .....	65
4.4.3	<i>Peithomai</i> in the LXX .....	66
4.4.4	<i>Peithomai</i> in the Extra-Biblical Literature .....	67
4.5	Analysis of Metaphors Related to Faith in Hebrews .....	67
4.5.1	Drift Away.....	68

4.5.2 ‘Milk’ and ‘Solid Food’ .....	68
4.5.3 ‘Turn Away’ and ‘Fallen Away’ .....	70
4.5.4 ‘Run’ and ‘Race’ .....	71
4.6 Conclusion .....	72
CHAPTER 5 .....	74
A CALL TO HOLD FAST TO THE CONFESSION OF FAITH: A HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL EXEGETICAL STUDY OF HEBREWS 2:1-4 .....	74
5.1 Introduction.....	74
5.2 Detailed Exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4 .....	75
5.2.1 Immediate Literary Context of the Passage .....	75
5.2.2 Internal Structure of the Passage.....	80
5.2.3 Clause by Clause Exegetical Analysis.....	82
5.3 The Aspects of Faith in Hebrews 2:1-4.....	102
5.3.1 How Faith Begins .....	102
5.3.2 Maintenance of Faith .....	103
5.3.3 The Key Ingredients for the Maintenance of Faith .....	104
5.3.4 Promises and Rewards .....	105
5.3.5 Feature of Neglecting Faith .....	106
5.3.6 Consequences of Neglecting Faith .....	107
5.4 Conclusion .....	108
CHAPTER 6.....	109
A CALL TO HOLD FAST TO THE CONFESSION OF FAITH: A RHETORICAL EXEGETICAL STUDY OF HEBREWS 2:1-4 WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE ROLE OF FAITH IN THE AUTHOR’S RHETORICAL STRATEGY .....	109
6.1 Introduction.....	109
6.2 Detailed Rhetorical Exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4.....	110
6.2.1 Rhetorical Unit of Hebrews 2:1-4.....	110
6.2.2 Rhetorical Genre of Hebrews 2:1-4.....	111
6.2.3 Rhetorical Situation .....	112
6.2.4 Rhetorical Problem.....	115
6.2.5 The Rhetorical Invention of Hebrews 2:1-4 .....	118
6.2.6 The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews 2:1-4 .....	122
6.3 Conclusion .....	130

CHAPTER 7 .....	132
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	132
7.1 Introduction.....	132
7.2 Summary of Findings .....	133
7.2.1 Summary of Chapter One .....	133
7.2.2 Summary of Chapter Two.....	134
7.2.3 Summary of Chapter Three .....	136
7.2.4 Summary of Chapter Four .....	137
7.2.5 Summary of Chapter Five .....	138
7.2.6 Summary of Chapter Six .....	139
7.3 Application within the South African Context.....	140
7.3.1 Hebrews as the Model for the Church in South Africa.....	141
7.3.2 The Implications of Hebrews 2:1-4.....	143
7.4 Conclusion .....	145
WORKS CITED .....	146

## LIST OF TABLES

Page	Table	Title
129	6-1	Rhetorical Devices in Hebrews 2:1-4

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

There have been several directions taken in recent studies of significance to the study of the epistle to the Hebrews. Firstly, several scholars have shed considerable light on the socio-historical and situational context of Hebrews. There is a general agreement among the scholars of this epistle today that the first hearers of this epistle were Christian believers. Although there are different views regarding their ethnicity, many scholars believe that these first hearers were both diaspora Jewish and Gentile Christians, who possibly lived somewhere in the Roman Empire outside Palestine (Asumang 2007:19; DeSilva 2000:7; Ellingworth 1993:25).

It is further believed that this Christian community was in an urban setting, made up of several house churches spread throughout the district (Lane 1998:liii). Scholars also agree that the available information regarding the experience of these hearers enables us to reconstruct, with a reasonable level of confidence, their social history which resulted in the writing of this homily (Allen 2010:62; Asumang 2007:20; DeSilva 2000:7; Koester 2005:231-233; Lane 1998:liii; O'Brien 2010:9-10).

Most interpreters widely accept the proposal by Koester, based on the internal references in the letter that this community's situation developed in three phases (Koester 2005:233-244). The first phase was the proclamation of the gospel and the conversion of these believers, which resulted in the formation of this community. The second phase was characterised by the persecution of this community by an unbelieving society. During these trying and hard times due to persecution, this community remained steadfast in faith and united, as well as supporting one another as the Christian family. The third phase involved friction and malaise. 'When the persecution lollled down, however, the church entered a third stage characterized by low-grade external harassment (Heb 13:13), a highly unstable internal demoralization

(Heb 12:12), and a spiritual malaise (Heb 3:12, 10:26-28)' (Asumang 2007:20). It is at this stage that this book was written to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers. The author therefore wrote this epistle to encourage the first hearers 'to remain faithful to God, Christ and the Christian community' (Koester 2010:619).

The second course of recent development in studies in the epistle to the Hebrews is that the application of recent methods to the epistle has yielded some key benefits to the understanding of this epistle (DeSilva 2000; Guthrie 2008; Heath 2011; Koester 2010; Thompson 2008; Westfall 2006). Three important examples of these methods are discourse analysis, literary analysis and rhetorical criticism. Discourse analysis 'deals with grammatical and semantic functions as they affect meaning above the level of the sentence' (Varner 2007:211). O'Brien (2010:29) also noted that 'discourse analysis is an approach in which the critic seeks to understand the relationships between the various sections of the discourse'.

What is further important about this method of interpretation is that it does not replace the traditional grammatical method, but instead supplements it (Runge 2010:5; Varner 2007:212). In other words, traditional grammatical method is still critical in exegetical studies, but this new method is able to fill the gaps. Runge (2010:4) argued that the 'traditional approaches to grammar have focused primarily on word-level or sentence phenomenon'. He further argued that the 'discourse grammar provides principles for understanding why a writer would use a historical present or an imperative particle'. He continued to argue that this 'provides a descriptive framework that is flexible and robust enough to elegantly capture the complexity of discourse phenomenon in a concise and practical description' (2010:4). This is what differentiates this approach from the traditional approaches which tend to '... tell us more about how Greek and English differ than they do about Greek as *Greek*' (2010:4).

The application of discourse analysis in biblical studies has resulted in advancement of the understanding of the structure of Hebrews by scholars such as George H. Guthrie and Cynthia L. Westfall (O'Brien 2010:30-34). Secondly, since Hebrews was written to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers, this method has

revealed the relevance of the hortatory elements of this epistle to the pressures on this community (2010:33).

Literary analysis is another important method in the study of Hebrews. This method according to O'Brien (2010:27) 'refers to an examination of the text that focuses on the literary characteristics by which the author crafted his work'. 'These include features that mark the structure (e.g., inclusio, chiasmus, and so on), aspects of style, genre, repetition, and vocabulary'. This method has provided important information on the understanding of the structure of Hebrews as employed by the author. Through this, it was possible to ascertain the changes in the sub-genres of Hebrews between exposition and exhortation.

Rhetorical criticism is also one of these versatile methods. This method, like the other two methods, has contributed significantly to the understanding of the structure of Hebrews (O'Brien 2010:25). The recent identification of the predominant genre of Hebrews as a homily has significantly enhanced the importance of applying insights from rhetorical criticism to Hebrews (2010:25). It has helped to explain the pastoral character of Hebrews, and more specifically the key role of its exhortation sections. Because of this method, today it is possible to understand and appreciate the distinctiveness of this epistle as compared with the whole of the New Testament. Rhetorical criticism together with traditional historical-grammatical method will be used in this study. Therefore these two methods will further be discussed in this study.

The third important course of development in the scholarly study of Hebrews is the recent revival in examining the theological themes and contributions of Hebrews to the New Testament, such as the Christology, Eschatology, and Soteriology (e.g., Allen 2009; Asumang 2005; Colijn 1996; DeSilva 2000; Gleason 2002, 2003; Gray 2003; Irons 2007; Joslin 2010; MacLeod 2005; McCrudden 2002; Scott 1998). One such recent revival is in the area of the theology of faith or faithfulness in Hebrews (e.g., Easter 2011; Hamm 1990; Rhee 1998, 2000, 2001; Richardson 2009; Still 2007). In 1990, Hamm claimed that faith in Hebrews is christological and that Hebrews portrays Jesus as the model and enabler of Christian faith. He further

claimed that Christ in this epistle is the object of faith. Rhee on the other hand between 1998 and 2001 wrote five articles on the theology of faith in Hebrews. In the first article he argued that faith in Hebrews is as christological as it is in Pauline letters, although faith in this letter is not expressed as 'faith in Christ' (1998:327; cf. 2001:283). In his other article (2000:175), in addition to christological faith, he argued that Christ is the object of faith as in the Pauline letters (cf. 2001:283). What is further important in this article is that Rhee is in agreement with scholars such as Lindars and Grasser before him, who argued that faith in this epistle has both ethical and eschatological dimensions. Lastly, Rhee believes that Christ in Hebrews is the model and enabler of faith (2000:84; 2001:283).

Todd Still investigates the idea of Jesus' faithfulness in Hebrews 'in order to discover both the substance and significance of this christological belief for the author and auditors of first century C.E. word of exhortation' (2007:747). He argues that Christ was faithful and obedient to God even to death. Hence Christ was raised from the dead and now is seated at the right hand of God. Hebrews, in his view, presents Christ as the model and enabler of faith. Believers therefore need to remain faithful and obedient even in the midst of suffering, as this will assure them of eschatological life. Christopher Richardson in his PhD dissertation (2009) investigates the faith and faithfulness of Christ in Hebrews. He achieves this by examining all faith related words referring to Jesus in Hebrews. To Richardson 'Jesus is not only presented as an example of faith, but also as the perfect exemplar of faith(fulness) in word and deed that the audience is to consider and imitate' (2009:iv). Hebrews 12:2 is the climatic illustration of Jesus' faith. The heroes of faith described in Hebrews 11 foreshadow Jesus' faith in Hebrews 12:1-3. 'By creating what is ultimately an encomium on Jesus, the famous men and women in Israel's history are recapitulated for the main purpose of amplifying Jesus' person and work; that is to say, they are recounted in order to praise and exalt the "pioneer and perfecter of faith" who endured the cross and tasted death on behalf of God's people' (2009:iv).

The most recent work on the theology of faith in Hebrews is by Matthew Easter based on his PhD dissertation (2011). In this study Easter interpreted Hebrews as a narrative story. Easter agrees with other interpreters who claimed that faith in

Hebrews has christological, eschatological and ethical dimensions. But further, Easter claimed that there is a fourth dimension of faith in Hebrews which is ecclesiological faith. Easter posited that this faith 'calls individuals to join with the community of faith who are travelling people of God' (2011:355). What is also important in Easter's study is that he does not believe that Christ in this epistle is the object of faith. Given the pervasive presence of vocabularies related to faith in Hebrews, and the epistle's immense contribution to the theology of the New Testament, these scholarly investigations on the theology of faith in Hebrews are immensely beneficial.

Despite these three directions in scholarly developments in Hebrews studies, few attempts have been made to combine their insights in order to shed light on the epistle. This is especially true in the area of the intent and strategies of the author of Hebrews in penning this epistle. To put the issue more succinctly: given what is now believed to be the likely situational context behind Hebrews, and using insights from rhetorical analysis of ancient speeches/letters, what can be concluded regarding the role of the theme of faithfulness in the author's strategies for addressing the problems that his readers faced? This investigation will therefore be devoted to addressing this question.

## **1.2 The Statement of the Problem**

The main problem to be addressed by this research may therefore be stated as follows: how did the author of the epistle to the Hebrews shape the theme of faithfulness as part of his rhetorical strategy to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers?

In order to successfully answer the main problem of this study, the following subsidiary questions will also be addressed:

1. What is the rhetorical arrangement of the epistle to the Hebrews? What role does each of the sections play to achieve the author's pastoral purpose in this epistle?

2. How did the author use both the inartificial proofs (i.e. quotations from the Old Testament) and the artificial proofs (ethos, logos and pathos) in different sections of his rhetorical strategy to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers? In other words what is the author's rhetorical strategy in different sections of the epistle?
3. How effective was the author's rhetorical strategy to address the first hearer's pastoral problems?
4. What role does the theme of faithfulness play in this rhetorical strategy?

### **1.3 The Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this study is:

1. That the writer through the rhetorical strategy of persuasion employed comparisons; warnings and encouragement; punishment and rewards in order to encourage the first hearers not to succumb to the pressures from the unbelieving society, but to renew their commitment to the Christian faith and continue to support one another as the family of God.

There are six aspects of faithfulness addressed by the author in this epistle in order to persuade believers to renew their commitment to Christian faith. The first aspect is 'how faith begins' (Heb 2:1-4). Here the author makes it clear that the founder of the believers' salvation is Christ through His sacrificial death, resurrection and exaltation to heaven as the glorified Lord (Heb 1:1-2:4). Then in the remainder of the epistle the author describes how Christ achieved this great salvation for His junior siblings. What is important in the author's description of how Christ achieved this great salvation is that Christ and His works are without equal. This includes His superiority over Angels, Moses, Joshua and Israel's priests. Further His sacrifice is much superior compared to that of Israel's sacrifices, as it was done once and for all. Therefore, to the author the new covenant is much more superior compared to the old covenant, because of Christ and His works as the merciful and faithful high priest.

The second aspect of faithfulness is 'how faith is maintained'. Here the author first exhorts the hearers to maintain their faith because of who Christ is and what He has done, and continues to do, for them as their senior brother and faithful high priest (Heb 2:1-4). Secondly, the author urges them to follow the positive examples of men and women of the Old Testament who remained steadfast in faith till the end (Heb 6:9-20; 10:32-12:11). The author also urges these believers to imitate the examples of faith of their leaders (Heb 13:7). Thirdly, these believers are exhorted to mutual love and encouragement as the family of God, which is also pivotal to maintaining faith (Heb 3:12-14; 4:1, 11; 10:24-25; 12:15-16; 13:1-3).

The third aspect of faithfulness is 'the key ingredients for maintaining faith'. These include; growing into spiritual maturity (6:1-2); peace and holiness (Heb 12:14-17); offering of worship acceptable to God (Heb 12:28-29; 13:1-21); and hearing God's voice (Heb 1:1; 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11). The fourth aspect of faithfulness is 'the promises and rewards of maintaining faith'. In this aspect the author makes it clear to the believers that Christian faith is not in vain. Their patience, trust and endurance will ensure that God, who is faithful and just, will reward them accordingly, as He has already done to Christ, who is their forerunner. These rewards include entering God's rest (Heb 4:1), eternal salvation associated with glory and eternal life (Heb 1:14; 2:10; 5:9).

The fifth aspect of faithfulness is 'the features of neglecting faith'. Here the author uses different phrases/terms of neglecting faith and even losing faith. These include; 'drifting away' (Heb 2:1); 'hardening of heart' (Heb 3:7) which reveals itself by having a 'sinful, unbelieving heart' (Heb 3:12a), 'turning away from God' (Heb 3:12b) and 'sin's deceitfulness' (Heb 3:13b); 'dull of hearing' (Heb 5:11); 'falling away' (Heb 6:6); 'sluggish' (Heb 6:12); and 'shrinking back' (Heb 10:39). What is important here is that the author uses the negative examples of Israel to explicitly show the peril threatening these believers in their relationship with God, Christ and as a Christian family.

The sixth and final aspect of faithfulness is 'the consequences of neglecting faith' (Heb 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:26-39; 12:25-29). The consequences of

neglecting faith are eschatological death, which is their final judgment if they do not repent while they can. This means that they will lose their heavenly blessings and eternal inheritance, which is assured and promised for them provided they maintain their faith till the end of their race here on earth. It is this narrative of faithfulness that our author shapes to address the pastoral problems of the community. This research hopes to more specifically delineate the role of this narrative of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy.

#### **1.4 The Value of the Study**

This study has two benefits, one theoretical and the other practical. In the theoretical sense, the study will be seeking to explore how two different methodologies, namely, rhetorical criticism and theological analysis can be married to address a historical question. The background above has indicated that while many scholars have followed new directions, few attempts have been made to seek how the two methodological approaches can complement each other. This study has value in that it will seek ways to achieve that.

The practical benefit of the study is that it will show how Hebrews may help in addressing the spiritual malaise in sections of Christianity in South Africa. It is beyond any shadow of doubt that we are living in totally different times with different challenges, compared with those of the first hearers of Hebrews. But at the same time, the Church today is facing similar pastoral problems to the first hearers of Hebrews. Sections of the Church today have succumbed to social pressures, although these pressures are different to those of the first hearers. This is evident in areas such as morality and various syncretic tendencies, such as the mixing of Christianity with materialism, or the mixture of Christianity and ancestral worship. Indeed one should expect such things in these postmodern times.

There are signs that today's church in South Africa, like the first hearers of Hebrews, has adopted a compromised Christianity, and indeed has become sluggish and prone to backsliding. Reports of infidelity or the divorce of prominent church leaders have increasingly become commonplace. Indeed, it is reasonable to say that

sections of the church have 'grown weary' (Heb 12:3) and developed 'drooping hands and weak knees' (Heb 12:12).

Therefore, because of the state of the Christian community today, Hebrews' focus on the theme of faithfulness speaks directly to the church. The church urgently needs to hear it again and again. The message of Hebrews through its warnings and encouragements reminds the Christian church that she must not be sluggish. Instead the church must rise up and move forward as a Christian community to its heavenly homeland. As the church renews her commitment to the Christian faith, this message of Hebrews calls her to persevere, to pay more careful attention and to hold fast to her confession of faith without compromise. There are greater rewards in heaven that await those who run the race to the very end, than the earthly rewards that are destined to perish. 'This epistle, without doubt, is very contemporary for every one of the challenges we face today, and understanding it holds an important key to a revitalized Christian life and witness' (Asumang 2007:6). Indeed as the church today we need to despise the shame and carry our cross to meet Jesus outside the camp.

## **1.5 Methodology**

While recognising the fact that no one method is adequate to address all the issues related to the interpretation of this epistle, this study aims to use the rhetorical analysis and historical-grammatical methods. These two methods will help to exactly delineate and pinpoint how the rhetorics of faithfulness exactly address the believers' socio-historical situation. Through the historical-grammatical method, we will be able to delineate the theme of faith in Hebrews. Then based on classical rhetorical method, we will be able to delineate the role of the theme of faith in author's rhetorical strategy to address the socio-historical pastoral problems of the first hearer.

Therefore, since this is what this study wishes to achieve, these two methods are adequate to achieve our objective. Further details of these methods, specifically rhetorical analysis will be given in chapter three of this study.

## 1.6 Delimitations of the Study

Issues such as the Christology, eschatology, soteriology and any other theological aspects of this epistle are not considered in depth in this study. The focus will only be on how these theological ideas are related to the theme of faithfulness in Hebrews. This is also true for the author's extensive use of the OT (LXX) in this epistle. The focus will be on the role of these in shaping the theme of faithfulness as the author dissuades his hearers from making a choice to change their current situation. Further, as he persuades the hearers to make a choice which is beneficial by renewing their commitment to the Christian faith.

## 1.7 Definitions of the Key Terms

The following are the definitions of the key terms in this study:

**Hearers:** this refers to the original recipients of this epistle to the Hebrews. Other terms used in this study with a similar connotation to hearers include audience, first century Christians, first listeners, community, Christian community, readers, recipients, believers and congregation.

**Theme:** the word 'theme' is used in the research to describe the unifying features of an idea. By 'the theme of faithfulness' this research will seek to delineate some of the composite features of the idea of faith in Hebrews and what role they play in the author's rhetorical strategy for addressing the problems his hearers faced.

**Faithfulness:** this term in this study refers to actively exercising faith, trust and belief in God by the first hearers following the examples of Christ, heroes of faith and their leaders which involved trust, obedience and endurance in suffering with the hope of eternal rewards (Easter 2011:355-356). It is a complete surrender to God and His perfect will.

**Hold Fast to our Confession:** this phrase is one of the key rhetorical moves by the author of Hebrews to express the idea of faithfulness. Its full explanation will be explored by the exegesis of this research.

**Rhetorical Strategy:** this refers to the intentions, designs and procedures adopted by the author of Hebrews as a means of persuading and dissuading his first hearers.

**Pastoral Problems:** this refers to social and religious problems that the first hearers of Hebrews experienced as believers in Jesus living in an unbelieving community. It also refers to the pressures the hearers faced, which had the potential to demoralize their Christian commitment.

## **1.8 Presuppositions of the Researcher**

I believe that Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour eternally existed as God and at the incarnation He became both fully God and fully man, and also as the risen Lord, He is still both fully God and fully man. Secondly, the Bible which is the Word of God including both the OT and the NT is fully inspired, authoritative and sufficient for faith and life. Lastly, it is only by faith through Christ and God's grace that we are saved, and there is nothing that we can do on our own to attain this salvation, but Christ's work is sufficient and final.

## **1.9 Overview of Chapters**

This thesis has six more chapters in addition to this introduction. Chapter two titled 'Background on Hebrews' examines the contextual background of the epistle to the Hebrews. This includes; socio-historical background and situational context behind Hebrews, the genre, the literary structure and the uniting theme of this epistle. This background on Hebrews is the foundation for a detailed inductive exegetical study of this epistle, where the role of the theme of faithfulness in this epistle is examined.

Chapter three titled, 'Methodology' is the description of the methodology to be employed for detailed exegesis. The primary focus is the classical rhetorical strategies employed by the author as he shaped the theme of faithfulness to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers. Firstly, this chapter examines the rhetorical strategies that were used to persuade the hearers to take a particular action. Further these strategies are examined in relation to the epistle to the Hebrews. Lastly, a

procedure based on insight from these strategies is developed. This procedure will be used to examine the role of the theme of faithfulness in the rhetorical strategy to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers.

Chapter four titled, 'Faith in Hebrews: A Grammatical and Linguistic Analysis' focuses on the grammatical and linguistic study of the faith-related words throughout Hebrews. This further includes the analysis of metaphors employed by the author as he persuaded the first hearers to make a renewed commitment to the Christian faith. The specific interest is to ascertain the denotative and connotative meaning as well as the semantic range of the language of faith in this epistle.

Chapter five titled, 'A Call to Hold Fast to the Confession of Faith: A Historical-Grammatical Exegetical Study of Hebrews 2:1-4' focuses on a detailed historical-grammatical study of Hebrews 2:1-4. The specific focus in this chapter is delineation of the theme of faith in Hebrews using a traditional historical-grammatical exegesis. Chapter six titled, 'A Call to Hold Fast to the Confession of Faith: A Rhetorical Exegetical Study of Hebrews 2:1-4' focuses on the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy. Classical rhetorical method is employed to achieve the objective of this chapter. Chapter seven titled, 'Summary of Findings and Implications' summarises the findings of the previous chapters and then describes the implications of this study for the church in South Africa.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE BACKGROUND OF HEBREWS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The present thesis aims to establish how the author of Hebrews shaped the theology of faith to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers. To achieve such a plan we first of all need to establish some of the background information of Hebrews. This includes the socio-historical circumstances, social location of the hearers, their ethnicity, authorship, the date it was written, the genre, the literary structure and the uniting theme of this epistle. This is, however, not an easy undertaking, given that many aspects of these issues are puzzling. It is no wonder that this masterpiece has been dubbed with different names, which reveals its complexity regarding its background information (Asumang 2007:10; Heath 2011:12).

What makes this epistle more complex is that the external evidence does not resolve the kind of questions we wish to answer about Hebrews. As a result the key source of evidence is the limited internal evidence within the epistle itself, and the educated guesses by various interpreters (Heath 2011:12). Scholars are of the view that this helps to reconstruct the background information of this masterpiece (Heath 2011:12; O'Brien 2010:2). With all these difficulties, however, scholars still believe that Hebrews is the most excellent book of the New Testament and unique (Allen 2010:24; DeSilva 2000:1; O'Brien 2010:1-2; Pshenichny 2009:39; Thompson 2008:3). Hebrews is indeed, '... carefully structured, and beautifully written, theologically profound and powerfully argued' (O'Brien 2010:1).

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the background information of Hebrews. Understanding these issues is critical to achieving the objectives of this study. Firstly, this will ensure that we have a better knowledge of the circumstances of the first hearers that led the author to pen this book. Secondly, it will be helpful to have some knowledge about the author and his relationship with the first hearers. Lastly, this will also be helpful for an understanding of the value system of first hearers. These

issues will be valuable to understanding and developing the author's rhetorical strategy as he addresses the pastoral problems of the first hearers. It will also provide a background to understanding why and how the theme of faith functioned to address the socio-theological situation of the readers.

## **2.2 Authorship**

### **2.2.1 Who is the Writer?**

Who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews? This question is one of the unresolved puzzles of Hebrews, and this is clear from the different views (Allen 2010:62; Asumang 2007:16; Heath 2011:12-14; O'Brien 2010:9). The options are, namely, Paul, one of his companions or an unknown author. Whether the author was Paul or one of his companions will not negatively affect the interpretation of this study (Asumang 2007:16; O'Brien 2010:8; Trotter 1997:57). However, some important information about the author, including his rhetorical skill, his character/authority, his relationship and knowledge about his first hearers will be pivotal to achieve the objectives of the study.

Firstly, knowledge of the author's rhetorical skill will be valuable to help understand how the author developed his rhetorical style in order to persuade the listeners to renewed commitment to their Christian faith. Secondly, the author's character and authority is one of the artificial proofs that are critical in convincing the audience to take certain actions or make decisions regarding their circumstances. Thirdly, his relationship with the audience is also critical, as the author could use his knowledge of the audience to trigger certain emotions, like fear or hope, emotions that would enhance his chances of convincing them, in order to achieve his rhetorical goal. Lastly, the relationship between the speaker and the audience is also critical in the rhetorical strategy, as this determines whether the audience could trust the speaker as one who cares about them and their needs. In other words, knowing that the speaker meant good for the audience, the audience would most likely respond positively, and ensure that the speaker achieved his rhetorical goal. These issues will further be discussed in more detail in chapters three and six of this study.

There are three main views, as mentioned above, regarding the authorship. Initially, this anonymous letter was attributed to Apostle Paul by the early fathers (Asumang 2007:16; Heath 2011:12; O'Brien 2010:2-3). This view was held by both the Eastern and Western churches, with the Eastern church adopting it in about AD 200, while the Western church adopted it in the latter half of the fourth century (Heath 2011:12; Koester 2001:42; O'Brien 2010:2; Thompson 2008:4). But during this period some learned scholars did have doubts about this view (O'Brien 2010:3). Therefore, it is not surprising that Origen eventually conceded that only God knows who the author of this masterpiece is (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.14). The common views range from Paul, his companions such as Barnabas, Silas, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Luke, or an unknown author.

#### *2.2.1.1 Paul as Author of Hebrews*

The traditional argument supporting Pauline authorship is based on similarities between Paul's writings and Hebrews in vocabulary, style and imagery, similarity of some of the theology, and testimony by the church fathers (Allen 2010:36; Koester 2001:42; O'Brien 2010:4-5). For example, it is believed that the personal greetings and exhortation in Hebrews 13:16-25 and Pauline letters are similar. In both Pauline writings and Hebrews Christ is identified as the one by whom all things were created (Heb 1:1-4; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 4:4). Christ is also said to have died a shameful death, but now is exalted to the right hand of God in heaven (Heb 2:9; Rom 8:3, 34; Phil 2:5-11); and now He intercedes for His fellow brothers and sisters (Heb 7:25; Rom 8:34). Also, because of His work and exaltation, the old Mosaic order was destroyed and replaced with a new and final covenant (Heb 7:19; 8:6-13; 2 Cor 3:18). Lastly, since Hebrews 13:23-24 mentions Timothy, who was a close associate of Paul, it is believed that Paul wrote Hebrews.

Although some of these arguments are strong, there are other reasons for questioning Pauline authorship. Firstly, nowhere in Hebrews does the author mention his name as being Paul, as he normally does in his writings. Secondly, the author of Hebrews identifies himself as receiving the gospel from the Christian ear-witnesses (Heb 2:3-4), and this is contrary to Paul's claim that he received the gospel through

revelation from Christ (Gal 1:11-12). Thirdly, although there are similarities in vocabulary between Paul's writings and Hebrews, these are also shared with broader Christian tradition (Koester 2001:43; O'Brien 2010:5). Indeed, based on extensive comparisons on style and vocabulary there are major differences between Paul's writings and Hebrews. Lastly, although there are theological similarities between Paul's writings and Hebrews, there are also clear theological differences (Allen 2010:39; Koester 2001:43; O'Brien 2010:5). For example, the "high priesthood of Christ" title which is central in Hebrews is not as prominent in Pauline writings, except the interceding ministry of Christ mentioned in Rom 8:34. Also the doctrine of justification is muted in Hebrews, while it is central in Pauline writings. Based on these arguments against Pauline authorship, it is therefore highly unlikely that Paul wrote Hebrews (Allen 2010:43; O'Brien 2010:5).

#### *2.2.1.2 An Associate of Paul*

As already mentioned above, various names have been suggested as possible candidates for authorship. The reference to Timothy in Hebrews 13:23 and some theological affinities between Hebrews and Paul's writings possibly support these views (Koester 2001:44; O'Brien 2010:6). Suggested associates include Barnabas, Silas, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos and Luke (Allen 2010:43-61; DeSilva 2004:788; Koester 2001:42-46; O'Brien 2010:4-9). Each of these candidates has both strengths and weaknesses and there is still a strong possibility that one of Paul's companions wrote Hebrews, although there is insufficient internal evidence to support any particular person. The only strong argument is that against Priscilla, as the author of Hebrews implies that he was a male (Heb 11:32).

#### *2.2.1.3 Unknown Author*

Because of the difficulties of identifying the author, many have followed Origen who concluded that the author is unknown (Koester 2001:45). Indeed, any suggested name still remains a speculation, as there is no support from the text itself (Koester 2001:45; Thompson 2008:5). It is therefore better to conclude that the author of Hebrews is unknown. As already mentioned above, this conclusion does not affect

the objective of this study. What is important is that Hebrews is indeed an inspired Word of God like any other biblical writings. This masterpiece has indeed positively influenced many Christians over the centuries. Therefore, we need to diligently study it.

#### *2.2.1.4 Internal Evidence about the Author*

Although the identity of the author is unknown, based on the internal evidence from Hebrews, there is valuable information that can be extracted about the author (Isaacs 2002:6; O'Brien 2010:8; Thompson 2008:5). Firstly, this author was not an ear-witness to the ministry of Jesus (Heb 2:3-4). Instead, he was in the second generation and not the first generation of believers (O'Brien 2010:8; Thompson 2008:5). Based on Hebrews 13:23, the writer also had a close relationship with Timothy. This relationship puts him in the circle of influential leaders who were apostolic founders of the churches (DeSilva 2004:788). This made him a respected leader by this Christian community. Further to this, throughout Hebrews this writer shows great compassion and concern for his fellow Christian friends (Cockerill 1998:14; Trotter 1997:45). But also on many occasions in Hebrews he commands sufficient authority over and the respect of these believers (Trotter 1997:45). DeSilva (2004:788) wrote that, 'although the author often associates himself with audience as 'we' or 'us', he also has sufficient authority to rebuke the audience where necessary and to expect that they honour his instructions'. Also, as mentioned above, this is critical to the author's rhetorical strategy as he persuades the audience to take action or make decisions regarding their current situation. Without this authority and respect, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for him to achieve his rhetorical goal. This is further boosted by his evident pastoral concern for the hearers (Cockerill 1998:27; Guthrie 1998:24; Lane 1998:li; Trotter 1997:45). Further, when he wrote this epistle, he was separated from the recipients, although he had an intimate knowledge about them and their circumstances (Asumang 2007:16; O'Brien 2010:8; Trotter 1997:46-47).

There is a possibility that he was in prison or involved with the leadership affairs of another congregation during this period (Asumang 2007:16; DeSilva 2000:27).

Further, many scholars based on the internal evidence from the text of Hebrews generally agree that this writer was a Jew, was well educated and trained in rudiments of Greco-Roman rhetoric (Guthrie 1998:25; Lane 1998:l; O'Brien 2010:8; Thompson 2008:6; Trotter 1997:44). 'His writings have been regarded by many as the finest in the New Testament, both in its use of grammar and vocabulary and in its style and knowledge of Greek rhetorical conventions' (O'Brien 2010:8; cf. Trotter 1997:44). According to DeSilva (2004:788), 'the author does not rely on charismatic authority but on his ability to connect his exhortations with the authoritative traditions of the community (chiefly the Old Testament and the proclamation of Jesus)'. This great rhetorical skill of the author played a pivotal role in achieving his rhetorical goal to persuade the hearers.

### **2.2.2 His Philosophical Background**

Hebrews was heavily influenced by both the Greco-Roman culture and Christian traditions (Koester 2001:78-79; O'Brien 2010:36-37). The use of language, rhetorical devices, honour and shame language as well as the agricultural and athletic metaphors are clear indication of the Greco-Roman culture influence in Hebrews. The author drew from Greco-Roman culture in order to encourage his listener to renewed commitment to their Christian faith. In other words, the use of Greco-Roman culture was critical in order to reinforce these listeners Christian belief.

Like any other NT writings, the author was also influenced by the Christian traditions (Asumang 2007:18; Lane 1998:cxii; Thompson 2008:21). This is evident when he reminds the believers of their original confession (Heb 3:1; 4:14; 10:23). This is critical for the author, as he uses it as 'the common ground on which he builds his argument' (Thompson 2008:21). He then reminds them of their beliefs about Christ, which are consistent with Christian traditions (Heb 1:2, 3, 5 13; 2:6-8; 4:14; 8:1; 9:28). Clearly, the philosophical background was important to the author in order to achieve his goal. This influence will become clear in the next chapters of this study.

### **2.2.3 His Use of the Old Testament Text**

The author's exceptional knowledge and extensive use of Old Testament text cannot be ignored (Lane 1998:cxiv; Trotter 1997:47). This is especially critical, as it would influence the interpretation of Hebrews. To achieve his rhetorical goal, the author wove the Old Testament texts both in his doctrine and exhortation sections. How the author used the Old Testament texts in Hebrews in order to encourage these hearers to hold fast to their faith will be evident later through the exegesis. What is important to note at this stage is that the author 'uses Christological reading of the Old Testament that involved typology, limited allegory, citations, allusions, and echoes to apply to the unstable pastoral circumstances of his congregation' (Asumang 2007:26).

## **2.3 The Date of Writing Hebrews**

Like the issue of authorship the date when this epistle was written is also an unresolved puzzle (Allen 2010:74; Asumang 2007:17; O'Brien 2010:15). There are also different views regarding this. Allen (2010:74) argued that, 'neither the internal evidence of the text nor the external historical data provide enough information for a dogmatic commitment to any of the theories that have been proposed'. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the date when this epistle was written is considered unknown, but it could have been written probably anywhere between 60 – 90 CE (Asumang 2007:18; O'Brien 2010:20; Koester 2010:616).

## **2.4 The First Hearers**

### **2.4.1 Their Ethnicity**

The ethnicity of the first hearers is also an unresolved puzzle. Views range from Jewish Christians, Gentile Christians or a mixed group of Christians made up of both Jewish and Gentile Christians (Allen 2010:62; Heath 2011:15; O'Brien 2010:9). Both the first and the second views have their strengths and weakness, but the third view that these believers were a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile Christians is seen

today as the most plausible option (Asumang 2007:19; DeSilva 2000:7; Ellingworth 1993:25; O'Brien 2010:10-11). These believers were both Diaspora Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who were possibly living somewhere in the Roman Empire outside Palestine (Asumang 2007:19; DeSilva 2000:9). It is likely that the majority were Jewish Christians (Asumang 2007:19; Ellingworth 1993:27).

#### **2.4.2 Their Social Location**

The second critical aspect concerning this Christian community is their social location. These believers were probably located in an urban setting (Cockerill 1998:15; Lane 1998:liii). In Hebrews 13:14 (also 13:1-6) the author wrote that the believers do not have a permanent city here on earth. In Hebrews 13:2 the hearers were exhorted to be hospitable to the strangers coming into the city. In Hebrews 13:3, they were to remember those who were in prison and fellow Christians who were being ill-treated. In Hebrews 13:4, they are also exhorted to fidelity in marriage. Lastly, in Hebrews 13:5-6, they are cautioned not to be greedy and have a love of material things. Further based on Hebrews 13, these believers were probably aliens in the city in which they lived (Asumang 2005:131). Also, the social and religious roots of these believers could be traced back 'to Jewish quarters and to participation in the life of Hellenistic synagogue' (Lane 1998:liv). This urban location and the fact that these believers were alienated are important for this study. It is highly possible that these believers drifted away from the Christian faith because they were badly treated. This made their life difficult in the city, and their last resort would be to abandon their Christian faith.

Furthermore, the church was likely a house church (Koester 2001:74; Lane 1998:liii). On many occasions Hebrews talks about the 'household' which is used to refer to the Christian community. In Hebrews 3:6 (cf. Heb 10:21), this is clear when the author refers to the believers as the house. Believers are said to be the sons and daughters of God. This further reinforces the idea of a family as this is what was expected from family members (Koester 2001:74). It is therefore not a surprise when the author refers to the relationship between Christians and Christ as 'flesh and blood' (2:14). This concept of the family was critical to the first-century world, and essential to every

human being (DeSilva 2000:157-158; Koester 2001:74). 'A person's family of origin is the primary source for his or her status and location in the world and an essential reference point for the person's identify' (DeSilva 2000:158). This is also clear from Israel's history, and how family genealogies and lineages were preserved (2000:158-162). The emphasis on the family is one of the ways that the author uses to help the readers to maintain their faith (see Heb 3:12-14; 4:1, 11; 10:24-25; 12:15-16; 13:1-3). Clearly, the concept of the family was important to the writer and his hearers. Therefore, this will be considered in exegetical study in the next chapters.

Further, this church's source of authority was the LXX (Lane 1998:liv). This view is substantiated by the presence of wisdom traditions in Hebrews, which suggests a Hellenistic Jewish background. What is further important about this congregation is that its leadership structure was that of plurality of leadership (Asumang 2005:131; Koester 2001:75). Based on Hebrews 13:7, 17 and 24, it is clear that there was no one leader who governed this congregation. These leaders had authority and were respected by the congregation because of their work among them and their exemplary faith. Therefore, this is also important as part of the author's rhetorical strategy, as will further be described in chapters three and six.

### **2.4.3 Their Social History**

Scholars today generally agree that the available information regarding the experience of these first hearers enables us to reconstruct the social history of these first century Christians which resulted in this book being written (Asumang 2007:20; Allen 2010:62; DeSilva 2000:7; Koester 2005:231-233; Lane 1998:liii; O'Brien 2010:9-10; Thompson 2008:8). The situation of Hebrews' first hearers developed in several stages.

The first stage was the proclamation of the gospel and conversion of the hearers, which resulted in the founding of the congregation (Koester 2005:233; Thompson 2008:8). This is clear from Hebrews 2:3-4, where the author wrote that the proclamation of the good news by those who heard the Lord Jesus (v 3) was accompanied by signs, wonders, and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit

distributed according to His own will (v 4). What is important about these signs, wonders and various other miracles is that they confirmed the message of salvation by the evangelists. Further to these miracles the believers received the Holy Spirit, which is a channel of grace. With these experiences, God confirmed that these newly born-again believers were adopted as children of God and also were co-heirs with Christ in God's eternal kingdom (Koester 2005:235-237). These believers were now part of the Christian community, and were required to forsake their old ways of living including social relations (2005:237). This was the norm in the Greco-Roman world, where Christians after being born-again and baptised, would bind together as a group with similar values and worldviews (2005:237). This planted a seed of conflict between the believers and the wider unbelieving society. Koester further mentioned that this first phase of the 'community life was a time when belief and experience reinforced each other' (2005:237). This connection between belief and experience caused problems at the later stage of this community's history. 'When tasting the heavenly gift is accompanied by the loss of earthly goods, when sharing the Spirit means sharing suffering, and when the powers of the future age seem overwhelmed by the powers of the present age' (2005:237).

The second phase of the community's history was marked by persecution by those outside this Christian community, and solidarity within the community (Koester 2005:238; Thompson 2008:8). The impressive beginning of this Christian community was soon followed by severe persecution (Asumang 2007:20). In Hebrews 10:32-34, the author reminds these believers how they remained faithful even under hardships and sufferings. This went to the point that they joyfully accepted losing their property. This further included showing compassion to those who were beaten and imprisoned, because of their hope of the promised eternal inheritance.

Regarding this passage, Koester made several observations which paint a vivid situation of this Christian community (2005:328-244). The author of Hebrews described suffering as 'a great contest' and a 'public spectacle'. Koester (2005:238) posited that this persecution involved four main elements: denunciation, affliction, imprisonment and loss of property, and that there were two groups against Christians, namely, the non-Christian populace and some of the local authorities. He

wrote that ‘the role of non-Christian populace can best be seen in considering how “denunciation” (*oneidismoi*) of Christians led to their imprisonment’ (2005:238). This was the norm during the first century; citizens could bring wrongdoers to the local authorities, which resulted in the imprisonment of Christians by the non-Christian populace. It is therefore clear that this community was not only abused, but their status was also degraded because of loss of property.

These issues experienced by the believers are critical to this current study. Firstly, it provides the important information that affected their commitment to their confession. The experiences these Christians suffered were not what they expected when they first believed. Secondly, their degraded status was serious, as it went against their social value system. Therefore, if Christianity was causing them to be dishonoured, this would indeed tempt them to adopt an alternative that would redeem their status. The author’s rhetorical strategy to address this will be described in detail in the chapters three and six.

What is important at this second stage is that although the believers went through these difficulties, they remained steadfast in their Christian faith (Koester 2005:241-242; Thompson 2008:8). This resulted in friction between this Christian community and the unbelieving society. The unbelieving society was infuriated by this, and as a result the Christian community was further pressured. The Christians were resilient, and these actions bound them together. They also supported those in prison both spiritually and materially.

The third stage of development of this Christian community involved friction and malaise (Koester 2005:244; Thompson 2008:8-10). According to Asumang (2007:20), ‘When the persecution lollled down, however, the church entered a third stage characterized by low-grade external harassment (Heb 13:13), a highly unstable internal demoralization (Heb 12:12), and a spiritual malaise (Heb 3:12, 10:26-28)’. These Christians had two options, whether ‘they can suffer verbal abuse while remaining loyal to Christ and his followers, or they can seek a more secure place in their earthly city by ceasing to follow Christ’ (Koester 2005:245). As a result some chose to remain loyal to Christ, while others drifted away.

Another challenge was maintaining support to those in prison, which at this stage was a challenge to them, as it strained their already limited material resources (Koester 2005:245). This was made worse by the fact that local officials and guards could demand bribes before the believers were allowed to see those in prison, making the situation even more difficult for them to bear. This was further aggravated by the long period of time that those in prison spent in custody, meaning they had to support them even longer. Supporting the prisoners also added the element of risk, as helping those in prison in the first century world was regarded as shameful in the society. Because of these situations, while some Christians continued to support the prisoners, others gradually drifted away, were inactive, and some no longer supported other Christians at all.

Even commitment to fellowship with one another among these believers started fading away. There was no longer that steadfastness of their faith they once exhibited and which bound them together. These believers' lack of commitment was an effort to curry some favour with the non-Christian society, which would help them to regain their social status and possessions in their earthly city (Koester 2005:247). Although the situation was not severe at this stage, the perennial friction demoralised the Christian community. It was therefore at this point that the epistle was written. According to Asumang (2005:131), 'there are reasons to believe that the spiritual doldrums were so deep that the author genuinely feared apostasy could result among the believers (Heb 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26; 12:16-17) and hence the urgency of the threats and warnings in the epistle'.

Thus, it is clear from the account of the social history of the readers what the author had to deal with. What they had been taught when they initially accepted Christianity was a critical factor in their current situation. These believers had expected a better life than the current hardships they were experiencing. This was because they believed Christ was an exalted Lord, with all things subjected to Him. Because of the current situation, some gave up their faith and went back to their old ways.

These issues are therefore critical to the author's rhetorical strategy to encourage these believers to remain faithful in the midst of current difficulties. In other words, it

was important for the author to explain to his audience why these hardships were happening. Also he needed to explain when these difficulties would eventually cease, and when they would receive the promise they were assured when they first became Christians. How the author developed his rhetorical strategy will be discussed in detail in chapters three and six.

## **2.5 Genre**

Another important issue that needs careful investigation in this study is the genre of Hebrews. The importance of this to the author's rhetorical strategy will be developed in chapters three and six. Two critical issues need to be answered in relation to this study. Firstly, whether Hebrews is a letter, a sermon, or a combination of both. Secondly, whether the rhetorical genre is deliberative, epideictic or a combination of both.

### **2.5.1 The Literary Genre of Hebrews**

There is a general agreement among scholars today that although Hebrews is traditionally called a letter, it is more of a sermon than a letter (Asumang 2007:21; Cahill 1994:141; DeSilva 2004:789; Heath 2011:35; Koester 2010:623-624; Lane 1998:lxix-lxxi; O'Brien 2010:22; Thompson 2008:10). Based on Hebrews 13, Hebrews has features of a letter. However, it lacks the characteristic features of being a letter of the period in the rest of the book (Lane 1998:lxix; O'Brien 2010:20; Thompson 2008:10). In the opening of Hebrews, the author did not identify himself, or his audience. Further, there is no prayer for grace and peace, as well as thanksgiving or blessing, as was the norm for letters at the time.

It is no wonder then that today Hebrews is believed to be a homily with some features of a letter (O'Brien 2010:21-22). Heath (2011:35) citing Witherington wrote that 'Hebrews is an "oral document" that was a sermon that had to be sent to the audience rather than delivered orally to them by the author'. There are several reasons that warrant Hebrews being associated with a sermon. Firstly, 'Hebrews is rich in hearing, listening, and speaking' as compared to reading and writing excluding

OT quotations (Heath 2011:35). In other words, Hebrews was written so that it would be orally presented to the first hearers (Heath 2011:35-36).

Secondly, Heath has suggested that the homily appears to be based on the allocated synagogue reading for one Sabbath (2011:36). Thirdly, 'the style, address, and use of *exemplars* create a striking similarity between Hebrews and Jewish-Hellenistic synagogue preaching' (Heath 2011:37). The most important reason, however, is the author's own characterization of his letter as a *paraklesis* a "word of exhortation" (Heb 13:22). This term was associated with the delivery of a homily in the assembly in the first century (Lane 1998:lxix).

Although this book extensively deals with doctrinal issues, its purpose is hortatory, based on the several passages of exhortation throughout the book (Asumang 2007:21; O'Brien 2010:20). The homiletic character of Hebrews is therefore central to this current study. This is because the study is intended to show the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy. What is firstly important about this sermon is that it is a unified whole (Cahill 1994:142-144; O'Brien 2010:22). In other words, the author delivered this sermon with one main purpose that weaves the doctrinal and exhortation sections together. Secondly, the homiletic character also helps to explain the rhetorical devices used throughout Hebrews (Koester 2010:624; Lane 1998:lxix; Totter 1997:67). In addition, the rhetorical elements prove that Hebrews was delivered in an assembly with one main purpose, like most sermons. In this case, the speaker's goal was to encourage these believers to make a renewed commitment to the Christian faith in the midst of sufferings. How the author achieved this rhetorical goal, will be made evident in the following chapters.

### **2.5.2 The Rhetorical Genre of Hebrews**

The second important issue that needs consideration is that of the rhetorical genre of Hebrews. This will be critical to developing the rhetorical strategy of Hebrews. Many scholars in the past treated Hebrews as either deliberative speech or epideictic speech (Heath 2011:30; Koester 2001:82). There was also a minority of scholars who saw Hebrews as judicial speech (Heath 2011:30).

These different views are problematic, but scholars today agree that Hebrews cannot be categorised as one speech of ancient rhetoric (Heath 2011:31; Koester 2001:82; O'Brien 2010:25). Instead, there is agreement that this sermon employs both deliberative and epideictic speeches (e.g., DeSilva 2000:46; Heath 2011:30-31; Koester 2001:82; Lane 1998:lxxix; O'Brien 2010:26; Thompson 2008:12; Thurén 1997-590-591). While many scholars agree on the mixture of these two forms of speeches, how they are employed in different sections of the text of Hebrews is still disputed (Heath 2011:31-33; Koester 2002:104). Some believe that epideictic rhetoric takes priority, while others believe that it is 'deliberative rhetoric with epideictic features' (Heath 2011:32). It is not surprising that some scholars have concluded that it is not helpful to categorise Hebrews as either epideictic or deliberative (Heath 2011:32; Koester 2002:104). 'Instead, scholars are focusing on specific rhetorical forms and text divisions' (Heath 2011:32, cf. Koester 2002:104).

However, Heath's recent work is very helpful when addressing the problem of the mixture of the two genres in Hebrews. He wrote that, 'the chiasmic framework illustrates how epideictic (Christ-focused) portions and deliberative (recipient-focused) portions work together to complement one another within an integrated process of textual communication' (2011:324). The two genres do not follow a sequential relationship, but a more complex relationship involving both sequential and concentric relationship (2011:325). This conclusion is critical for this current study. Firstly, it is crucial in identifying the uniting theme of Hebrews, which is important to achieve the objective of the study. Secondly, the rhetorical genre is important to develop the rhetorical strategy of Hebrews as will be discussed in detail in chapters three and six of this study.

## **2.6 Literary Structure**

Tremendous work has been done over the decades in an attempt to resolve the issue of the literary structure of Hebrews. Although there is great progress on this, still today there is no agreement regarding both the major and minor divisions of the structure of Hebrews (Allen 2010:87; DeSilva 2000:71; Heath 2011:29-58; Joslin 2007:99; O'Brien 2010:22; Koester 2001:83; Lane 1998:lxxxv; Stanley 1994:245-246;

Thompson 2008:13). Lane (1998:lxxxv) citing DE Aune (1987) argued that, 'the structure of Hebrews remains an unresolved problem'. Indeed, even today this is still an unresolved puzzle proving how complex it is (Joslin 2007:100).

The intention of this study is not to solve this critical and complex problem of the literary structure. In this study the structure should properly be understood to correctly grasp the message of Hebrews. Several proposals on the structure of Hebrews have been proposed by interpreters of this epistle over the years. These different proposals have their own strengths and weakness. However, the preferred proposal in this study is that by Heath (2011). Heath has managed to integrate the strengths of the other proposals for his latest work on the structure of Hebrews. Therefore, the structure proposed by Heath will be adopted for exegesis.

## **2.7 The Uniting Theme**

The uniting theme of Hebrews is another problematic issue in this masterpiece, as there is no consensus among scholars (Allen 2010:79; Asumang 2007:33). This study aimed at establishing the role of the theme of faithfulness in the author's rhetorical strategy. Therefore the uniting theme is central to achieving the aim of the study. Different proposals have been made over the decades regarding this uniting theme (Asumang 2007:33-38). Some of these proposals include the superiority of Christianity over Judaism; the high priestly ministry of Christ; the pilgrimage of the people of God, perseverance in suffering and migrant of the camp of God's people (Asumang 2007:33-165; Biggs 2003; Mason 2010; Koester 2002).

The migrant of the camp of God's people is the preferred uniting theme in this study. This uniting theme has managed to take into consideration the strengths and weakness of the previous proposals. Therefore, this is very plausible as the uniting theme of the epistle to the Hebrews. It takes into consideration the situational context of Hebrews, which is critical in this thesis. A uniting theme taking into consideration the situational context of Hebrews is important to achieve objective of this study. This will be evident in the next chapters of this study.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter the issue of the background information of Hebrews was examined. This included issues such as the authorship, the date the epistle was written, the first hearers of Hebrews, the genre, the structure and the uniting theme of Hebrews. The conclusions from this chapter is valuable for the detailed investigation of the role of the theme of faithfulness based on the author's rhetorical strategy to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers. The next chapter aims to develop a methodology to achieve this purpose. The primary focus of this methodology is classical rhetorical analysis.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This study proposes to use rhetorical criticism combined with the historical-grammatical method. There are a number of reasons for preferring this approach. Firstly, the recognition of the genre of the book of Hebrews as a *paranaesis* or homily means that no examination of the epistle is complete without delineating its rhetorical features. Secondly, this study is particularly interested in investigating the fit between the theme of faithfulness in the book of Hebrews and the situational context of the first hearers. Therefore, this demands a methodology sensitive to the rhetorical designs of the author's teaching. Thirdly, many examinations of the theme of faithfulness in the book of Hebrews do not consider its role in the author's rhetorical strategy. This tends to leave a rather dry and overly academic appreciation of the epistle. To put it more positively, examining the rhetorical features of the theme of faithfulness in Hebrews will highlight the pastoral purposes of the author, as well as the likely contemporary benefit of studying the epistle.

These reasons have motivated the recourse to rhetorical criticism in the present study. Therefore this chapter aims to provide a brief description of the historical background of rhetorical criticism and how it is being used in NT studies. Also, it will investigate suggestions as to the rhetorical strategy employed by the author of Hebrews. Lastly, a procedure based on this insight will be developed. This procedure based on rhetorical criticism combined with the historical-grammatical method will be used to achieve the objectives of this present study.

## **3.2 Rhetorical Criticism and NT Studies**

### **3.2.1 Rhetoric Defined**

Delineating the rhetorical strategy of the book of Hebrews firstly requires that rhetorical theories are properly understood. This is critical, since rhetorical theories are the basis for rhetorical criticism. As stated by Cornelius, 'a theory of rhetoric states the basic facts, central laws, and fundamental components of rhetoric process' (2000:256). Therefore without precisely starting by spelling out rhetoric theory, it would be impossible to do rhetorical criticism. Further, how this is being used in contemporary NT studies is critical to achieve the objective of this study. Therefore, this section aims to address these issues.

Before these issues are addressed, it is important to start with a definition of rhetoric. Watson (2010:166) defined rhetoric as, 'the art of using spoken and written discourse according to accepted rules and techniques to inform, persuade, or motivate an audience according to the agenda of the speaker or writer'. Porter and Stamps (2002:17) have also argued that '... rhetoric is more than how a text communicates and whether that "how" is effective, but what the text communicates'. They moved on to say that 'rhetoric becomes the means of positing a new reality and persuading others to adopt it' (2002:17). Fiorenza (2010:§2) further argued that 'rhetoric is understood as the study and practice of persuasion and argumentation and as part of a comprehensive theory of inquiry and scholarship'. It is therefore clear that rhetoric involves communication either through a spoken or written discourse utilizing both argumentation and persuasion with the ultimate purpose of winning support from the hearers based on a particular situation (Aune 2003; Hester 2004:10; Reed 1997:171; Thurén 2002:83; Witherington 2009:11).

It is important to further note that there is a distinction between argumentation and persuasion. While the goal of argumentation is opinion, the goal of persuasion, on the other hand, is action (Thurén 2002:83). This distinction will be helpful in this study in pursuit of formulating the author of Hebrews' rhetorical strategy and its effectiveness in addressing the first hearers' pastoral problems. In other words, did

the author's rhetorical strategy manage to convince the hearers to form an opinion and then proceed to take an action based on their current situation? This is the crux of the study, with specific interest on the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy.

### **3.2.2 Rhetorical Criticism in Biblical Studies**

Based on our understanding of the meaning of rhetoric, the next important step is a brief historical survey of the application of this discipline in biblical studies. This is important, as it lays the foundation to help select an appropriate rhetoric theory to achieve the objective of the study. Rhetorical criticism of the Bible has been in existence for a very long time, dating back to St. Augustine (Morrison 2002:1; Pogoloff 1992:10-11; Stamps 1997:221; Watson 2010:166; Witherington 2009:9; Wuellner 1987:450-451). After St. Augustine, several other biblical scholars have applied this method in biblical studies (Hester 2010:§1; Stamps 1997:222; Watson 2010:166). However, it was only in the last three decades that biblical scholars have had a renewed interest in rhetorical criticism (Classen 1992:319-344; Hester 2010:§1; Pogoloff 1992:13-14; Stamps 1997:222; Watson 2010:167; Wuellner 1987:451). This has helped to advance knowledge of biblical texts as intended by their original writers to address their audiences (Salyer 2010:§3). It has also made the biblical texts relevant to the readers of every generation (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:31-35; Salyer 2010:§3).

Several interpreters in biblical studies over the years have adopted principles from classical rhetoric, or modern rhetoric or a combination (Fiorenza 2010:§2; Hester 2010:§1; Watson 2010:168; Witherington 2009:6; Wuellner 1987:453). Both classical and modern rhetoric methods have advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, they contribute differently to biblical studies. As a result biblical scholars tend to combine these two methods to benefit from both theories. There are several weaknesses associated with the classical rhetorical method. This method is 'inadequate for modern hermeneutics because it does not address all theoretical, philosophical, and practical issues posed by speech' (Watson 2010:170). This is due to its reliance on ancient techniques and methods for biblical criticism (Fiorenza 2010:§2). Before the

text can be analysed, it is important that first it fits in the templates of classical rhetoric based on ancient rhetoric theory. This stylistic approach has been criticised by several prominent scholars in this field as inadequate (Morrison 2002:9-15, Wuellner 1987). That's what probably resulted in the decline of this method in 1900, although later it was revived (Morrison 2002:4-5). The problem with stylistic approach is that '... it does not sufficiently account for all that texts do and come to mean' (Morrison 2002:11, citing Patricia Tull). Further, the stylistic approach '... has remained for centuries formalised, and functionless, and contextless' (Wuellner 1987:462). Also its concentration on the speaker's authority and how she/he goes about convincing the audience is another weakness (Cornelius 2000:260; Salyer 2010:§3). Therefore, as a result, 'the full potential of rhetorical approach to the Bible has not been achieved' through this method (Hester 2004:3). Consequently Wuellner dubbed this stylistic approach 'rhetorical restrained' (1987:451).

To address this problem scholars have proposed different theories. Wuellner and other scholars, called this shift a "rhetoric reinvented" (Wuellner 1987:453). These different theories are grouped under the term "modern rhetoric". There are three main groups of these theories including socio-rhetoric, rhetoric of inquiry and neo-rhetoric (Amador 1999; Bloomquist 2010:§5; Gowler 2010:191-192; Hester 2004; Hester 2010:§1; Robbins 2010:192-194; Stamps 1997:225-226; Watson 2002:130; Wuellner 1987). There would be several advantages of combining one or more of these theories with classical rhetoric. Several leading scholars in this field have over the years proved the value of this hybrid approach. While this is the case, this study proposes to adopt the theories of classical rhetoric. This will primarily be based on the procedure developed by Kennedy and with some modifications (1984:33-37). This procedure will be discussed in detail under section 3.4 below. This study wishes to exactly delineate and pinpoint how the rhetorics of faithfulness exactly address the socio-historical situation of the first hearers. Thus, although there are several advantages associated with the hybrid approach, classical rhetoric will be more suitable for this study. It will be enhanced by the historical-grammatical method. This means that some of the weaknesses of the classical rhetorical method will be addressed using this method. The sections below will focus on classical rhetoric theory applicable in this study.

### 3.2.3 Theory of Greco-Roman Rhetoric

The NT was written and read in the ancient Greco-Roman environment (Stamps 1997:222). It is thus not surprising that the first application of the method to the NT used theories and methods from ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric contemporaneous with the NT times (1997:223). Greco-Roman rhetoric is preserved both in written sources and also in rhetorical handbooks (DeSilva 2000:39; Lane 1998:lxvii-lxxviii; Thompson 2008:12; Watson 2010:168). The 'knowledge of ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions helps the interpreter to understand how the NT texts functioned in their oral and written cultures' (Watson 2010:168).

In rhetorical criticism of the Bible, the critic relies on the ancient handbooks and progymnasmata (Fiorenza 2010:§2). Based on the ancient rhetorical handbooks, there are five main rhetorical categories: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery (Olbricht 1997:159; Watson 2010:168). The first three categories will be central to achieving the objectives of this study as will be evident in chapter six.

#### 3.2.3.1 *Invention*

The first category (i.e. invention), simply 'means discovery' (Heath 1997:87). Heath (1997:87) wrote that, 'in rhetoric it designates the discovery of resources for discursive persuasion latent in any given rhetorical problem'. Reed (1997:176) on the other hand argued that, 'invention concerns the speaker's attempt to select or find valid arguments to render a plausible thesis'. He further posited that 'this could be accomplished, first of all, by determining the "status" or "issue" to be resolved, asking questions about the fact, definition, and nature of the issue under discussion'. Heath (1997:100) wrote that 'the theory of stasis seeks to classify themes according to the underlying nature of the dispute'.

What this means is that based on the nature of dispute, the speaker selects a relevant thesis to address the specific issue(s). When the issue(s) are properly understood, it is important for the speaker to further determine the rhetoric species suitable to address this problem (Heath 1997:106; Watson 2010:168). These rhetorical species are divided into three basic forms: judicial, deliberative and

epideictic (Hester 1984:223; Kennedy 1997:44; O'Brien 2010:25; Reed 1997:172; Watson 2010:168). 'Judicial calls for a decision for or against an action that occurred in the past through appeals to what is true and just' (O'Brien 2010:25). Deliberative rhetoric 'urges people to follow a course of action in the future, pursuing what is beneficial and avoiding what is harmful' (2010:25). Lastly, epideictic rhetoric 'is concerned to reinforce the present values of the listeners by commending what is praiseworthy and condemning what is shameful' (2010:25). Regarding epideictic rhetoric, Kennedy (1997:45) argued that it 'is perhaps best regarded as including any discourse, oral or written, that does not aim at a specific action or decision, but seeks to enhance knowledge, understanding, or belief, often through praise or blame, whether of persons, things, or values'. What is further important about these species is that they are used in different contexts such as courtroom, political forum, and public ceremony. How the author of Hebrews wove these species into his rhetorical strategy as he addresses the pastoral issues of the first hearers will be discussed in the next section.

Another important issue regarding invention is that of convincing proofs. There are two types of these proofs in biblical texts. Firstly, proofs can either be from an eyewitness or quotation from the Old Testament texts, and these are called inartificial proofs (Watson 2010:169). The second type is artificial proofs which are divided into, ethos, logos and pathos (DeSilva 2004:781; Koester 2010:626; Watson 2010:169). Firstly, ethos which is the 'authority or moral character of the speaker' played a very important role in the speaker's rhetorical strategy (Watson 2010:169). The speaker persuaded the listeners to make a decision based on their trust of the speaker. This means that the speaker who lacks authority/character would not be trusted, and hence would not have an effective proof. This implies that to be an effective and a successful orator skill alone was not sufficient, but was to be augmented by authority/character. Winning the trust and confidence of the hearers to do what the speaker wants was the key. DeSilva wrote that 'we trust those whom we deem well-disposed toward us, rather than those who seem antagonistic or derogatory; we trust [those] who embody the values we hold dear; we trust those who speak and reason sensibly, and seem knowledgeable about those matters they speak of' (2004:508).

Secondly, *logos* which is the 'propositions and supporting arguments' was also important, as it appealed to the mind of the listeners (Watson 2010:169; Koester 2001:87). DeSilva (2004:572) wrote that, 'ancient rhetoric handbooks are brimming with topics for creating a case and determining the arguments of rival speakers, whether the case has to do with a decision about the course of action to be pursued, a verdict about someone's behaviour or the praise or censure of an individual or group'. The goal is for the listeners to respond in a particular way premeditated by the speaker. This means that the speaker pre-plans his speech and the envisaged response from the listeners. Based on his pre-knowledge of the listeners he knows that he has achieved his rhetorical goal. The speaker achieves this goal by using various deliberative topics to either persuade them to a particular action or dissuade them from a particular action or behaviour (2004:572-573). Deliberative topics refer to those actions that within the context of the audience were either acceptable, meaning they can be followed, or were not acceptable, meaning they need to be avoided. These might be based on things in the past which resulted in particular consequences. For example, if the speaker wants to persuade the listeners to follow a particular action, he promotes this by using deliberative topics that show that the action is, virtuous, expedient, honourable and praiseworthy, lawful, necessary, feasible, and so on. (DeSilva 2004:572). On the other hand, if he wants to dissuade them from a particular action or behaviour he would do the opposite. DeSilva further wrote that, 'very often, a speaker is urging one course over another, so he or she is engaged in persuasion and dissuasion at the same time, weighing the relative merits of the various courses of action facing hearers' (2004:573). He also wrote that 'another set of topics would assist a person seeking to confirm or refute the validity of a position' including topics such as inconsistencies, implausibility, impropriety, and so on. Opposite topics on the other hand would be used if confirmation of position is the rhetorical goal. Also the speaker uses a different set of topics for praising a person or denouncing a person. DeSilva (2004:573) further wrote that, 'other topics could contribute fuel for argumentation across the spectrum of deliberative, judicial and epideictic oratory'. He continued to argue that these topics are called common, because 'they provide ammunition for all kinds of speeches'. It will therefore be

important in this study to ascertain how the author of Hebrews incorporated these in his rhetorical strategy to achieve his goal.

Thirdly, pathos arouses the emotions of the listeners for or against the proposition (Watson 2010:169). Koester (2001:89) citing Cicero who wrote that 'people decide far more problems by hate or love, or lust or rage, or sorrow or joy, or hope or fear than by rational argument'. Further citing Quintilian, Koester wrote that it is 'in its power over the emotions that the life and soul of oratory is to be found'. In other words through pathos, the orator can change the emotions of people 'in regard to their judgments, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain' (Aristotle, Rhetoric 2.1.8; cf. Koester 2001:89). DeSilva (2004:782) also wrote that, 'Aristotle recognized correctly that people are prone to make different decisions depending on the emotional state they are in at the time of decision'. Therefore a skilful orator with a good understanding of his audience, including their circumstances, would be successful. He would be able to arouse the required emotions from his audience to achieve his rhetorical goal. This is indeed aligned with the 'strategy of persuasion'.

It is clear from invention that for the rhetor to achieve his goal there are many critical things that should be considered. Since rhetorical strategy is central to this study, it is important that we clearly discern how the author wove these issues into the book of Hebrews. It became clear in the previous chapter that the author was dealing with a very complex situation. Therefore it was essential that his rhetorical strategy be skilfully developed to achieve his goal. In the next section this will be ascertained, as it will be important to achieve the objective of this study.

### *3.2.3.2 Arrangement*

Arrangement was important for the rhetor to arrange his material in the best order that would help him to present his speech in an orderly manner (Koester 2002:104; Reed 1997:179; Watson 2010:169; Wuellner 1997:51). In other words arrangement helped to provide the required flow in the speaker's argument. The components that constitute the arrangement include: 'exordium (introduction to the key points to be made), narratio (statement of the facts of the case), partitio (propositions to be

developed), probatio (arguments and development of topics in support of the proposition), refutatio (refutation of the opposition), and peroratio (summary of points made and appeal to audience emotions)' (Watson 2010:169). It is important to note that it was not necessary for the speaker to include all these components in his speech (Koester 2002:104; Witherington 2009:8; Wuellner 1997:52). The choices were determined by the specific situation that the speaker was addressing. It will be important to ascertain in this study whether the author of Hebrews adopted a specific arrangement in his sermon. This will be reviewed in the next section. This will also be crucial in developing the exegetical model for this study.

### 3.2.3.3 *Style*

The last important issue that needs to be discussed as part of the rhetorical categories is style. Rowe (1997:121) argued that this, 'has had an especially pervasive and lasting influence' in classical rhetoric. There are three reasons for this (1997:121). Firstly, 'classical rhetoric supplies a rich nomenclature encompassing most of the important stylistic phenomena found in any language' (1997:121). Secondly, 'the ancient precepts on style apply to any verbal expression and simply to that which is used to persuade' (1997:121). Lastly, 'classical rhetoric has established criteria for judging style that are sufficiently flexible to allow for changing tastes and requirement' (1997:121). What was important about style was that it ensured that a proper language for the effectiveness of invention and arrangement was provided (Watson 2010:169). In other words, for the thesis of the speaker to be effective, it was required that a proper style was adopted.

There are four stylistic virtues that the speaker could use to achieve effectiveness in his thesis (Rowe 1997:121). These include correctness, clarity, ornamentation and propriety. Ornamentation is important in this study and therefore will be discussed in detail. Regarding correctness, what is important is that there is correct use of the language by the speaker (Rowe 1997:122). Here, rhetoricians focused on the common errors or vices of grammar that the speakers should avoid in their speeches. Clarity on the other hand like correctness is achieved or lost in single words and combination of words (1997:123). Ornamentation is the third stylistic

virtue; its function is to please the audience (1997:124). It causes the audience to be attentive and disposed to the speech of the speaker. The outcome of this is that the listeners will be in a position to readily believe the speaker. It 'contributes several different features to the verbal expression – strength, polish, acuity, abundance, gaiety, precision, variety, and clarity – depending on the type of ornament employed' (Rowe 1997:124). Like correctness and clarity, ornamentation also applies both to single words and combination of words. Under single words there are three classes of substitutions: archaisms, neologisms and tropes. Tropes as compared to the other two classes played a key role in ancient rhetorical theory. 'Tropes extend, expand, or change the meaning of words as no other rhetorical device' (Rowe 1997:124). This is 'a change of a word or phrase from its proper meaning into another for the sake of effect' (Rowe 1997:124, citing Quintilian *inst.* 8:6:1). In other words, through the use of tropes, the speaker is able to attract the attention of the audience according to his rhetorical strategy.

There are several examples of tropes such as, metaphors, irony, metonymy, synecdoche, emphasis, periphrasis, antonomasia, hyperbole, and litotes (Rowe 1997:124-129). The author of Hebrews employed these tropes extensively throughout his sermon. He employed metaphors from maritime matters, education, law, property, athletics, architecture, cult as well as agriculture (Heb 2:1, 3-4, 14; 4:2, 13; 5:2, 12-14; 6:1, 7-8, 13-18, 16, 19; 7:4-10; 9-10; 10:20; 33, 34; 11:1, 10; 12:1-3, 7-11; see also Heath 2011:384-390). 'A metaphor is a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea but used in place of another in such a way that it suggests a likeness or an analogy between them' (Rowe 1997:126). However, the more appropriate definition for a metaphor is that proposed by Aune (2003) citing R.M. White (1996:79-80);

A metaphor is a sentence that may be regarded as a sentence that has arisen from the conflation of two other, grammatically analogous, sentences... One of these sentences, the primary sentence for the metaphor, is a sentence that would give a description of the actual situation. The other sentence would give a description of a situation with which the metaphor invites us to compare the actual situation. As a result of such a conflation, we are invited to explore a

network of similarities and dissimilarities between the two situations, and see the one situation in terms of the other situation, to see it as if it were the other situation.

This understanding of metaphor is important in this study. This is because metaphors, as will be shown in chapters four, five and six, played a central role in the author's development of the theme of faith. In chapter four, the focus will be on how the various metaphors associated with faith help to define the theme of faith. Chapter five on the other hand will focus on Hebrews 2:1-4, and maritime metaphor in Heb 2:1 will be further be analysed in detail, while in chapter six the focus will be on the author's rhetorical purpose based on this maritime metaphor. In other words, the focus will be on how this metaphor contributed to convincing the listeners to make a renewed commitment to their Christian faith. In addition to metaphors, the author of Hebrews also employed irony (Heb 5:12; 11:32), metonymy (Heb 4:16; 10:20), synecdoche (Heb 11:1), antonomasia (Heb 1:4; 2:6; 5:7; 10:23, 11:11), hyperbole (Heb 6:4, 6; 11:12) and litotes (Heb 4:15; 6:10; 7:20; 9:7, 18; 10:35; 11:16; 13:2) (Heath 2011:384-390; Koester 2001:95-96). Although these rhetorical devices clearly played a central role in the author's argument, they will not be described in detail in this study.

In addition to tropes, figures are another category of ornamentation (Rowe 1997:129). Figures belong to the 'shaping of group of words' (1997:129). This is divided into figure of words and figure of thought. Figure of words refers to the 'words arranged in certain pattern' (1997:129). While figure of thought refers to the 'meanings of the word groups have standard intellectual and emotional shapes, such as the questions and exclamations' (1997:129). Figure of words falls under three categories including addition, omission and transposition. Looking at figure of thought, this category, although there are different views, is classified under two main categories, namely, figures focused to audience and figures focused upon the subject (1997:138). Both under figure of words and figure of thought, there are several categories such as anaphora, asyndeton, hyperbaton, homoiototon, isocolon, antithesis, ellipsis and many other examples (Bullinger 1898:171; Koester 2001:95; Rowe 1997:129-150). These examples were integral in giving effect to the

rhetorical strategy of the author of Hebrews. However, alliteration, paronomasia, hendiadys and chiasmus are important in this study. Therefore, these figures are described in detail.

The term alliteration is ‘the repetition of an initial letter or sound in a closely connected series of words’ (Aune 2003; cf. Bullinger 1898:171; Koester 2001:95; Trotter 1997:165). The ancient writers regularly employed alliteration in their writings. In effect, during NT times alliteration was common, and it is not surprising that NT writers extensively used it (Trotter 1997:166). What is important about alliteration is that it is effective in drawing attentiveness from the listeners (Koester 2001:95). Also, what the speaker said to the listeners becomes memorable (Trotter 1997:166). According to Trotter (1997:166), ‘if employed with restraint and wisdom, it can be a useful means of making an idea memorable’. The effect of alliteration is evident in Hebrews as it is extensively employed (Heb 1:1; 2:1, 2, 4, 10; 3:12; 4:16; 7:3, 26; 9:27; 10:11, 33; 11:7, 17; 12:11, 21; 13:19). The opening sentence of Hebrews is an excellent example of the author of Hebrews’ restraint and wisdom in applying alliteration as communication tool (Trotter 1997:166). Three of the first four words, and five of the seven key words of the first clause begin with a letter “p”. This according to Koester (2001:95) ‘calls for attention by its explosive sound’. The author of Hebrews was indeed fond of commencing his sentences with the letter “p” as is also evident in Hebrews 2:1, 2 and in many other places in the sermon.

Paronomasia is another key term in this study as will be evident in chapter six. This is commonly known as “pun” (Trotter 1997:173). It is ‘a play on the etymology of a word in order to relate several meanings to the core meaning the speaker is trying to get across’ (Trotter 1997:173). Both OT and NT writers frequently used this figure (1997:173). The author of Hebrews was undoubtedly fond of paronomasia (see Heb 1:1; 2:2, 2:5-8, 10; 3:11, 13; 4:1-2, 16; 5:11; 6:17; 7:9, 23-24; 9:28; 10:5-7, 19-20, 29, 38-39; 11:11; 12:7-11; 13:2, 18) as well. Again, the various expressions of this term were used mainly if the speaker wanted a particular issue to be memorable to the audience. We will be interested in chapter six of this study in how the author in Hebrews 2:2 employed this figure (*parabasis kai parakoē*), and its effect on the listeners. Hendiadys is another important term in this study. It ‘uses two or more

terms to express a single notion, usually by balancing nouns or participles alongside one another' (Trotter 1997:170). The author of Hebrews clearly also relied on hendiadys (see Heb 1:1; 2:2; 5:2; 6:10; 8:5; 12:18) in his rhetorical strategy. By using hendiadys, attention is 'drawn to the description in a fresh, arresting way' (Trotter 1997:170). The focus in chapter six of this study will be to examine again the persuasive effect of this rhetorical figure in Hebrews 2:2 (*parabasis kai parakoē*).

Another prominent rhetorical figure in NT biblical writings is chiasm (Trotter 1997:169). The term is derived from the Latin form of the Greek word *chiasmus* (Bullinger 1898:374; Heath 2011:59; Rhee 2001:14-15). This means 'placing crosswise'. This comes from the letter "X" (chi) in the Greek alphabet. This according to Aune (2003) 'refers to a form of inverted parallelism'. Although the origin of the term *chiasmus* is postclassical, there are undeniable traces of its existence in earlier rhetorical handbooks (Aune 2003; Heath 2011:60). As early as the second or third century CE, *chiasmus* was already widely used (Heath 2011:60). According to Kennedy (1984:28), 'it is not uncommon in classical Greek literature and very common in Latin'. Over the last few centuries the study of *chiasmus* in biblical studies has received considerable attention (Heath 2011:60-61). This goes back to as early as 1742 with the work of Johann Albrecht Bengel (Heath 2011:60). Also, Robert Lowth is believed to have played a pioneering role by coining the term *parallelism* in 1753 (2011:60-61). In recent years, the study of chiasmic structures in biblical studies has been further advanced and has therefore made several significant contributions both to OT and NT studies. Albert Vanhoye (1976) and Welch (1974) are the chief proponents of this advanced understanding of the chiasmic structure in Hebrews (Heath 2011:72; Rhee 2001:14).

There are several functions of chiasmic structures (Heath 2011:85-98), namely, (1) attention-getting device, in which based on the arrangement of his speech in a manner not familiar to the audience, the speaker is able to draw the attention of his audience, (2) memory aid in which chiasmic arrangement further functions as an aid to memory, (3) highlight a contrast or comparison, (4) establish or draw attention to a new textual boundary, (5) establish a topic, that is, establish a topic of a section or pericope, (6) drawing attention to the centre of a larger structure, (7) cohesion,

structure and ordering of ideas and (8) denoting prominence. What is important in this is that by placing the theme or idea at the centre the author might be signifying its prominence (Heath 2011:95). It will therefore be important in chapter six of this study to examine how the author used the chiasmic structure in Hebrews 2:1-4. The main focus will be on the role it played in persuading the listeners to make a renewed commitment to Christian faith.

In addition to the ornamentations described above, “rhetorical questions” are also important in this study. Rhetorical question ‘is a modern designation for clauses in the form of questions that do not normally expect answer’ (Aune 2003). These rhetorical questions are mainly left unanswered, but at times are answered by the speaker (Aune 2003). They ‘are often equivalent to emphatic declarations’ (Aune 2003). Aune further argued that ‘the use of rhetorical questions often reflects the conviction of a speaker or writer that the audience is in agreement (e.g., Rom. 8:31-35)’. When used in series, the rhetorical questions increase the effect. Further, ‘rhetorical questions can also be used to hammer away at one of two alternatives’ (Aune 2003). In this study, the aim will be to examine how the author used rhetorical questions in Hebrew 2:1-4. More importantly, attention will focus on the role of this rhetorical feature in the author’s strategy to convince the listeners to make a renewed commitment to their Christian faith.

Another important class which is part of ornamentation is composition (Rowe 1997:150). ‘Ancient rhetoricians treated the broader aspects of composition under various topics’ (Rowe 1997:150). These included; the basic types of composition, the period and its basic parts, the sequence of words and the prose rhythm. Periodic sentence will be important in this study, as Hebrews extensively employed this composition (see Heb 1:1-4; 2:2-4, 8-9; 3:12-15; 4:12-13; 5:1-3, 7-10; 6:4-6; 7:1-3; 8:4-6; 9:2-5, 6-10, 24-26; 10:11-13, 19-25; 11:24-26; 12:1-2; cf. Heath 2011:384-390). The interest in this study will be the periodic sentence in Hebrews 2:2-4. Periodic sentence means ‘a way around’ (Aune 2003). It ‘is a carefully structured sentence in which a balance created by a combination of word order and syntax takes the reader or hearer on “the way around” a circle and then back to the point at which he or she began’ (Aune 2003; cf. Rowe 1997:151). Rowe (1997:151) posited

that, 'the period evokes the image of a circular path because the ideas presented at its beginning are only completely understood at the end, when they have been integrated with each other into one conclusive context'. The three kinds of period include; narrative, dialogue and oratory (Aune 2003). According to Aune (2003) 'a number of periodic sentences occur in those parts of the NT that exhibit a more elevated style'. This is the case with many of the periodic sentences in Hebrews. However, Hebrews 1:1-4 and 2:2-4 are excellent examples. What is also important about the period sentence is that it draws the attention of the listeners. Further they aid in memory. In chapter six of this study the persuasive effect of this composition in the author's strategy will be examined.

The fourth and the last virtue is propriety. This virtue 'is achieved when all the parts of an oration harmoniously merge into one organic whole and the whole exactly fits the occasion' (Rowe 1997:154, 155). The importance of this virtue is that it overlaps with the three other virtues discussed above (1997:155). Given these different categories of ancient rhetoric, it is important to establish how the author of Hebrews' emphasis on faith enabled him to achieve such rhetorical objectives. According to DeSilva (2000:40), '... the rhetorical handbooks reflect the practices current in the period in which the NT was composed...' So, it is possible to discern when the NT author is trying to arouse a particular emotion from his audience (DeSilva 2000:40). Watson (2010:166) posited that 'rhetorical criticism tries to understand the biblical authors' messages, how they constructed and intended their text to function, and how the hearers/readers were likely to have perceived and responded to the texts'.

While adopting rhetorical handbooks as guides for exegeting NT is good, it has some problems, and there are also some objections from other NT scholars. First of all, even though these handbooks are available, they were written by Greco-Roman writers for Greco-Roman readers. This is not the case for the NT whose writers were all Jewish. Secondly, the handbooks appear to have circulated among the upper class and highly-educated elites of the time, who could read and write (Pogoloff 1992:14). Most of the members of the Christian congregations of the first century were certainly not in that class. So, there are uncertainties about whether they would have appreciated the intricacies of classical rhetoric. Paul's rejection of rhetoric in 1

Corinthians 1-2 supports this view (Pogoloff 1992:15; Weima 1997:466-467). Thirdly, it is unknown if the inspired writers were well educated in rhetoric and acquainted with these handbooks. Did Paul or the author of Hebrews know these rhetorical manoeuvres which have been described? Because of these objections, some writers have cast doubts on the use of the classical handbooks for studying the NT.

Some arguments may be offered against these objections. Firstly, though we cannot be certain if the author of Hebrews was acquainted with the classical rhetorical handbooks, his polished Greek certainly indicates a highly educated writer. Since even basic Greco-Roman education at the time involved some exposure to rhetoric, it is right to assume that our author must have been exposed to some elements of these handbooks. After all he uses several of these logical and rhetorical techniques. Secondly, although the author was Jewish, there were evident cross-pollinations between Jewish and Greco-Roman language and culture, even in Palestine, let alone the diaspora where our author and his readers were most likely based. Their Jewishness therefore did not preclude them from being familiar with and using ideas and elements of Greco-Roman rhetoric. Whilst we must be careful not to overstress the effects of the classical rhetorical handbooks on the Biblical writers, we must on the other hand not dismiss them altogether as unimportant in our exegesis. So, it is important in this study that these rhetorical handbooks be used as a guide (see Aune 2003). Therefore, the texts in the study will not be forced to fit all the rubrics of the classical rhetoric handbooks.

### **3.3 The Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews**

In the previous section, the focus was mainly on the theories of rhetoric and their relevancy and application in biblical studies. The purpose of this section is to ascertain how the author developed his rhetoric strategy based on ancient rhetoric. This study aims to investigate how the author of Hebrews employed the theme of faithfulness in his rhetorical strategy to address the listener's pastoral problems. Therefore, understanding how the author developed his rhetorical strategy takes us closer to achieving our goal. What is important to note here, as confirmed in chapter two, is that the author has one uniting theme. In other words based on the uniting

theme of Hebrews it is clear that the author wove different themes in his strategy to achieve his rhetorical goal. So, based on the author's strategy we will be able to ascertain the role of the theology of faith to address the first hearer's pastoral problems. What is therefore the rhetorical strategy of Hebrews? This section is aiming at investigating these critical questions.

Several scholars have examined the rhetorical strategies employed in the book of Hebrews (e.g., DeSilva 2000:34; Heath 2011:384-392; Isaacs 2002:16; Koester 2001:87-96; O'Brien 2010:24; Thompson 2008:12; Trotter 1997-66-67, 164-184). According to DeSilva (2000:47) identifying the rhetorical strategy 'is a way of focusing on what the author wants to accomplish through the text, and it provides a focal point for exposition of the whole – we can keep returning to that fundamental goal, asking how each passage contributes to moving the hearers closer to responding as the author desires'. To that end, interpreters seek to identify all the various means by which the author sought to achieve these goals. To ascertain how the author of Hebrews employed the theories of rhetoric, this study will follow the categories of classical rhetoric as described in the handbooks.

### **3.3.1 The Use of Invention**

As discussed above, the speaker's task is firstly to define the issue/dispute to be resolved. The author of Hebrews did not explicitly describe the problem at the beginning of the sermon, but wove it into different sections. As discussed in chapter two, the socio-historical situation of these listeners developed in three phases. This sermon was written during phase three of development, and was characterised by friction and spiritual malaise (Heb 10:26-28; 12:12; 13:12-14). In addition, there was some disintegration within this community (Heb 5:11; 6:12; 10:25). According to Perry (2009:99), 'having experienced fear and shame, some were drifting away from the Christian community (2:1), not gathering for worship (10:25) and not listening to their leaders (13:7, 17)'. Christianity to these believers only brought hardship and disgrace instead of the blessings and honour they expected. It seemed that the only solution was to drift away from the Christian faith. By doing this, they hoped that they would regain their honour and social status. It is thus clear that the author of

Hebrews was dealing with a very complex ethical and emotional situation (Perry 2009:99).

So, in order to address this complex situation the author had to employ both deliberative and epideictic speeches in his sermon. It is likely that it was because of the complexity of the problem that the author's adopting the complex relationship between these two speeches. As mentioned in chapter two their relationship involved both sequential and concentric relationship. This may well explain why there is no agreement among the scholars on how these two genres are employed in this sermon. However, Heath's recent work is helpful in addressing this complex issue (2011:33-331). The speaker further employed logic, emotion and ethos in order to convince the listeners to renew their commitment to faith (DeSilva 2004:781-782; Koester 2001:87). The use of inartificial proofs (i.e. quotations from OT (LXX) texts) throughout the sermon is also evident.

### **3.3.2 The Arrangement of Hebrews**

There is no agreement among the scholars on how Hebrews fits the arrangement as described in the ancient handbooks of rhetoric (Heath 2011:32; Koester 2002:104; Thompson 2008:16). The first disputed is the identification of exordium (Thompson 2008:16). Koester's exordium is Heb 1:1-2:4 (2002:105). Witherington proposes that the exordium is Heb 1:1-4 (2009:201, cf. Thompson 2008:17). Thurén on the other hand posits that the exordium is Heb 1:1-2:18 (1997:590). As with exordium there is also no agreement among the scholars about narratio. Koester, Thurén and Witherington excluded this completely in their respective work. Koester argues that this was not essential in antiquity and hence it is omitted in Hebrews (2002:105). Thompson in his work suggests that the narratio is Hebrews 1:5-4:13 (2008:18). His propositio is Hebrews 4:14-16. Koester on the other hand suggested that the propositio is Hebrews 2:5-9. Other scholars like Witherington and Thurén have argued that Hebrews excludes a propositio. Koester's probatio on the other hand is Hebrews 2:10:12:27. Thompson's probatio is Hebrews 4:14-10:31. Thurén's probatio is Hebrews 3:1-12:29 (1997:590). Witherington's is Hebrews 1:5-12:17 (2009:201). When it comes to the peroratio there are also different views, as might be expected.

Thurén's example is Hebrews 13:1-25. Koester's is Hebrews 12:28-13:21. Thompson maintains it is Hebrews 10:32-13:25. Witherington on the other hand concludes that the peroration is Hebrews 12:18-29.

What, therefore, do we make of these different views? Does Hebrews fit the template of ancient rhetorical handbooks when it comes to arrangement? Based on recent work in Hebrews some scholars have concluded that Hebrews must not be forced to fit the ancient rhetorical handbooks. For example, DeSilva concluded that Hebrews 'defies division into exordium, narratio, propositio, probatio and peroratio' (2001:46). Recently O'Brien has supported this conclusion (2010:26). Indeed, Hebrews belongs to a group of NT texts that are 'resistant to being divided neatly into four or five parts of the Greco-Roman speech' (O'Brien 2010:26, citing DeSilva 2000:46). O'Brien further argued that, 'the discourse is full of rhetorical devices, but the arrangement of it does not fit the template of the classical Hellenistic structure' (2010:26). The reason for this is that the author of Hebrews does not follow the classical handbooks which 'were crafted in the judicial and political spheres, however, the author of Hebrews way of arguing follows the rhetorical and exegetical skills of rabbis' (2010:26). O'Brien (2010:26) argued that 'assigning of general designations, like exordium, narration, and arguments, to large sections of the book is not particularly illuminative of the literary dynamics of the text'. Also, Heath in his recent work supports the view that Hebrews does not fit the categories of ancient rhetoric (2011:32). Therefore, like these scholars this writer concludes that Hebrews does not fit the template of the ancient rhetoric handbooks. These are important to understand the author's 'persuasive techniques and strategies' (DeSilva 2000:46), but it will be misleading to force them into the text.

### **3.3.3 The Style of Hebrews**

As already discussed under section 3.2.3 above, style is critical for the effectiveness of the speaker's speech. It is therefore important that the style of Hebrews be ascertained, to be able to achieve the objective of this study. I am in agreement with those who have concluded that the author of Hebrews was an expert both in rhetoric and style (DeSilva 2001:35). 'Both at the level of stylistic ornament and persuasive

argument this author shows himself fully equipped in the art of persuasion' (DeSilva 2001:35). Various interpreters have identified different literary devices in Hebrews to support the claim that the author was an expert. O'Brien (2010:24) has also pointed out that 'Hellenistic literary devices, such as repetition, anaphora, inclusio, parallelism, rhetorical questions, direct address to listeners, oratorical imperative, hook words, and the like were employed by the author' in this word of exhortation. DeSilva (2000:37) has also argued that, 'the author also employs a wide range of metaphors, all from areas of life commonly selected from such illustrative purposes: education, agriculture, seafaring, law, athletics, and cultus'. Thurén (1997:589) wrote that these devices 'are utilized in accordance with classical recommendations to please, stimulate, or shock the audience'. He continued that 'they also emphasize emotionally or ideologically important utterances'.

There is therefore no doubt that when the author of Hebrews employed these devices he had a clear purpose. Attridge (1989:20-21), Heath (2011:378-390), Koester (2001:92-96) and Trotter (1997:67-75) have provided a very helpful comprehensive list of these rhetorical devices. Some of the important rhetorical devices have already been mentioned in section 3.2.3 above. The applicable devices will further be analysed in detail in chapter six of this study. What is important to note at this stage is that the author used these various devices in this masterpiece to achieve his rhetorical goal to persuade the listeners to faithfulness. Thus it is understandable why the author of Hebrews employed these various devices. To correctly interpret Hebrews, it is important that the uses of these rhetorical devices and their function in different sections of the sermon are properly understood (Thurén 1997:587-588; Trotter 1997:165).

It is clear from the evaluation of rhetorical strategy in Hebrews that the author was indeed skilled in ancient rhetoric. The author did not take his task of addressing the complex ethical and emotional problem of the first hearers lightly. So, he had to dig deep from the handbooks of ancient rhetoric. As shown in this section, the author clearly understood the complexity of the problem he was dealing with. Based on this he had to adopt a complex strategy in order to convince the listeners to renew their commitment to the Christian faith. In his strategy he wove together different sub-

themes. In the previous chapter it was concluded that “the migrant camp of the people of God” is the uniting theme in this sermon. Therefore, these different sub-themes are united by this uniting theme of the migrant camp of the people of God.

The interest of this study is the role of the theme of faithfulness in the author’s rhetorical strategy. Since the author’s rhetorical strategy has now been described the next task is to examine the role of the theme of faithfulness in Hebrews. This will be done in two steps, firstly by using the historical-grammatical method. Secondly, rhetorical analysis will be used to ascertain the role of the theme of faithfulness in Hebrews in addressing the pastoral situation of the first hearers. These steps will ensure that the objectives of this study are met. With this in mind, it is important to adopt a model to interpret the book of Hebrews. The next section is aimed at achieving this very important step in order to fulfil the objectives of the study.

### **3.4 The Methodological Approach of the Present Study**

In the previous sections the focus was on the theories of classical rhetoric, and their application in NT biblical studies. Then the study examined how classical rhetorical theories fit in the epistle to the Hebrews. Therefore, it is now important to propose how the objectives of this study are going to be achieved based on classical rhetorical theories. Kennedy formulated a procedure for biblical studies using classical rhetoric (1984:33-38). This procedure has five interrelated stages, namely, (1) determination of rhetorical unit. What is important about this is that it can either be a well-defined pericope or an entire book. Further, this rhetorical unit must have a beginning, middle and an end as per ancient rhetorical handbooks. (2) definition of the rhetorical situation of the unit. This is the situation in which the persons, events, objects and relationships where a verbal response is required (1984:35). (3) determination of the rhetorical problem and species of rhetoric. (4) detailed analysis of invention, arrangement, and style. (5) evaluation of the rhetorical effectiveness of the rhetorical unit in utilising the invention, arrangement and style to address the rhetorical situation. This approach has been adopted by scholars such as Watson in his work on Jude and 2 Peter (Black 1989:255; Stamps 1997:225).

Although this approach has been commended, some limitations have been identified (Black 1989:255; Cornelius 2000:264-265; Robbins 1985:145-149). Black (1989:255) concluded that 'Kennedy's primary contribution is methodological: the presentation of a distinctive manner of exegesis that is lucid and systematic, far more painstaking than Muilenburg's proposal, and insightfully undergirded by classical erudition'. Black further wrote that, 'once its basic concepts and terminology are grasped, Kennedy's method both invites new ways of pondering old questions and opens modern eyes to neglected dimensions of ancient literature' (1989:255). The fifth step of Kennedy's has been criticised as a 'vague concept' (Cornelius 2000:265). To put it succinctly, the evaluation of the rhetorical effectiveness based on this approach is lacking, and therefore the effectiveness of the author's strategy cannot be examined. Further, in this study we have concluded that Hebrews does not follow the template of ancient rhetoric. If we were to adopt this procedure, therefore, we would need to modify it and exclude arrangement.

Olbricht (2008:16-18) also developed his approach mainly based on ancient rhetoric and somewhat different to that of Kennedy. His approach has eight sequential steps, namely, (1) determination of the genre. (2) determination of the stasis. (3) assessment of logical argument, consisting of assessing enthymemes, rhetorical syllogisms and examples. (4) ethical proofs based on the character of the author, (5) assessment of pathos, (6) identification of arrangement, (7) assessment of style, and (8) assessment of memory, Olbricht (2008:17) considered that it is difficult to assess memory, but argued that 'attention can be given to whether items might be arranged chronologically or according to placement on a landscape'. Like Kennedy's approach, this approach also lacks rhetorical effectiveness. There are other approaches based on classical rhetoric that have been developed over the years. For example, Thurén (1990) developed his approach, and likewise was influenced by Kennedy's procedure.

This study will therefore follow the modified procedure proposed by Kennedy. As also mentioned, this will further be enhanced by the historical-grammatical method. Consequently it is believed that the several problems associated with classical rhetorical method and Kennedy's procedure will be alleviated. Rhetorical unit will be

examined. Then rhetorical genre will be examined. The third step will be rhetorical situation. The fourth step will be rhetorical problem. The fifth step will be examination of rhetorical invention. The last step will examine the rhetorical arrangement of Hebrews. These steps will further be discussed in chapter six.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter theories employed in rhetorical criticism with specific focus on classical rhetoric were discussed. Further the history of application of these theories in NT biblical studies was also investigated. How these methodologies have been used by various interpreters was also discussed. What became clear is that some scholars use one of these methods, while others benefit from both by opting for a hybrid approach. In this study it was decided to adopt the classical rhetoric, but combined with the historical-grammatical method. Then rhetorical strategy of the epistle to the Hebrews based on classical rhetoric approach was investigated. Evidence of the strategies from classical rhetoric was detailed. Lastly, a procedure based on classical rhetoric was then developed.

# CHAPTER 4

## FAITH IN HEBREWS: A GRAMMATICAL AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

The next critical step in our study is the grammatical and linguistic study of faith in Hebrews. Faith related vocabularies can be categorised into two categories, namely, (1) *pist* and (2) *peithomai* word groups (Becker 1986; Michel 1986; Rhee 2001:2). These two categories are important in our study and therefore will be analysed in detail. These categories have been employed by the author of Hebrews to achieve his rhetorical goal. In addition, Hebrews extensively employed peculiar faith related imagery. Hence key imagery from selected passages will also be investigated. Since faith in Scriptures is a very broad subject, this study will be limited only to the aspects of faith relevant in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Two approaches will be adopted to ascertain the denotative and connotative meaning as well as the semantic range of the word “faith”. The first approach will be a synchronic and diachronic analysis of the *pist* and *peithomai* words. The emphases in this approach will be on diachronic analysis of these words. The second approach will be based on biblical imagery containing the metaphors similar to those employed by the author of Hebrews both in the OT and the NT.

### 4.2 Methodology

There is no doubt that word study is critical in exegetical study. However there are dangers associated with it that should be avoided (Carson 1996:27-65; Fee 2002:80; Kaiser 1981:105-129; Silva 2007:49-65; Smith 2009:63-64). It is important to realise that words function only within a specific context, and hence must not be overanalysed (Fee 2002:80; Kaiser 1981:105-106; Smith 2009:63). A single word can have different meanings based on its particular context. It is exactly at this point that it becomes important for the exegete to be careful not to overemphasise the

importance of a single word (Fee 2002:80; Smith 2009:64). Kaiser (1981:106) argued that 'usually the particular meaning a word has in a particular situation is clearly specified by the grammatical constructions in which it occurs'. The second danger that should be avoided is what Fee called 'derivation happy' (2002:79). In other words, knowing the etymology of the word is meaningless unless it is read within a specific context.

These two critical issues will be taken seriously in this study. The aim here is to try to understand exactly what the author of Hebrews was conveying based on particular word within a specific context of a text (Fee 2002:81; Kaiser 1981:106-109; Smith 2009:66). This will help to ascertain the theology of faith in Hebrews as will be shown in the next chapter. In order to achieve the objective of this section, various aspects will be addressed. Firstly, faith as it is used within Hebrews will be studied. The thesis will then proceed to ascertain how similar words are used outside Hebrews, starting with the rest of the NT and ending with classical Greek literature. This will help to ascertain the denotative and connotative meaning as well as semantic range of faith. Further the study will analyse the use of metaphors within Hebrews. Based on these two approaches, a complete picture of the meaning of faith within Hebrews will be depicted.

### **4.3 *Pist* Word Group – A Diachronic Analysis**

In order to persuade his listeners to a renewed commitment to their Christian faith, the author of Hebrews employed the *pist* words in various contexts and forms (Heb 2:17; 3:2, 5, 12, 19; 4:2, 3; 6:1, 12; 10:22, 23, 38, 39; 11:1, 3-9, 11, 13, 17, 20-24, 27-30, 33, 39; 12:2; 13:7). The positive form includes: (1) *pistis* which is the noun, (2) *pisteuō* which is the verb and (3) *pistos* which is the adjective. In the NT, *pistis* occurs 243 times and in the LXX 60 times. *Pisteuō* on the other hand occurs 241 times in the NT and in the LXX 84 times. As part of this verbal form, *pistoō* is another term which only appears once in the NT (2 Tim 3:14) and in the LXX 16 times. In total the verbal form in the NT appears 242 times and in the LXX 100 times. Lastly, *pistos* occurs 67 times in the NT and in the LXX 71 times. Thus only in the NT, *pist* words appear 552 times while in the LXX appears 231 times.

The negative form has further three terms: (1) *apistos* which is the adjective, (2) *apistia* which is the noun and (3) *apisteō* which the verb. In the NT, *apistos* occurs 23 times and in the LXX 4 times. *Apistia* on the other hand occurs 11 times in the NT and in the LXX once. Lastly, *apisteō* occurs 8 times in the NT and in the LXX 5 times. Thus the negative form in the NT appears 42 times while in the LXX appears 10 times. Combined, the *pist* words in the NT appear 594 times and in the LXX 241 times. It is therefore clear that the *pist* words are frequently used in Scriptures, more especially in the NT as compared with the LXX. This excludes the appearance of this word group outside the biblical texts.

Given the overall statistics of the *pist* word group, unlike any other writers, the author of Hebrews drew from both the positive and negative examples of faith to exhort his listeners to faithfulness. Based on the negative examples of the wilderness generation, the author solemnly warned his listeners against drifting away from faith. If they ignored the warning by the author, these believers, were guaranteed punishment including possible eternal death. While based on the positive examples and more specifically Christ's example of faith and endurance the author exhorted his listeners to maintain their faith till the end. Through faith and endurance, like Christ these believers were guaranteed eternal rewards far better than earthly rewards. What is important for the author's use of the *pist* word group is that this is unique to Hebrews. In the following sections, the author of Hebrews' use of the *pist* word group as compared with other writings will become clear.

### **4.3.1 *Pist* within Hebrews**

#### *4.3.1.1 Positive Uses of the Pist Word Group*

*Pistis* refers to faithfulness, reliability, fidelity, commitment, assurance, oath, troth, proof, pledge, trust, confidence, faith, persuasion, persuaded (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:818). It occurs 39 times in Hebrews. *Pistis* alone occurs 32 times (Heb 4:2; 6:1, 12; 10:22, 38, 39; 11:1, 3-9, 11, 13, 17, 20-24, 27-30, 33, 39; 12:2; 13:7). From this analysis it is clear that *pistis* appears more frequently in Hebrews 11 as it occurs 24 times. Within Hebrews 11 *pistis* is mostly used by the author as '... part of

the anaphora formed by the recurring *pistei*' (Easter 2011:17). This is used eighteen times only in this chapter. In the remainder of the passages *pistis* is only used in the hortatory sections. The first usage of this anaphora is in Hebrews 11:3 where it is used in relation to creation by God's Word. Here the author says that because of faith the heroes understood that God created the universe by the power of His Word although they had never seen God doing this (O'Brien 2010:401).

The other anaphoric usage in Hebrews 11 is the examples of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and his family. In Hebrews 11:1, the author has already provided a 'characterisation of some of the key aspects of faith of the OT witnesses' (Baugh 2006:119). This characterisation of faith is 'the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen' (NRSV). In Hebrews 11:2, the author linked faith 'with being attested by God' (O'Brien 2010:398). What is important about faith in this chapter based on heroes of faith is the 'faith in action' (Baugh 2006:119). These heroes of faith are '... men and women living and acting on the basis of faith' (O'Brien 2010:398). They had full assurance and firm conviction that what God had promised would surely come to pass, therefore they lived in anticipation of the promise (Baugh 2006:119; Easter 2011:173; Richardson 2009:112-118). They had to endure hardships and sufferings while on earth with a complete hope of a greater and much better eternal future in the heavenly homeland.

While *pistis* is extensively employed by the author in Hebrews 11, it is also used elsewhere in Hebrews. In Hebrews 4:2, the author exhorts the Christian community to be united in *pistis* and not to imitate the negative example of the wilderness generation of Israel. Since this Christian community has entered their rest because of the gospel they received (see Heb 2:1-4), they must be persistent in their faith (O'Brien 2010:162). In Hebrews 6:1, the noun is used and in this case the author wants this community to move on to maturity while 'not laying again foundation of repentance from dead works and *pisteos epi theon*' (Easter 2011:17). In this verse God is the object and this community is called to trust in Him. O'Brien (2010:213) argued that 'faith here in Hebrews is simple belief in His existence (11:6), but trust in the God who keeps His promises'. What the author wants from this Christian community is for them to be 'imitators of those who through *pistis* and patience inherit

the promises' (Heb 6:12, NASB). Those who are to be imitated are deceased leaders of this Christian community (13:7). These leaders completed their race and therefore the community can learn from their faith and faithful lives and imitate them (O'Brien 2010:516). In Hebrews 10:22, the author exhorts this community to '... draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of *pistis*' (NASB). In other words, because of what Christ did for this community, they should have firm conviction of faith.

In Hebrews 10:38 the author quoting Habakkuk 2:4, says that 'my righteous one shall live by *pistis*'. 'This points to the Christian believer whose trust in God is characterised by endurance in the face of hardships and sufferings' (O'Brien 2010:366). In the next verse (Heb 10:39) the author says that they don't shrink back but are '... those who have *pistis* to the perseverance of the soul' (NASB). So, because of complete trust in God, believers must patiently wait in confidence (i.e. *pistis*) of the promises of God while continuously enduring hardships and sufferings. The author in Hebrews 11 illustrates the faith described in Hebrews 10:38-39 by giving examples of those who actively demonstrated this faith (Cosby 1988:260; Richardson 2009:112-118). As described above, these men and women had full assurance and firm conviction of the promises of God. Therefore, they demonstrated active obedience to and trust in God for which they were commended by God (Heb 11:2). But this example of faith reaches its climax in Hebrews 12:2 (Richardson 2009:124-127; Spellman 2011:117). In Hebrews 12:2, these believers are exhorted to fix their eyes on Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of faith. He endured hardships till the end and despised the shame, because of the joy set before Him. Indeed Christ is 'the example of the Saviour, the true model for the believer, who courageously suffered shame and death for the joy set before him' (O'Brien 2010:392, cited R. Gheorgita). Therefore the believers must fix their eyes on Jesus and follow His example of faith and endurance in the midst of sufferings till the end. They are guaranteed great eternal reward in the heavenly homeland.

Further to the noun, the verb *pisteuō* also occurs twice (Heb 4:3; 11:6). In Hebrews 4:3 the author says that 'for we who have *pisteuō* enter that rest' (NRSV). So, believing in this verse is the only key to enter God's rest. O'Brien (2010:162) posited that 'it is in those of the circle of faith that the promise of entering God's rest will be

fulfilled'. In Hebrews 11:6a, the author says that '... without *pisteuō* it is impossible to please God'. In verse 11:6b, the author says 'for to believe it is necessary for the one who approaches God'. Again here *pisteuō* is the condition to please God and also to approach Him.

Lastly the adjectives, *pistos* appears five times (Heb 2:17; 3:2, 5; 10:23; 11:11). In each of these occurrences, 'God or Jesus is the one who is faithful' (Easter 2011:16). The first occurrence is in Hebrews 2:17, Jesus is called the 'merciful and faithful high priest'. While in Hebrews 3:2 it is further said of Jesus that He 'was faithful to Him who appointed Him'. In the first occurrence, the faithfulness of Christ can better be understood as trustworthy within the immediate context (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:820; Hamm 1990:282; O'Brien 2010:120). This according to Ellingworth is in the sense 'worthy of believers' trust' (1993:182; cf. O'Brien 2010:120). But 'in the light of v.18 (see 14-15), however, the term points to Jesus' remaining faithful to God in spite of temptation or suffering: He was faithful to the end without flattering' (O'Brien 2010:120; cf. Ellingworth 1993:182). In Hebrews 3:2 (cf. v.5), 'Christ is faithful in discharging an office entrusted to one by God' (O'Brien 2010:121). This has a sense of both His steadfast loyalty to God (see v.17) and His trustworthiness (O'Brien 2010:121, cf. Attridge 1989:95). Verse 5 does not directly refer to Christ but to Moses, who was faithful to God's household as the servant. This is the only time *pistos* is used referring to a person (Easter 2011:17). This comparison of Christ and Moses' *pistos* is to accentuate Christ's *pistos* and not diminish Moses' *pistos* (2011:17). The remaining occurrences both in Hebrews 10:23 and 11:11 refer to the *pistos* of God. In both cases 'the author speaks of the one who promised as being faithful' (Easter 2011:17). God does what He has promised, making Him faithful as He keeps His promises.

#### 4.3.1.2 Negative Uses of the Pist Word Group

In addition to the positive form of *pist* words, Hebrews also employed the negative form, *apistia*. This term appears twice in Hebrews (3:12, 19). In Hebrews 3:12, the author warns the believers not to follow the *apistia* of the wilderness generation. In Hebrews 3:19, the author says that this wilderness generation was not able to enter

God's rest because of *apistia*. This word basically refers to a lack of belief or trust (Bultmann 1964:205). So, the wilderness generation lacked genuine faith. Therefore these believers were being warned not to fall in the same trap as the wilderness generation.

This study of *pist* words within Hebrews has provided an important foundation for detailed exegetical study of the theme of faith. What was evident from the *pist* words in Hebrews is that faith involves active obedience and firm conviction. This positive form of faith promises greater rewards as in the case of Christ, who is the pioneer and perfecter of faith. This means that those who follow the positive examples of faith and endurance till the end even in the midst of suffering are assured of greater eternal rewards. On the other hand, those who follow the negative examples of the wilderness generation were sure not to enter God's rest. Hebrews use of *pist* words is important considering the believers' situational context. It was concluded in chapters two and three that these believers were in a complex ethical and emotional situation. Evidently, from the *pist* words in Hebrews, the author was exhorting these believers to remain steadfast in their faith till the end even in the midst of sufferings. Doing this, the believers were assured of eternal rewards like Christ, whom they need to imitate. At the same time the author was vehemently warning them against lack of faith, as there were negative consequences associated with this.

The next section will analyse the use of *pist* words in the rest of the NT. This will further help to an understanding of their connotative and denotative meaning.

#### **4.3.2 *Pist* in the Rest of the NT**

The other NT writers have extensively employed the *pist* words in their writings as already shown. Both the noun and verb are frequently used, and with a wide range of meanings (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:818; Louw and Nida 1996:198). But the general emphasis concerning faith in the NT is related to the life, words and works of Jesus as revealed in Scriptures (Bultmann 1985:855; Rhee 2001:3). Faith in Hebrews focused both on the negative examples and positive examples of faith. Based on the negative examples of faith, believers are being warned not to follow

these examples as there are negative consequences. Following the positive examples of faith and endurance, which reach their climax in Christ's example, will ensure eternal rewards for believers. Therefore, these believers were exhorted to follow these positive examples of faith. This presentation of faith in Hebrews is unique in the epistle.

While faith in Hebrews is unique, there are notable general similarities with other NT writings (Bultmann 1985:853-855; Louw and Nida 1996:375; Rhee 2001:3). For example 'to obey' which is used in Hebrews 11 is used by other NT writers, as by Paul in Romans 1:8 and 1 Thessalonians 1:8. In Hebrews, the heroes of faith obeyed God to the point of suffering while waiting on His promises. Similarly the Thessalonian believers remained steadfast in their faith and obediently served God even in suffering while waiting for Christ's return.

'To trust' which is used by the author in Hebrews 11:11 is used by other NT writers, for example in Mark 11:22-24; Romans 4:17-20. Trust in Hebrews 11:11 describes the confidence that God will make His promises materialise. In Mark 11:22-24, Jesus was speaking about trust in God's miraculous power to those who ask Him with complete confidence about what He can do for them. In Romans 4:17-20, Paul describes Abraham trust in God's miraculous power to make it possible for him and his wife to have a child at their advanced age. Again, based on this passage Abraham had complete confidence that indeed God would fulfil His promise. 'To hope' is used by the author of Hebrews in chapter 11. This is also used by NT writers; for example by Paul in Romans 4:18. From both these writers there is a future hope of God's promises. Lastly, 'faithfulness' is used by the author of Hebrews and the other NT writers. Both in Hebrews 12:1-3 and 2 Timothy 4:7, this faithfulness involved patience and endurance. In Hebrews 12:1-3, the believers are exhorted to follow the example of Christ. Paul on the other hand describes his faithfulness to Timothy.

What is critical in the emphasis of faith between Hebrews and the other NT writers is that faith in Hebrews 'is constancy, heroic belief in the unseen and apparently improbable' (Rhee 2001:3, citing Stevens G.B. 1968). In the NT texts faith is used

mainly for personal and intimate relationship with Christ our Lord and Saviour (Rhee 2001:3-4). The author of Hebrews' point of departure is that the faith of this community began when they put their faith in Christ Jesus (see Heb 2:1-4). Then throughout Hebrews, he exhorts the community to maintain its faith till the end. They need to follow the positive examples of their forefathers. Ultimately they need to follow the example of Christ, who obediently and faithfully completed His race, even under sufferings and hardship including shameful death on the cross (see Hebrew 11:1-12:1-3). It is therefore clear that although there are some similarities, faith emphasized in Hebrews is that of active obedience and firm conviction of the eternal future. This is crucial to this Christian community of Hebrews since they were sluggish and had lost hope because of sufferings. Through the examples of faith, the author gives them hope of a better future even though all looks dull and bleak around them. So, since our focus is to ascertain the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy to address the pastoral problems for the first hearers, the emphasis on faith in Hebrews is helpful. It is evident that the author's emphasis on faith throughout Hebrews had a specific goal to achieve regarding the situation of the first listeners. This is helpful; however, a detailed exegesis of a specific passage from Hebrews using both the traditional historical-grammatical and classical rhetorical methods will enable the study to exactly pinpoint the role of the theme of faith in Hebrews.

#### **4.3.3 *Pist* in the LXX**

The use of faith in the OT laid the foundation for the NT writers (Bultmann 1964:205; Rhee 2001:3). Thus examining how the OT writers used faith is important. It is even more important given that the author of Hebrews relies heavily on the LXX for his scriptural citations, expositions and applications. What is important about faith in the LXX is that people were reacting to God's primary action (Weiser 1985:849). This was mainly by collective nature of faith in the OT religion, but later by the individuals, as can be seen from the prophets and Psalms (Weiser 1964:182). Examining the semantic range of *pist* words in the LXX, the writers used this word group with a 'wide range of meanings' (Easter 2011:18; Weiser 1985:850-851). The noun, verb

and adjective of *pist* word group is the rendition of the Hebrew stem *Nmx* with wide variety of meanings (Easter 2011:18; Weiser 1985:850-851). *Pistis* range of meanings include: 'faithfulness', 'honesty', 'faith', 'persuasion', 'confidence', 'assurance', 'credence', 'proof' (Easter 2011:18; Liddell, Scott, & McKenzie 1996:1408). While *pisteuō* includes: 'to trust', 'trusting', 'to put faith in', 'to believe in', 'to believe that' 'to admit the reality of', 'relying on', 'believing', 'complying'. Lastly, *pistos*, the passive meanings include: 'faithful', 'trusty', 'trustworthy', 'worthy of credit', 'genuine', or 'credible'. The active meanings include: 'believing', 'relying on', 'obedience' or 'faithfulness' (Easter 2011:19; Liddell, Scott, & McKenzie 1996:1408). Although the *pist* words have a wide range of meanings in the LXX, throughout Hebrews both the positive and negative examples of faith from LXX are employed. For example, the author, to warn his listeners against disobedience and lack of trust, draws from the examples of the wilderness generation (see Heb 3:12-19). The wilderness generation, although God had saved them from slavery in Egypt, provided for them and protected them in the wilderness, stubbornly disobeyed God. Therefore, the author of Hebrews, using this negative example of the wilderness generation, warns his listeners not to fall into the same trap as the wilderness generation. Further, the author of Hebrews draws from the positive examples of the people of Israel to exhort his listeners to imitate their examples of faith and endurance (see Heb 11:3-40). What is then important here is that the author of Hebrews relied heavily on the examples of faith from the LXX. But the actual application based on a specific context is still unique in Hebrews. In other words, since some of the listeners of Hebrews were in serious danger of falling into apostasy, the author used the negative examples of the wilderness generation to warn them. What was important to the author was to show the seriousness of their situation and the consequences if they didn't change. Also, based on the positive examples, the author's goal was to encourage and strengthen these believers to faithfulness. He reminded them how the people of old remained faithful even in the midst of sufferings and hardships. So, he was exhorting his first hearers to follow the positive examples of faith and endurance.

#### **4.3.4 *Pist* in the Inter-Testamental Jewish Literature**

Like the OT, faith in the Inter-Testamental Jewish literature contributed significantly in the NT (Bultmann 1964:205; Rhee 2001:3). However, the main contribution during this period is the semantic range of meanings for the biblical texts. During the time of Philo and Josephus faith referred to; pledge, evidence, loyalty, trust, belief (Hay 1989:463; cf. Easter 2011:19). While Philo did use faith as belief in one God, Josephus did not use faith primarily for religious purposes (Bultmann 1985:853; Easter 2011:19; Hay 1989:470). Therefore, it appears that there is no direct similarity in the usage of faith by Hebrews and Inter-Testamental Jewish literature. So, the usage during this period does not help us to better understand faith in Hebrews.

#### **4.3.5 *Pist* in Other Extra-Biblical Literature**

The *pist* words were also extensively used in classical Greek literature (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:818; Bultmann 1985:849; Michel 1986:594). However, they were not used in relation to God (Bultmann 1964:179; Michel 1986:595). They were primarily used in relation to men, things or deities (Bultmann 1964:179). The range of meanings of *pistis* includes: confidence, trust in, firm conviction, good faith, trustworthiness, honesty, guarantee, assurance, credibility, proof (Bultmann 1964:176; Liddell, Scott, & McKenzie 1996:1408; Michel 1986:594). *Apistia* on the other hand means 'untrustworthiness, unreliability, also distrust'. *Pistos* includes: trusting, trustworthy, obedience. Lastly, *pisteuō* includes: to trust, to entrust, to obey. In the Hellenistic age, *pist* words had to do with belief in the gods (Bultmann 1964:179). Therefore, the contribution during the period is only in the semantic range of meanings.

### **4.4 *Peithomai* Word Group – A Diachronic Analysis**

The second category used to express the idea of faith is the *peithomai* word group. To achieve his rhetorical strategy, the author of Hebrews also employed some of the words from this category of faith. The words under this word group include: *peithō*, *peithomai*, *pepoitha*, *pepoithēsis*, *peitharcheō*, *peismonē*, *apeitheō*, *apeithēs*,

*apeitheia*, *pithanologia*. These words in total appear 94 times in the NT. Hebrews only employed *peithō* (Heb 2:13; 6:9; 13:17, 18), *apeitheō* (3:18; 11:31) and *apeitheia* (Heb 4:6, 11). Therefore only these terms will be examined further. *Peithō* which is the positive form occurs 52 times in the NT and 171 times in the LXX. The negative form, *apeitheō* occurs 14 times in the NT and 49 times in the LXX. Lastly, *apeitheia* occurs 6 times in the NT and 4 times in the LXX. With this brief lexical study, we now proceed to a detailed diachronic analysis of these words.

#### 4.4.1 *Peithomai* within Hebrews

*Peithō* generally means 'to rely on, to trust in, to depend on, to have (complete) confidence in, confidence, trust' (Louw and Nida 1996:375; cf. Bultmann 1964:4). It occurs four times (Heb 2:13; 6:9; 13:17, 18). In Hebrew 2:13 the author quoting Isaiah 8:17 prophesied that Christ will put His *peithō* in God. So Christ in this passage as the God Man has complete trust and confidence in God. In Hebrews 6:9, *peithō* means convinced (Bultmann 1964:4). Here, the author is firmly convinced of better things for this community in the present and eschatological future because of their salvation (Lane 1998:143; O'Brien 2010:231). In Hebrews 13:17 on the other hand, the author call his listeners to be *peithō* to their leaders. So, *peithō* means to be persuaded or to obey (Lane 1998:554). The author in Hebrews 13:17 was therefore telling these listeners about the necessity to obey their leaders. This obedience does not come from the authority flowing from the position of the leaders but '... is won through persuasive conversation and that follows from it ...' (1998:554). According to O'Brien (2010:529) *peithō* (Heb 13:17) means to 'to give away, yield, or submit to someone (usually in authority)'. So this community because of their current leaders' persuasive conversation should yield and submit to their leadership. Lastly, *peithō* (Heb 13:18) means confidence or conviction (Lane 1998:556; O'Brien 2010:531). This author and others with him are firmly convinced of their clear conscience, and hence the request for prayer.

The second term from the *peithomai* word group used by Hebrews is the negative form, *apeitheō* (Heb 3:18; 11:31). It means to disobey or disobedience (Bultmann 1964:10; Louw and Nida 1996:467). In the first occurrence, the author draws from the

negative examples of the wilderness generation based on Numbers 14:43. Moses in this verse describes how in disobedience, the wilderness generation turned away from God. What is therefore clear is that the author of Hebrews does not want this community to fall into the same trap as the wilderness generation. Therefore he was encouraging them to maintain their faith by encouraging one another daily (Heb 3:13). Also in Hebrews 11:31, the author says that by faith Rahab did not perish with those who were *apeitheō*. What is clear from both of these verses is that the key to avoiding God's wrath because of disobedience is faith (O'Brien 2010:437). Lastly, *apeitheia* (Heb 4:6, 11) generally means disobedience (Bultmann 1964:11). In these verses, the disobedience is to God and again based on the negative example of the wilderness generation. Therefore, it is clear from the examples that the author was warning and exhorting his listeners to maintain their faith. The listeners were to live a life of obedience with the firm conviction of a better eschatological future. Disobedience on the other hand was inviting God's wrath. Like the *pist* word group, this word group again is important to achieve the objective of the study. Considering the socio-historical aspect, it is clear that the author saw that their situation needed urgent attention before it was too late. The examples of Christ and the people of Israel were central to the author's strategy to change the situation of his fellow brethren.

#### **4.4.2 *Peithomai* from the Rest of the NT**

Outside Hebrews within the NT, *peithō* occurs forty eight times. This occurs mainly in the book of Acts and Paul's letters (Becker 1986:589; Sand 1990:63). This term in the NT has a wide range of meanings. The study will limit its analysis only to uses which will further help in the search of the theology of faith in Hebrews. Both Romans 15:14 and 2 Timothy 1:5, 12 have similar connotative meaning to Hebrews 6:9, which is "convince" (Bultmann 1964:4). However, the contexts differ. In Romans 15:14, Paul was firmly convinced that the believers were full of goodness. In 2 Timothy 1:5 also Paul is persuaded of Timothy's faith. Again in 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul is convinced that Christ is able to guard what He has entrusted to him till the end. Therefore, while the context is different, in all these passages the connotative meaning of *peithomai* is

“firm conviction”. Also in Hebrews 13:17; Galatians 5:7 and James 3:3, *peithomai* means to “obey” with different contexts (Bultmann 1964:4; Sand 1990:63). In Galatians 5:7, Paul asks the believers about who hindered them to *peithō* the truth. While James in James 3:3 says that by putting the bits into horses’ mouths the horses will *peithō*. As a result of this the horses will easily be controlled.

Lastly, *peithō* in Hebrews 13:18 and Acts 21:14; 26:26 means “confidence” or “conviction” (Bultmann 1964:4; Sand 1990:63). In Paul’s letters (see Rom 5:2, 3, 11; 2 Cor 7:14; 10:8, 13, 15-17; 11:16, 18, 30) conviction further refers to boasting. What is important about boasting is that there is an ‘... element of trust: it is a boasting of trust in God’ (Lane 1998:556). This understanding is helpful, as it shows that trust in God comes from a joyful heart and hence is expressed with bragging.

The second term, *apeitheō* in Hebrews 3:18, 11:31 also has synonymous meaning with other NT writers for example Paul (Rom 2:8; 10:21; 11:30) and Peter (1 Pet 3:20; cf. Bultmann 1964:10). The difference in the use of this term is that in other places, it denotes disobedience against God (see Heb 3:18; Rom 10:21). But this is not always the case, as can be seen in Hebrews 11:31; Romans 11:8 and 1 Peter 3:20. The last term, *apeitheia* also refers to disobedience (Bultmann 1964:11). This is the case in Hebrews 4:6, 11 and other NT writers mainly Paul (Gal 3:22; Rom 11:30, 31; Eph 2:2; 5:2). So, both the verb *apeitheō* and the noun *apeitheia* mean “disobedience to God” (Bultmann 1964:11). This is also helpful as foundation for detailed exegesis study in the next chapter.

#### **4.4.3 *Peithomai* in the LXX**

The use of *peithō* in the LXX is similar to the NT (Bultmann 1964:1). What is important here is that Hebrews cites or draws from the example of the OT texts (see 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalms 18:3; Isaiah 8:17; 12:2). *Apeitheō* on the other hand is ‘used to characterise people who disobey God’ (Becker 1986). As shown in Hebrews (3:18; 11:31), the author cited or drew from the examples of the OT texts. *Apeitheia* is also found in the LXX in 4 Macc. 8:9, 18; 12:3 (Bultmann 1964:11). This word has a connotation of disbelief which is towards God (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:99).

Therefore both these terms in LXX are synonymous with the use in Hebrews. Although the context is different, this again helps us as we lay the foundation for exegetical study in the next chapter.

#### **4.4.4 *Peithomai* in the Extra-Biblical Literature**

The three terms (*peithō*, *apeitheō* and *apeitheia*) were already used in classical Greek literature (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:791; Becker 1986:588; Bultmann 1964:1; Thayer 1889). During the time of Homer *peithō* was used and denoted to convince, persuade. Also *apeitheō* still denoted to be disobedient and *apeitheia*, disobedience during classical Greek (Becker 1986:588; Bultmann 1985:819). While these terms might have been used in different contexts during this period, they are helpful in our current study. It is clear that biblical authors shared similar usage with classical Greek literature.

### **4.5 Analysis of Metaphors Related to Faith in Hebrews**

The Bible extensively employs images to communicate the truth to us (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000). Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman (2000) wrote that, 'the bible is a book that images the truth as well as stating it in abstract propositions'. It is therefore not surprising that Hebrews extensively employed several metaphorical phrases to achieve the author's rhetorical goal. Some of these imageries include agricultural, athletic, educational and maritime metaphors (see Heb 2:1; 3:12; 4:1; 5:12-14, 6:1, 6, 19; 10:38; 12:1-2, etc.). They are used both in the positive and negative forms. Therefore, it will not be sufficient to investigate only the word used for faith in Hebrews.

It will not be possible to cover all the images employed in Hebrews. Therefore, only limited images that will broaden our understanding of the concept of faith in Hebrews will be studied. These images include: 'drift away' (2:1); 'milk' and 'solid food' (5:12-14); 'fallen away' (6:4-6); 'turn away' (12:25) and 'run' (12:1).

#### **4.5.1 Drift Away**

The Greek word for this maritime metaphor is *pararreō*. Literally this means “flow, slip” (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:770; Balz 1990:34; Carson 1986:682; Liddell, Scott, & McKenzie 1996:1322; Michaelis 1964:170; Utley 2013). This word was widely used in classical literature and also in the LXX (Carson 1986:682). It meant “to flow, gush” (Carson 1986:682). The promised land which flows with milk and honey is a good example in the OT (Ex. 3:18; 13:5; Lev. 20:24; Num. 14:8; Deut. 6:3; 26:9; Jos. 5:6; Jer. 11:5). There are also other uses of this in the OT, for example the flow of water from the smitten rock (Ps. 105:41). There is further variety of usage in the OT (Job 36:26; 38:30; Ps 147:18; Prov. 3:20; Jer. 9:18; Joel 3:18; 14:12).

In the NT, this word (i.e. verb, *rheō*) occurs only in John. 7:38 (Carson 1986:683). In this verse (Jn. 7:38) ‘the believer...is viewed as a channel for outflowing of the spirit to others’ (Carson 1986:683). Now *pararrheō* which literally means ‘flow past’ is only used in Hebrews 2:1, figuratively (Balz 1990:34; Carson 1986:683). It refers to drifting away from faith. This is ‘like a boat that is gradually slipping away from its moorings’ (O’Brien 2010:84). O’Brien (2010:84) further wrote that ‘this suggests a movement that may be subtle and undetected by those on board’. According to Utley (2013) ‘it is used figuratively of a current of wind or water causing someone to be carried past safe anchorage’. This will be analysed extensively during the detailed exegesis in chapter five. What is important here is that this denotes subtle and undetected moving away to a dangerous zone/area. In other words the believers’ were drifting away from the faith which is solid ground and a place of safety into a dangerous territory where they would be lost. Therefore, the author wrote this sermon to warn them against this danger and to convince them to make the right decision while there was still time.

#### **4.5.2 ‘Milk’ and ‘Solid Food’**

Since many in the Mediterranean world were agricultural workers and shepherds, milk was their daily product (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000:551). ‘However, its colour, texture, use and origin all lent to milk’s use as an image in the Bible’

(2000:551). In the OT for example it is used to symbolise material blessings and luxury. So, the Promised Land was, for example, is referred to as a land flowing with milk and honey, meaning great abundance and fertility. When God sent Moses to rescue the Israelites from the Egyptians, He promised them a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8; see also Ex 3:17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24; Nu 13:27; Deut 1:25; 6:3; 8:7-9; 11:9; 26:9; 27:3; Jos 5:6; Jer 11:5; 32:22; Eze 20:6). Also Joel 3:18a wrote that 'in that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk' (NIV). Here the prophet Joel was referring to the day in the future when Israel's blessing was going to be restored. There are other examples in the OT where milk is used as a symbol (e.g. Job 10:10-11; 29:6; Song 4:11; 5:1).

Milk in the NT is also used as a 'metaphor for spiritual nourishment' (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000:551). In 1 Corinthians 3:2 when Paul was addressing the Corinthian church, he told them that milk is still suitable for them as infants. On the other hand, solid food was not suitable for them as they had not spiritually matured. The author of Hebrews also told the believers of their spiritual immaturity. Hence, only milk was suitable for them and not solid food which is reserved for the spiritual mature believers (5:12-14). Unlike the other two writers, Peter in 2 Peter 2:2 encouraged his believers to crave for milk, as it would help them to grow. In other words if they consume milk like newborn babies, they are assured of spiritual growth. This is important as the stomach of newborn babies can only take milk for easy digestion. Succinctly put, 'milk is an early growth formula that goes down easily, but with growth comes teeth, and further growth requires solid food' (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000:551).

So milk in biblical texts clearly has wide range of meanings. In the OT its use is different as compared with the NT. In the NT it signifies that believers are still children in their faith. In other words during this stage a believer is still weak in faith and under hardships can easily backslide. So the metaphor of milk in Hebrews relates to weaker faith which still needs to be nurtured. Since the believers are drifting away from faith because of external pressures, this is the sign of immaturity. The solid food on the other hand refers to a stronger faith. If these believers were strong in faith as shown in the early stages of their faith, there would still be a means

to handle the pressures. This will help to properly delineate the theology of faith in Hebrews which is central to achieving the objectives of this study.

#### **4.5.3 'Turn Away' and 'Fallen Away'**

Turning away and falling away express one of the concepts of apostasy in biblical texts (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000:38). This concept includes: rebellion, turning away, falling away, and adultery (2000:38). Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman further wrote that, 'the images used to portray apostasy generally show a gradual and self-willed movement away from God' (2000:38). So this is an intentional act of deserting the faith. The image of 'turning away' which is found both in OT and NT texts refers to people whose hearts turn away from God (Jer 17:5-6). In Ezekiel 3:20 turning away from righteousness is also an apostasy. 'In the OT it centres on Israel's breaking covenant relationship with God through disobedience to the law (Jer 2:19), especially following other gods (Judge 2:19) and practising their immorality (Dan 9:9-11)' (2000:39). There are different examples of this type of apostasy in the OT (see Jer 2:19; 5:6).

In the NT the turning away/falling away is also associated with apostasy. Paul, for example talks about people turning away from the truth which is the Gospel (1 Tim 4:4; Tit 1:14). Also Hebrews in different passages warns against turning away from the living God (3:12; 12:25). So turning away is clearly one of the attributes of apostasy. However, this could also refer to turning away from evil ways. There are many examples of this in Scripture (Jer 23:22; Ezek 3:18-19; 18:21; Acts 3:26; Rom 11:26). This understanding will be important in chapter five where the theme of faith in Hebrews will be detailed.

Another important term in this study is "falling". Falling can be associated with the collapse of a structure, for example the walls of Jericho (Jos 6:20). Also it can be associated with physical injury even disability (Prov 24:16; Jer 8:4). Even in our daily lives, we are familiar with fall and slip, which can result in physical injuries. In the NT, falling portrays an eternal destruction (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000:39). In the Gospels, Jesus used this term several times. In Matthew 7:24-25 in the parable of

the wise and foolish builders, He said that when the house is built on the sand it would fall during heavy storms. In Luke 6:39 He said that when the blind lead the blind both will fall into the pit. With these parables Jesus 'painted a highly memorable image of the dangers of falling spiritually' (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000:39). Differently from the above, in Luke 20:18 'Jesus spoke of Himself as the stone rejected by builders that causes some to fall break into pieces' (2000:39). Earlier in Luke 2:34 Simon describes Jesus as 'destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel'. The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 6:4-6 also describes the serious consequences of falling away for those who were once saved and enjoyed the Christian life. It is impossible for these believers to repent again as they are 'crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace' (Heb 6:4-6).

Based on this brief study of turning away and falling, we can conclude that this is associated with rejecting the faith and God. The believers in Hebrews were on the verge of deserting the faith, because of the social pressures. This example will further help to delineate the theology of faith in Hebrews as will be shown in chapter five.

#### **4.5.4 'Run' and 'Race'**

Running is a very common word not only for people, but for many things including animals (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000:744). Further, this word is also common in biblical texts. It is used both literally and figuratively. But, more importantly 'in all cases, however, running is an image of speed or haste and strenuous exertion in a momentous event' (2000:744). Also, running is applied to an athletic competition. In Psalm 19:5 the sun is like a champion 'rejoicing to run his course' (NIV). While the teacher in Ecclesiastes 9:11 wrote that 'the race is not to the swift' (NIV).

The image of athletic race is also used in the NT. Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman wrote that 'in the NT we find influence of Greek athletics in the readiness with which writers compare the Christian life to a race' (2000:744). In Corinthians 9:24 Paul wrote that 'do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run

in such a way as to get the prize' (NIV). In 1 Corinthians 9:25-26, Paul then wrote that 'everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get the crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly' (NIV). Hebrews on the other hand said that '... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us' (12:1). A race requires extreme determination, commitment and a focus on the rewards at the end. In other words, the athlete would joyfully endure any pressures and hardships in anticipation for eternal rewards. It is therefore true that the 'imagery of racing in Scripture involves the training, skill and awards received for running and winning the race' (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman 2000:693). It is only spiritually mature believers who are constantly being fed on solid food who are sure to attain this eternal reward. There are other examples of running in scripture (see Gen 16:8; Num 10:35; 1 Sam 8:11; 2 Sam 15:1; Ps 59:5; 119:32; Is 40:32; Jer 51:31; Mark 13:14; Gal 5:7; Phil 2:16). So, based on this, it is clear that both the metaphors of running and race have broad meaning in biblical text. However, what has been discussed above, mainly based on Paul and the author of Hebrews, deepens our understanding of faith. Based on the preliminary findings regarding faith in Hebrews in this study, detailed exegetical study will help us to draw a final conclusion regarding the theology of faith in Hebrews.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the grammatical and linguistic features of faith related vocabularies in Hebrews. Two approaches were adopted, namely, (1) diachronic analysis and (2) analysis of metaphors. Based on diachronic analysis of *pist* and *peithomai* words, the connotative and denotative meanings as well as the semantic range of these words were discovered. It became clear that faith in the rest of the biblical texts and ancient literature has a wide range of meanings. It should therefore be defined within a specific context. More importantly, it was concluded that faith in Hebrews is unique compared to the rest of the biblical texts and other literature.

The first hearers of Hebrews were called for active obedience and with the firm conviction of an eternal future. Although sufferings and hardships were a reality, they were to persevere and fix their eyes on the eschatological future. The heroes of faith and ultimately Christ were the examples the believers were to emulate. On the other hand the believers were strongly warned against drifting away or rejecting the faith, as this would result in negative consequences. The findings from this chapter lay a foundation for detailed exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4 in chapter five. The specific focus will be delineation of the theology of faith. This is important to determine the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy as will be shown in chapter six.

## **CHAPTER 5**

# **A CALL TO HOLD FAST TO THE CONFESSION OF FAITH: A HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL EXEGETICAL STUDY OF HEBREWS 2:1-4**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Hebrews was written to address the pastoral problems of the listeners as they moved forward to the city of God. However, their journey was extremely difficult and painful as they experienced sufferings. As a result, some succumb to social pressures and were giving up the faith. Therefore, the author wrote this homily to convince them to make a renewed commitment to their faith. This chapter focuses on the role of the theology of faith in addressing the listeners' pastoral problems. In other words, how did the author weave the theme of faith in his sermon to achieve his pastoral goal? This chapter is aimed at addressing this question.

In chapter four a grammatical and linguistic study of the faith-related words in Hebrews was performed. This indicated the boundary of the range of meaning of the faith-related words. However, a detailed exegesis of an appropriate passage from Hebrews is necessary. This will help to delineate the theme of faith in Hebrews. Based on this, it will be possible to establish how the author wove this theme of faith to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers. As shown in chapter four, the theme of faith recurs throughout Hebrews. Therefore, there are several candidate passages (e.g. Heb 2:1-4; 3:7-4:16; 5:11-6:20; 10:19-39; 11:1-40; 12:1-29) in Hebrews that delineate the theme of faith. However, given the limit of space, it is appropriate to select one passage for extended exegesis. Hence, Hebrews 2:1-4 is the appropriate passage for this extended exegesis in this study. The author in Hebrews 2:1-4, introduces several aspects of faith. Then throughout Hebrews these aspects of faith are fleshed out to elaborate on their meaning and implications (Morrison 2005:11; cf. Mackie 2012:97). Throughout Hebrews believers are being

exhorted on how to 'look to Jesus, not the law' (Morrison 2005:11). So, it is only in Hebrews 2:1-4 where these aspects of faith can be ascertained, and then the foundation laid for the rest of the exhortations within Hebrews. Further, Hebrews 2:1-4 is important, as it is the first exhortation in the sermon, and links faith with response to God's word. This is vital, as it helps the listeners to take seriously God's revelation, which is spoken through the Son. More importantly, it forces the listeners to apply the Word of God in their daily lives.

The exegetical study will include steps such as the examination of the immediate context of Hebrews 2:1-4. This will be followed by an examination of the internal structure of Hebrews 2:1-4. The focus will be both on the syntactical and semantical issues. Then a detailed clause by clause exegesis will follow. Lexical, grammatical, and historical issues will be examined in this step. Lastly, the aspects of faith in Hebrews 2:1-4 and the rest of Hebrews will be examined.

## **5.2 Detailed Exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4**

### **5.2.1 Immediate Literary Context of the Passage**

The immediate context of the passage is critical to accurately ascertain the author's original intended meaning. Therefore, it is necessary to begin with an examination of the immediate context of Hebrews 2:1-4. In chapter two it was mentioned that the literary structure proposed by Heath (2011) will be adopted in this study. It is apparent from this structure that Hebrews is made up of several chiasmic macro-structures which are related to each other at book-level structure (Heath 2011:267-313). Hebrews 1:1-2:18 based on this structure is a literary unit with five macro-structures. There are, however, other views regarding this literary unit. One view sees Hebrews 1:1-2:4 as the literary unit (Koester 2001:174; Rhee 2001:63-66). Hebrews 1:1-14 is the doctrinal section. This section is further divided into subsections, Hebrews 1:1-4 and 1:5-14. Hebrews 2:1-4 on the other hand is the hortatory section, and is founded on the basis of the Christological teaching in Hebrews 1:1-14 (Rhee 2001:66). However, Hebrews 1:1-2:18 is preferred as the literary unit, as will be evident below.

Hebrews 2:1-4 is the first of the five warning passages in this sermon (Attridge 1989:63; Hughes 1977:72; Isaacs 2002:34; Oberholtzer 1988:93; O'Brien 2010:81). The author in this passage digresses from his Christological exposition in the first two chapters of Hebrews (Attridge 1989:63). Based on the supremacy of the Son over the angels in Chapter 1, the author exhorts his listeners to pay more careful attention to the message of salvation (Heb 2:1-4). In Hebrews 2:5-18, the author proceeds with a Christological exposition with specific focus on Christ's humanity, making further grounds for his exhortation. So, both the Christological expositions in Chapters 1 and 2 are the foundations of the exhortation in Hebrews 2:1-4 (Allen 2010:189; Isaacs 2002:34).

Hebrews 1:1-4 has a dual function in this sermon. First, it is a programmatic function for the whole sermon (Allen 2010:95; Cockerill 2012:87; Heath 2011:131; Mackie 2008:438; O'Brien 2010:44). The author introduced several theological themes, which later are developed to persuade the listeners to renewed commitment to Christian faith (Allen 2010:95; Macleod 2005:212; O'Brien 2010:45; Rhee 2012:342). These themes include the doctrine of revelation, soteriology, Christology, creation and eschatology (Allen 2010:95; cf. Mackie 2008:438). Secondly, it introduces the first part (i.e. Heb 1:5-2:18) of the sermon (Lane 1998:22; Vanhoye 2011:26; cf. O'Brien 2010:63; Ramsey 1997:2). This section (Heb 1:5-2:18) develops further the theme of the Son's superiority over angels (Attridge 1989:63; Isaacs 2002:34).

The theme of the Son's superiority over angels was first announced in Hebrews 1:4 (Allen 2010:132; Cockerill 2012:87; Lane 1998:8; Mackie 2008:438; O'Brien 2010:47; Vanhoye 2011:25). Also the comparison of the old revelation and the new revelation introduced in Hebrews 1:1-2a is further described in Hebrews 2:1-4 (Attridge 1989:63). In both eras of revelation, the same God spoke to the forefathers through the prophets, and in these last days has spoken to us through the Son (Allen 2010:100; Bruce 1990:45; Hughes 1977:37; O'Brien 2010:48). When God first spoke through the prophets, it was only the start; the climax and finality of this divine revelation only came through His Son in these last days (Attridge 1989:39; Guthrie 1998:46; Hagner 2011:21; O'Brien 2010:48). The reason for this is the prophets'

relationships with God. Their relationship with God is that of servanthood, while Jesus' relationship with God is that of Son-ship (Macleod 2005:214).

Hebrews 1:2b-4 describes Christ's superiority in His essential nature as God Man and His continuous high priestly work (Guthrie 2007:923; Oberholtzer 1988:83). After this prologue, the author moves to the first part of the sermon (1:5-2:18). This section forms a chiasmic structure with the exhortation (Heb 2:1-4) at the centre and also the climax of this part (Heath 2011:155). In Hebrews 1:5-14, the author focuses on the superiority of the Son as God and Lord over angels. To demonstrate this, the author cited from a catena of OT (Septuagint) passages. Hebrews 1:5-12, 'consists of three movements' of these citations from the Septuagint, and are grouped in two pairs (Guthrie 2007:925; O'Brien 2010:65). Based on these citations the author proves the Son's nature as God and Lord, His relationship with God as well as His superiority over angels.

In Hebrews 1:13, the author only quotes Psalms 101:1 without pairing it with any other OT passage (Guthrie 2007:942; O'Brien 2010:65). In Hebrews 1:3 this same Psalm was alluded to and employed to introduce the theme of the superiority of the Son over angels in Hebrews 1:4 (Guthrie 2007:942; O'Brien 2010:65). In Hebrews 1:13, however, it plays different functions. Firstly, it 'forms the closing of the *inclusio* opened in 1:5' (Guthrie 2007:942). Secondly, it 'serves both as the climax of the section on the Son's superiority and to make a transition to the discussion of incarnation (2:10-18), by its verbal analogy with Psalms. 8:4-6, quoted in 2:5-9' (Guthrie 2007:942). In Hebrews 1:5, the author opened with the rhetorical question, 'for to which of the angels did He ever say,' (NASB) and again in Hebrews 1:13 closes the quotations with another rhetorical question, 'but to which of the angels has He ever said,' (NSAB).

What is important about the use of Psalm 101:1 in Hebrews 1:13, is that it proclaims the lordship and superiority of the Son (Guthrie 2007:943). Further, it anticipates what the author is going to say about Jesus' high priestly ministry, which is central to this epistle (see Heb 1:3; 7:11-28; 10:1-18). This includes His ministry of interceding for His junior siblings (Guthrie 2007:943). More importantly from the overall passage,

the primary focus is the eschatological kingship of the Son in the kingdom to come with His enemies completely subjugated (Allen 2010:185; DeSilva 2000:102; Gleason 2003:97-98; Oberholtzer 1988:84-91). This eschatological view by the author is sustained throughout his sermon. It plays a pivotal role in persuading the listeners to renewed commitment to the faith (DeSilva 2000:102). This is even more critical considering the listeners' socio-historical situation as described in chapter two. The last verse (Heb 1:14) serves both as the closure of Hebrews 1 and also introduces Hebrews 2:1-4 (Allen 2010:185; O'Brien 2010:184). What also needs to be noted about this verse is the important role of the angels as helping those who will inherit salvation (Allen 2010:185). Clearly, salvation in this verse is a futuristic event that will happen when all the enemies of God are under the footstool of the Son, during His kingship rule (Allen 2010:185). So, the believers are currently living on the 'not yet' fully realised promises. The final fulfilment of the promises is in the eschatological future. Therefore, it is important that the believers in their pilgrimage should focus not on their current sufferings, but on the eschatological future (O'Brien 2010:79).

Hebrews 2:1-18, is divided into exhortation (Heb 2:1-4) and doctrine (Heb 2:5-18) sections. Hebrews 2:1-4 is the link between the two doctrinal sections (i.e. Heb 1:5-14 and 2:5-18) of this literary unit. There are several themes from Hebrews 1:1-14 that connect with this exhortation. In Hebrews 1:5-13 the author cites OT texts to prove the supremacy of the Son over angels based on the declaration in Hebrews 1:4 (O'Brien 2010:80). The author in Hebrews 2:1-4, uses a *fortiori* argument between the Son and the angels in calling for his listeners to pay careful attention to the message of salvation. If those who disobeyed the law which was spoken through the angels (i.e. the lesser) were severely punished, therefore since the agent of the message of salvation is the Son (i.e. the greater) even more severe punishment for the transgressors is guaranteed (2:2-3). The author calls this message the great salvation (2:3a). This message was affirmed by the Christian ear-witnesses (2:3b). God also attested to it through signs, wonders, various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit (2:4). The theme of salvation mentioned in Hebrews 2:3, was introduced by the author in Hebrews 1:14. In Hebrews 1:14, the author said that it is the angels' ministry to help those who will inherit this salvation. In Hebrews 2:3, the author uses

the rhetorical question (how will we escape if we neglect so a great salvation?), to warn his listeners that there is no way to escape punishment if they neglect this great salvation. In Hebrews 1:14, clearly the author tells his listeners that the great salvation is the privilege for the believers. There is therefore much at stake if they neglect this great salvation. Another important theme first introduced by the author is that of communication, 'God has spoken' (Heb 1:1-2; 2:2-3). In Hebrews 1:1-2, the author contrasts the revelation spoken through the prophets and that spoken through the Son. In Hebrews 2:2-3, the author contrasts the message spoken through the angels with that spoken through the Son. In both passages, God is the source of what is communicated.

In Hebrews 2:5-18, the author reverts back to the Christological exposition which commenced in Hebrews 1. First, in Hebrews 2:5-9, he elaborates on the relationship of the Son to the angels (O'Brien 2010:92). The author's focus is on the incarnation of Jesus and His earthly ministry. Secondly, in Hebrews 2:10-18, the author develops the theme of the high priestly role of Jesus, which includes His suffering to attain perfection and solidarity with humanity (Gray 2003; Grogan 1998:167-168; O'Brien 2010:92). The comparison of the Son to the angels in Hebrews 2:5-9 goes back to Hebrews 1:5-14 (Allen 2010:203; Attridge 1989:69; Guthrie 2007:944; Lane 1998:45). This is achieved through Christological interpretation of Psalm 8:4-6 (LXX, 8:5-7), in the form of homiletic Midrash (Guthrie 2007:946; Lane 1998:43; O'Brien 2010:93). The critical issues achieved by the author are firstly to prove the full deity and humanity of Christ. Secondly, Christ is rewarded by being crowned with glory and honour after completing His assignment on earth. More importantly, it was essential for Him to be perfected through sufferings including death to achieve this. Thus faith and endurance were the key for Him to receive these rewards. The result was that all things are now completely subjected to Christ. The author further made it clear that his focus was on the eschatological future (Heb 2:5, 8b-9).

In Hebrews 2:10-18, the author develops further the theme of humiliation of the Son first introduced in Hebrews 2:9 (Guthrie 2007:947; O'Brien 2010:101). In Hebrews 2:10-11, the author first demonstrates the Son's solidarity with the believers ('the sons'). For many sons to attain salvation, Jesus first had to suffer and die for them.

As a result, all those who believe are adopted in God's family and become siblings with Christ. Christ becomes their senior brother, and they are entrusted to Him to take care of them (see also Heb 2:14). In Hebrews 2:12-13, the author cites Psalm 22:22 (Ps 21:23, LXX) and Isaiah 8:17b-18 respectively, to support Christ's suffering and His solidarity with believers (Guthrie 2007:947, 949, 951). Both the concepts of suffering and solidarity of Christ with humanity are central in the whole sermon. This will be made clear further in the next chapter in this study.

In Hebrews 2:16-18, the author provides the reasons for Christ becoming like His brethren. For Him to be a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, He had to be like them in all things except sin (2:17b). Secondly, for Him to be able to make atonement for the sins of humanity He had to be like His brothers (2:17c). In Hebrews 2:18, the author says that Christ can identify with His junior siblings in suffering, as He also suffered as a man during His earthly life. Therefore, He is able to sympathise and help them in their sufferings, as a merciful and faithful high priest who now is seated at the right hand of God in heaven. In the next section, the internal structure of Hebrews 2:1-4 will be examined, and this will be followed by a detailed exegetical study of this passage.

### **5.2.2 Internal Structure of the Passage**

The internal passage focuses both on the syntactical and semantic issues of Hebrews 2:1-4. In the original Greek this passage is made up of two sentences, Hebrews 2:1 is the first sentence and the remainder the second sentence (Allen 2010:190; Lane 1998:34-35; O'Brien 2010:81). Hebrews 2:1 makes a direct statement (Allen 2010:190; Lane 1998:35). It echoes the exhortation in LXX Deuteronomy 4:9 and 32:46 (Allen 2007:101-103; Allen 2010:192; Ellingworth 1993:136; Koester 2001:205). The author calls the believers to take heed of the message of salvation which they heard (Allen 2007:101; Vanhoye 2011:92). The second sentence (vv 2-4) is the conditional statement based on the exhortation in Hebrews 2:1 (Allen 2010:190; Lane 1998:35). In this conditional statement the author makes a *a fortiori* argument contrasting the message through the angels and that through the Son (O'Brien 2010:82; Vanhoye 2011:92).

What is further important about this passage is that semantically Hebrews 2:2-4 is the reason for or ground of the exhortation in Hebrews 2:1 (Allen 2010:190). This is indicated by explanatory conjunction 'for' (*gar*) at the beginning of the Hebrews 2:2 (2010:190). The author in verse 1 opens with transitional phrase 'that is why' (*dia touto*). This transitional phrase concludes the author's exposition of the superiority of the Son in Hebrews 1:1-14 (Attridge 1989:64; Greenlee 2008:42; O'Brien 2010:81). This includes the Son as the final revelation of God's word (Heb 1:1-2a); also the Son's superiority over angels (Heb 1:5-14).

Then the author proceeds to exhort the listeners to 'pay attention' (*prosechein*). The author uses 'the adverb *perissoteros* to indicate the comparative idea of paying closer attention to something' (Allen 2010:189). This oratorical imperative '*prorissoteros prosechein*' is based on what all 'have heard' (*akoustheisin*). After this oratorical imperative '*prorissoteros prosechein*', the author follows the negative purpose clause 'so that we do not drift away' (*mēpote pararyomen*) (Allen 2010:189; O'Brien 2010:81). The verb "drift" in this purpose clause 'is usually taken to have an active meaning in spite of its passive form, "to be drifted past; to be carried away; to be flowed by"' (Allen 2010:189). This negative purpose clause concludes Hebrews 2:1 (Allen 2010:189; O'Brien 2010:81).

The second paragraph (Heb 2:2-4) is a 'single explanatory sentence' (O'Brien 2010:81). It 'expresses a condition' (2010:81). So, Hebrews 2:1 is the main point (i.e. exhortation) of the paragraph and Hebrews 2:2-4 modifies it (Allen 2010:190). As mentioned, Hebrews 2:2-4 is the ground or reason for the exhortation. There are two conditional clauses in this sentence governed by a single "if" (*ei*) (Allen 2010:190). According to O'Brien (2010:82) 'the protasis (if clause, verse 2) concerns the message delivered by angels and, though shorter, matched by an apodosis (vv 3-4) which is a rhetorical question (how shall we escape?) involving *a fortiori* ('how much more?') argument (v. 3; also 8:6; 9:14; 10:28-31)'. If the exhortation in verse 1 is not taken seriously by paying careful attention to this great salvation, there is a potential danger awaiting the believers (O'Brien 2010:82). There is no way that they can escape this danger (v.3). This is simply because those who disobey the message

through the angels (i.e. the lesser) never escaped punished (v. 2). How can they escape punishment if they ignore the great salvation from the Lord (i.e. the greater)?

So, the first conditional clause in vv 3-4 is expressed by the rhetorical question, '*how shall we escape?*' (Allen 2010:190). The second conditional clause is based on the conditional participial clause 'ignoring such a great salvation' (2010:190). 'The rest of the paragraph is a complex relative clause introduced by the pronoun *hētis*, "which," and describes this salvation' (Allen 2010:190). Allen further wrote that 'the participial (genitive absolute) construction beginning verse 4 serves to describe further confirmation by affirming that God Himself testified to the salvation message with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts given by the Holy Spirit' (2010:190).

This analysis of the internal structure has further prepared us for detailed analysis of this passage. Firstly, the relationship (i.e. syntax) between clauses, words and phrases within this passage has been established. Secondly, the meaning (i.e. semantic) of this passage has also been defined. Based on this firm foundation, the next section will focus on detailed clause by clause analysis of the passage.

### **5.2.3 Clause by Clause Exegetical Analysis**

#### *5.2.3.1 Hold Fast to the Message of Salvation (Heb 2:1)*

##### *a) Dia touto*

The author opens this passage with the transitional phrase *dia touto*. There are several translations of this phrase such as; '*therefore*' (NET, NASB, ESV, KJV, NKJV, NRSV), '*then*' (NJB), '*so*' (NLT), '*for this reason*' (NASB77, TNT), '*that is why*' (REB, TEV). This phrase is critical in this passage, as it draws and gives a practical implication of what has been said in Hebrews 1:1-14 (Alford 2010:25; Allen 2010:191; Cockerill 1998:49; 2012:116-117; Ellingworth 1993:135; Guthrie 1998:83; Hughes 1977:72; Koester 2001:208; Lane 1998:36; O'Brien 2010:83; Rhee 2001:73). Based on what has been said about the Son (1:1-14), the author in Hebrews 2:1-4 warns the believers that this demands genuine obedience (Alford 2010:25; O'Brien 2010:65).

The author's exhortation here is purposeful. In chapter two of the study, the socio-historical situation of this Christian community was described. It became clear that because of social pressures some of the believers were giving up their faith and reuniting with the unbelieving society. One of the reasons was to regain social status instead of social shame. So, the purpose of this exhortation is to warn the believers not to drift away from faith. If they thought their current sufferings and hardships were unbearable, they must think twice, as drifting away from the faith has dire consequences, much greater than those experienced by the wilderness generation when they disobeyed the message of the angels. *Dia touto*, it is far better for these believers to hold fast to their Christian faith even in the midst of hardships and sufferings (Cockerill 2012:118).

#### b) *Dei*

This infinite verb may mean 'it is necessary', 'it must be' and 'obligation' (BDAG 2000:214; Grundmann 1964:21; Louw and Nida 1996:669; Tiedtke 1986:664). This could be a compulsion of any kind, either internal or external depending on a current pressing situation (BDAG 200:214; Ellingworth 1993:135; Grundmann 1964:21; Lenski 1938:63; Louw and Nida 1996:669). When this word is used for religious purposes, it can carry the meaning of neutral necessity based on the nature of God and His will (Balz and Schneider 1990:279; Grundmann 1964:21-22; Tiedtke 1986:665). Further, this word is used in the message to declare the will of God based on the specific issue (Grundmann 1964:22).

So, in Hebrews 2:1 this usage is applicable. Guthrie (1998:83) posited that *dei* 'shows the logical necessity of following the preacher's instructions'. Greenlee (2008:42) on the other hand argued that, 'it is what believers must logically do because of the evidence from Scripture and ultimately because they will be lost if they do not give heed'. This necessity is both logical and moral based on the immediate and broader context of Hebrews (Allen 2010:191). It is clear that this is serious, and therefore the listeners have only one better option, which is to hold fast to message of salvation. Failure (i.e. drifting away) has eternal consequences (Greenlee 2008:42). We have already mentioned that some of the believers were

forsaking the faith, because of social pressures. So, the author in this verse is contrasting holding fast with drifting away. These contrasts in the next two sections will be analysed in detail.

### c) *Prorissoteros Prosechein*

The adverb *prorissoteros* refers to “far greater” or “absolute exceeding abundance” (Balz and Schneider 1990:77; Brandt 1986:728; Greenlee 2008:42; Louw and Nida 1996:687; Westcott 1903:36). It is the extent or degree to which something must happen or be done. According to Balz and Schneider (1990:77), this adverb in the NT is used comparatively, ‘to a far greater measure’ (2 Cor 11:23; 12:15; Gal 1:14; Phil 1:14; Heb 2:1; 13:19). Also it is used relatively (2 Cor 1:12; 2:4; 7:13, 15; 1 Thes 2:17). So, this comparative adverb in this passage is connected with *prosechein* which is unnatural (Greenlee 2008:42). Westcott (1903:36) argued that ‘the force of comparative is “more exceeding than if there had been no such marked preeminence of the Son”’. The listeners are exhorted to give more abundant heed (Greenlee 2008:42). Further this adverb refers to both *dei* and *prosechein* (2008:42). ‘It is more abundantly necessary to give heed more abundantly’ (Greenlee 2008:42). Therefore, the combination of *dei*, *prorissoteros*, *prosechein* and *pararyomen* forces the listeners to pay attention to the stern warning (Allen 2010:191).

So this clause (*dei prorissoteros prosechein hēmas tois akoustheisin pararyomen*) is significant in the author’s attempt, as he calls the listeners to hold fast in their faith. His aim is indeed to exhort them to faithfulness even in the midst of sufferings and hardships. So, because of Christ superiority, more abundant faithfulness is demanded from the listeners based on this adverb (*prorissoteros*). This is far more than what was expected from the Israelites under the old covenant (Ellingworth 1993:135; Greenlee 2008:42). This is logical, since Christ is far superior to the angels, and therefore the need for far more abundant faithfulness to His message of salvation is inevitable.

The complementary infinitive verb, *prosechein* on the other hand literally means ‘to give heed’, ‘pay closer attention’, ‘to pay attention to’, ‘to hold firmly to’, ‘to continue to believe’ (Balz and Schneider 1990:170; BDAG 2000:880; Louw and Nida 1996:371).

Further it means to 'hold to', 'offer', 'to bring to' (Liddell 1996:690). It means 'to bring a ship near a place', 'bring it to port' (Liddell 1996:690; Lenski 1938:64; LSJ 1996:1512). The context of the text in Hebrews supports the technical nautical term, 'to bring a ship toward the port' (Allen 2010:191; Cockerill 2012:117; Rhee 2001:74). This is based on the use of another technical nautical term *pararrein* (to drift) in the same verse (Allen 2010:191; DeSilva 2000:104; Cockerill 2012:117; Koester 2001:205; Lenski 1938:64; Rhee 2001:74). Further, based on the overall context also the cognate metaphor in Hebrews 6:19 (anchor that holds sure and steadfast), makes this nautical use more likely in this verse (Allen 2010:191). Allen (2010:191) further argued that 'it has been suggested that *prosechein* indicates the fastening of the anchor to the seabed to keep the ship from drifting'. Cockerill (2012:117) posited that this metaphor suggests that 'the hearers must attend to their course with diligence lest through neglect they drift away and miss their intended harbour'. This indeed paints a vivid picture of a ship being pushed away by the currents beyond some fixed points (Allen 2010:191; DeSilva 2000:104). 'It is as though they were in a boat on a river or at sea. He pictured them moored at a dock or anchor. If they continue to neglect their attachment to the truth that does not change, the currents of their age might carry them away from it'. (Constable (2013:23).

This is indeed what was happening to the first hearers. While they knew the truth as they were properly equipped, some were drifting away from it. In Hebrews 3:6, 14; 10:23 the author also used a cognate phrase, *katechein*, as in this verse (Allen 2010:191; Lane 1998:37; O'Brien 2010:84). In these passages again the author was exhorting the listeners to hold fast to their faith (Lane 1998:37). Further to the nautical use of this phrase, there is also moral application (Koester 2001:205). Therefore the listeners are to hold fast to the message and live according to its teachings.

This moral implication is based on the fact that in this verse the author echoes Deuteronomy 32:46, LXX (Allen 2007:101; Koester 2001:201). Although the echo is supported lexically, it is thematic and contextual within Hebrews that provides the stronger support (Allen 2007:101; Allen 2010:192; Ellingworth 1993:136). The author in Hebrews 1:6 quoted *prosechein* from Deuteronomy 32:43 (Allen 2007:101; Allen

2010:192; Ellingworth 1993:136). There is also an allusion to Deuteronomy 32:8 in Hebrews 2:5 which gives further support (Allen 2007:101). The immediate context of Hebrews 2:1 also provides support for the echo (2007:101). Both Moses and the author of Hebrews link *prosechein* with inheritance. In Hebrews 1:14 the author mentioned that angels help those who will inherit salvation. So, the listeners' goal is to inherit this salvation. The author also uses this same term in other passages (Heb 6:12, 17; 9:15; 11:7-8). In the case of Moses, if the Israelites pay attention they will inherit the land (Deut 32:47).

So the listeners were to '*prorissoteros prosechein hēmas tois akoustheisin*'. The author wanted the listeners to remain absolutely attached to the anchor by firmly fixing on the Word of Christ (Constable 2013:24; DeSilva 2000:104; Lenski 1938:64). This will help them not to be taken away by untrustworthy and unpredictable currents of the sea (DeSilva 2000:104). If this happens they will get lost on their pilgrimage to the heavenly homeland. It is therefore beyond doubt that the author in this passage wants an active commitment to their confession of faith. This will ensure that they live according to the message of salvation which they heard. 'Movement away from this commitment is interpreted as "drifting away" - the very movement that non-Christian neighbours would affirm as "getting back on course"' (DeSilva 2000:105).

The unbelieving society wanted the believers to revert back to their old ways of living. To achieve this, they treated them badly to the extent that they even lost their social status. Based on their tradition, losing social status was shameful (DeSilva 2000:105). So, this was a serious problem for the believers and hence the only better option was to give up their faith. The author here was counteracting this belief. The dual nature of Christ in Hebrews plays an important role to help counteract the situation. First, the superiority of Christ based on His divine nature and His authority demands that the believers hold fast in their confession. Secondly, His suffering and solidarity encourages them to hold fast to their confession. Also His continuous work as the merciful and faithful high priest, which involves sympathising and helping them in their suffering energises them to hold fast in their confession. Lastly, the fact that they belong to the family of God, makes them not feel ashamed because of their current earthly social status. They are joint heirs with their senior brother, and

therefore they lack nothing, even if presently they have nothing. There are far greater things that await them in the heavenly homeland. Knowing this, they must rather fix their eyes on what awaits them. They are assured of this, because their senior brother has already attained it for them. They know about what awaits them, because this is one of the things they had heard (*hēmas tois Akoustheisin*). This leads to the next important phrase, '*hēmas tois akoustheisin*'. The section below will elaborate on the meaning of this phrase to give further clarity on the overall clause, *prorissoteros prosechein hēmas tois akoustheisin*'.

What is important regarding the theme of faith from the discussion above is that the author used several aspects of faith in order to exhort his listeners to hold fast to their faith. Firstly, paying more abundant attention to the message of salvation is an aspect of maintaining faith. In other words, the author was calling his listeners to hold fast to their confession of faith. This will be further discussed in detail under section 5.3.2 below. Secondly, paying careful attention requires attentive hearing. Therefore, the theme of hearing alluded in this clause is another aspect of faith. In this case, this is the necessary ingredient for the listeners to maintain their faith. This will be clear below based on the analysis of *hēmas tois akoustheisin*. It will further be discussed under section 5.3.3 below. Lastly, the maintenance of faith is not without rewards. In this passage, the author has not explicitly mentioned that paying attention will earn the listeners rewards. The overall context of Hebrews 2:1-4 and the whole of Hebrews, support the fact that maintenance of faith results in believers being rewarded. This aspect of faith will further be discussed in section 5.3.4 below. These aspects of faith and their role in the author's rhetorical strategy are important to the objective of this study. This will be evident in chapter six of this study.

#### *d) Hēmas tois Akoustheisin*

In this phrase, the author used the first person plural "we" (*hēmas*) including himself (Cockerill 1998:49; 2012:116; Girdwood and Verkruyse 1997; Greenlee 2008:42; Moffatt 1924:17; Vanhoye 2011:95). So based on this, the author himself heard the gospel through others as well. While this is true, the author is excluded from those who are drifting away and hence the warning (Greenlee 2008:42). The reason for

including himself was for rhetorical effect. This will be revisited in the next chapter. This phrase is the aorist participle literally meaning ‘what was heard’ (Girdwood and Verkruyse 1997). According to Ellingworth (1993:136), it ‘implies submission and/or acceptance of what is heard’ (cf. Allen 2010:192). Girdwood and Verkruyse (1997) also argued that ‘to hear implies to obey’. So “what is heard”, means total acceptance and obedience to the teachings of the Christian faith.

This further brings clarity to the meaning of *prosechein*, which when used intransitively refers to the theme of listening and hearing (Allen 2007:101). Therefore, cognitively it calls for listening and keeping in mind what has been heard (Allen 2007:101; Koester 2001:205). As already argued, Hebrews 2:1 echoes Deuteronomy 32 where Moses in Deuteronomy 32:44, 46 exhorts his fellow Israelites to listen and heed the word of the message they heard (Allen 2007:101). Both in Hebrews and Deuteronomy, the messages are delivered orally and God is the primary source (Deut 31:19 Heb 1:1-2a). Both in Hebrews and Deuteronomy, God is the witness in the messages (Deut 31:19; 32:46; Heb 2:4). So, the believers are further exhorted to attentively listen and take to heart by applying the teachings of the divine message in their lives. This will keep their ropes firmly attached to the anchor. This will ensure that they withstand the strong currents from the sea while they are firmly attached to the anchor. The last phrase of Hebrews 2:1 warns the listeners against the danger of drifting away if they don’t pay careful attention to what they heard. The section below examines this last phrase of Hebrews 2:1, ‘*mēpote pararyomen*’.

This clause further fleshes out the theme of listening and hearing and giving clarity in the intransitive use of *prosechein* as discussed in the previous section. This is an ingredient of maintaining faith, which is one of the aspects of faith in this passage. What is further important is that the listeners were called to completely submit to what they had heard. This is critical and challenging considering the socio-historical situation. During this stage, some of the listeners were sluggish in hearing (see Heb 5:11). Hence, when the author exhorts them to attentively listen and pay heed to the message of salvation, this must have been an important challenge to the listeners. However, since Christ was superior over angels, it was an obligation for them to comply with. In other words, based on the superiority of Christ, the listeners were

exhorted to pay more abundant attention to the message of salvation. Their current hardships and sufferings were only temporary; what awaited them in eschatological future was far better. Therefore, they had to fix their eyes on their eternal destiny and remain faithful and obedient to the message of salvation till the end.

e) *Mēpote Pararyomen*

The conjunction adverbial purpose *mēpote*, has a negative connotation such as 'never', 'lest perhaps', 'lest', 'on no account', 'so that not', and so on. (BDAG 2000:648; Greenlee 2008:43; Louw and Nida 1996:784; LSJ 1996:1129). Louw and Nida called this adverb 'markers of purpose, often with the implication of apprehension'. It 'introduces a negative purpose'; it means 'lest perhaps' (Greenlee 2008:43; cf. Ellingworth 1993:136). The clause that comes after this negative purpose is the aorist passive subjective *pararreō*. This has been analysed in detail in the previous chapter. In this passage, it means that these listeners were in danger of drifting away from faith and eventually losing what they believed (Greenlee 2008:43; Lane 1998:37). As discussed in the previous chapter, this is a subtle and undetected movement away from the anchor. In other words, if the listeners are not paying more careful attention to the faith, they are in danger of this gradual and unnoticed movement away from the faith (O'Brien 2010:84). This will result in them missing 'their intended harbour' (Cockerill 2012:117).

So, *mēpote pararyomen* expresses the negative purpose of paying attention to the message of salvation. The author in this exhortation is warning his listeners to guard against this danger of drifting. This threat is real, and the only practical way to avoid it is for the listeners to hold fast to their confession of faith. There are lasting eternal rewards, which the believers are guaranteed, if they hold fast to their confession till the end. This reward is the inheritance of salvation (see Heb 1:14). Therefore, their perseverance under sufferings and hardships will not go without being noticed. Christ, their senior brother has already provided the assurance for this, since after completing His race He was crowned with glory and honour. He is now seated at the right hand of God, and all things are under His authority.

Based on this clause, the author presents to his listeners the opposite of not holding fast to the faith, which is giving up the faith. This is another aspect of faith which is the feature of neglecting faith. Because of the social pressures, some of the listeners were already in this danger. Therefore, the author was presenting a better alternative, which was going to guarantee them eternal rewards. So, the author was saying to his fellow brethren, don't allow the temporary pressures to ruin your eternal destiny. They could not afford to allow the social pressures to destroy what God had planned for them, and therefore they must follow the example of their senior brother. They had to remain faithful and obedient till the end. God, as He had done for their senior brother, was going to crown them with glory and honour.

In Hebrews 2:2, the author describes the consequences of not paying careful attention to the message of salvation. Therefore, the next section examines this in detail.

#### *5.2.3.2 The Neglect of Salvation Results in Punishment (Heb 2:2-3a)*

The author opens this sentence (2:2-4) with the explanatory conjunction *gar* (for). With this the author moves from the exhortation in Hebrews 2:1, and in this sentence gives reasons to pay more attention (Alford 2010:27; Greenlee 2008:44). In this argument the author applies *a fortiori* comparison between the lesser (law) and the greater (gospel) (Allen 2007:102; Allen 2010:192; Ellingworth 1993:137; Greenlee 2008:44; Guthrie 1998:84). In Hebrews 1:1-2, the author contrasted the revelation through the prophets and that through the Son. In this passage, the author contrasts the message spoken through the angels, which is the law, and the message of great salvation by the Son. This reference to the angels in this passage echoes the divine revelation through angels at Mount Sinai (Allen 2007:102; Alford 2010:27; Cockerill 2012).

#### *a) Ei gar ho di aggelon lalētheis logos egeneto bebaios*

The author introduced this first reason with *ei* (if). The term *logos* refers to 'word' (BDAG 2000:599; Louw and Nida 1996:399). Since the author's focus is the oral message, he used the 'word' instead of the 'law' (Allen 2010:193; Greenlee 2008:44;

Moffatt 1924:18). This is also the reason why *lalētheis logos* is translated as ‘the message spoken’ instead of the law (Allen 2010:193). The proposition *di* is better translated as “through angels” instead of “by angels” (Allen 2010:193; Greenlee 2008:44). This translation implies that God was the one speaking through the angels (Allen 2010:193; Ellingworth 1993:138; Greenlee 2008:44). *Di aggelon lalētheis logos*, means that the angels were the intermediaries of God’s Law to Moses in Mount Sinai (Alford 2010:27; Allen 2010:193; Cockerill 2012:119; Ellingworth 1993:138; Greenlee 2008:44; Lane 1998:37; O’Brien 2010:84). Exodus 19 and 20 do not mention that the angels were present during the giving of the Law to Moses in Mount Sinai (Attridge 1989:64; Hughes 1977:75; Lane 1998:37; O’Brien 2010:84). However, based on Deuteronomy 33:2 (LXX), it is believed that angels played an intermediary role in the giving of the Law, as they were with God at His right hand at Mount Sinai (Alford 2010:27; Bruce 1990:67; Hughes 1977:75; Lane 1998:37; O’Brien 2010:85). This belief of an angelic intermediary role in giving the Law is also indicated in the NT (Acts 7:38, 53; Gal 3:19; cf. Alford 2010:27; Bruce 1990:67; Ellingworth 1993:138; Hughes 1977:75; O’Brien 2010:85). This same belief of the angelic intermediary role in the giving of the Law was also held by Jewish tradition. Therefore, it is justifiable to conclude that the angels indeed played an intermediary role in the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

The author says that the message spoken through the angels was *egeneto bebaios*. Louw and Nida (1996:339) translated this phrase as ‘known to be true’, ‘shown to be true’. Further, it can be translated as ‘dependable’, ‘reliable’ and ‘trustworthy’. Other translations include; ‘binding’, ‘firm’, ‘in force’, ‘valid’, ‘steady’, ‘terra firma’, ‘unchanging’, ‘authoritative’, ‘unalterable’, ‘securely established’, ‘verified’ (BDAG 2000:172; Greenlee 2008:44; LSJ 1996:312). So, clearly this term used by the author in this passage has legal implications (Alford 2010:27; Allen 2010:192; Attridge 1989:65; O’Brien 2010:85). This legal term is also used in Hebrews 3:6, 14; 6:19; 9:17 (BDAG 2000:172; cf. Allen 2010:192). According to Allen (2010:192), this term ‘in the papyri is virtually a technical term implying legal security’ (cf. Deissmann 1901:104-109). Allen (2010:192) further posited that, ‘it qualifies something as valid with additional connotations of being trustworthy, dependable, reliable, unaltered, and securely established (here the result of having been spoken by God)’. Since this

word was spoken by God Himself through the angels, it is indeed valid and authoritative (O'Brien 2010:85). Hence, the message spoken through the angels has serious unavoidable obligations (Attridge 1989:65; O'Brien 2010:85).

This conclusion, based on the message of the law was critical to the listeners, as will further be shown below. If the message of the law was valid and authoritative, the Israelites were obliged to obey it. How much more is the message of great salvation spoken through the superior Son? What this implies is that since the message of salvation is superior, the listeners were even more obliged to obey it. In other words, the listeners were required in their daily Christian walk to be aligned with the teachings of the message of salvation. They were to keep it in their hearts. It was supposed to guide them in the areas of their lives. This was contrary to what these listeners were going through. Because of the social pressures they were giving up their faith and to such an extent that they were sluggish in hearing. They were indeed in serious danger, and hence the warning and exhortation by the author of Hebrews to counteract the situation. This is critical in the objective of this study as will be shown below and in chapter six.

b) *Pasa parabasis kai parakoē elaben endikon misthapodosian*

The implications of the validity of the words spoken through the angels are that '*pasa parabasis kai parakoē elaben endikon misthapodosian*'. The two terms (*parabasis* and *parakoē*), 'are virtually synonymous, with both involving a deliberate rejection of the divine will' (O'Brien 2010:85; cf. Greenlee 2008:45; Lane 1998:38). According to BDAG (2000:758), *parabasis* refers to an 'act of deviating from an established boundary or norm, overstepping, transgression'. Louw and Nida (1996:468) further posited that it refers 'to act contrary to established custom or law, with the implication of intent' – 'to disobey, to break the law, to transgress, disobedience, transgression'. The second noun, *parakoē* refers to 'refusal to listen and so be disobedient, unwillingness to hear, disobedience' (BDAG 2000:766). Lane (1998:38) also posited that it 'implies unwillingness to listen to the voice of God'. So clearly, these two words indicate the character and cause of sin (Allen 2010:193). The character of sin is based on *parabasis* and it is disobedience (2010:193). The cause of sin on the other

hand is based on *parakoē* and it is inattention. The listeners were in this danger because of social pressures. Therefore, the author was warning them not to fall into the same trap as the wilderness generation.

The consequence of this to the offenders is just punishment. The author used the phrase '*elaben endikon misthapodosian*' to describe the consequences of willful rejection of God's will. The aorist indicative verb *elaben* refers to 'take', 'receive', 'take hold of', 'grasp', 'take in hand' (BDAG 2000:583; LSJ 1996:1026). *Endikon* on the other hand refers to 'just', 'legitimate', 'legal', 'right' (BDAG 2000:332; Louw and Nida 1996:743; LSJ 1996:560). So, the offenders receive just *misthapodosian* for their sins. In other words, it is legally right and appropriate for an offender to be punished (Allen 2010:193; Greenlee 2008:45; Lane 1998:38). The term *misthapodosian* refers to 'recompense' (BDAG 2000:653). This can either be a favorable or unfavorable reward depending on the act (BDAG 2000:653; Girdwood and Verkruyse 1997; Isaacs 2002:37; O'Brien 2010:85). In the context of this passage payment of reward is a penalty, because of the rejecting of God's will. Allen (2010:193) argued that 'it is used here in an ironic sense because the meaning of the term is normally reward in the sense of receiving payment, but here the "reward" is actually "punishment"' (cf. O'Brien 2010:85). Lane (1998:38) also posited that 'by coining the term *misthapodosian*, "punishment as reward," the writer arrests the attention of his hearers and reminds them that carelessness and contempt for God's revelation under the old covenant brought in its wake just and appropriate punishment'. The argument by the author in this passage is supported by numerous examples of how God never tolerated sin in the OT texts (Allen 2007:102; Koester 2001:209; O'Brien 2010:85; Vanhoye 2011:96). While the God of Israel was tender and merciful, He never overlooked sin and punished the offenders justly (Exodus 34:6, 7; Deut 32:35). Many of the wilderness generation, were left to die in the wilderness and others including Moses did not enter the Promised Land because of their disobedience and rejection of God's will (Num 14:20-45; Deut 1:34-38; 32:48-52). If there were serious consequences of disobedience and rejection of God's will under the Law of Moses, then under the new covenant even worse consequences must be expected.

So, the implications for those Christians who were already drifting away from the faith were serious. The author was telling them that the consequences of neglecting the faith had direct impact on their eternal destiny. This is another aspect of faith. If the listeners did not take heed of the warning and correct their ways by holding fast to their confession, they were assured of severe punishment. If they thought that their situation was unbearable, they needed to think again. Neglecting the faith was going to result in severe punishment, with the possibility of eschatological death. Therefore, their situation was nothing when compared to the eternal consequences. Thus the author was calling the listeners to reconsider and make the right decision regarding their faith.

c) *Pos hēmeis ekpheuxometha tēlikautēs amelēsantes sotērias*

In Hebrews 2:3a, the author, said '*pos hēmeis ekpheuxometha tēlikautēs amelēsantes sotērias*'. This is another *a fortiori* argument, how much more? (O'Brien 2010:86). This clause is rooted in what the author had said in Hebrews 2:1-2. Again, the author has in mind the superiority of the Son as described in Hebrews 1:1-14 (Dods n.d.:259). What this rhetorical question implies is that there are unavoidable consequences when this great salvation is neglected (Allen 2010:193). '*Pos* (how?), in rhetorical questions, especially after conditional sentence has the force of a strong negative: "how shall we escape.'" Allen (2010:193; Ellingworth 1993:139; O'Brien 2010:86). The future middle indicative *ekpheuxometha* refers to 'escape', 'to avoid', 'shun', 'run away' (BDAG 2000:312; Louw and Nida 1996:239). Within the context of this passage this implies the impossibility of escaping.

What is important in this rhetorical question is that the author also associates himself, "*hēmeis*" (we), with the listeners. This association is important for the author to achieve his rhetorical goal, as will be shown in the next chapter. He says there is no way they can escape if they '*tēlikautēs amelēsantes sotērias*'. The aorist active participle *amelēsantes* refers to 'have no care for', 'to neglect', 'be unconcerned', 'to disregard', 'to pay no attention to' (BDAG 2000:52; Louw and Nida 1996:355). Within the context of this passage, it 'implies total disregard and contempt' (Greenlee 2008:45; cf. Dods n.d.:259). Dods (n.d.:259) posited that, 'the guilt and danger of so

doing are proportion to the greatness of the announcement, and this is no longer of law but of life'. The Son inaugurated this salvation through the shedding of His own blood. There is therefore no way to escape, if they disregard so great a salvation which was bought by life.

The word *tēlikautēs* refers to 'so great', 'so mighty', 'so large', 'so important' (BDAG 2000:1001; Louw and Nida 1996:1788). Within the context of this passage it shows the superiority of the message of salvation compared with Mosaic Law (Dods n.d.:260; Ellingworth 1993:139; Greenlee 2008:45). The word *sotērias* refers to salvation. The author first mentioned this word in Hebrews 1:14 where the angels are '... sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation' (NASB). 'The word here, as there, indicates salvation in its entirety at its completion in the eschaton' (Allen 2010:194). But the actual content of salvation in this passage is not indicated. The author will expound this word later in Hebrews. In this passage, the author's main focus was to connect the message of salvation with its source, which is Jesus (2010:85). This is important since the message the listeners received was from Christ through their leaders (2:1; 13:7). Therefore, knowing the superiority of Christ as expounded in 1:1-14, the listeners are being informed that if they don't pay careful attention to this great salvation, they will be rewarded accordingly.

The author did not elaborate on the type of retribution for those who neglect the great salvation. It is more likely a final judgment, although not explicit from the text (Allen 2010:194; O'Brien 2010:87). The author in Hebrews 3:7-4:11 provided an example of how God dealt with wilderness generation who rejected His divine will (O'Brien 2010:87). When this generation rejected God's covenant, God allowed them to die in the wilderness (Heb 8:9; 3:12-19; cf. O'Brien 2010:87). 'Their persistent neglect was in effect a rejection of God's purpose (Jer. 4:17)' (O'Brien 2010:87). It is therefore clear that final judgment is in view in this text as well, for those who succumb to the social pressures resulting in their drifting away from the faith. The listeners still had an opportunity to change their ways and pay careful attention to the message of salvation. Otherwise they will be caught by surprise when the Lord returns (see Matt. 24:37-39; 25:1-12).

So, while their earthly situation is serious, drifting away from the faith will not help them, as this will result in eternal judgment. As already mentioned in the previous section, punishment because of neglecting the faith is another aspect of faith. The author used this in order to show the listeners the seriousness of their actions. This is critical considering the fact that the listeners were experiencing social pressures from the unbelieving society. Their better option appeared to be to drift away and be reunited with the unbelieving society. This would ensure that their status was redeemed and they could live happily again. However, the author tells them to think carefully about their eternal destiny. Based on this, they must choose whether they want to be like the wilderness generation, or like Christ. Whatever the decision they make, it has eternal consequences. So, faith is the deciding factor on where they will spend their eternity. However, holding fast to the message of salvation was their better option, as it promises a better eternal future. This is central to the author's rhetorical goal as will be shown in the next chapter.

#### *5.2.3.3 The Validity and Reliability of the Message of Salvation (Heb 2:3b-4)*

In Hebrews 2:2-3a, the author strongly warned against neglecting the great salvation and that offenders are guaranteed severe punishment. In Hebrews 2:3b-4, the author emphasizes the validity and reliability of the message of salvation. He achieved this by first reminding his listeners that Christ is the pioneer and the founder of this message of salvation (Heb 2:3b). Secondly, he reminded them that this message was confirmed to them by Christian ear-witnesses to the Lord's message of salvation (Heb 2:3c). Lastly, he reminded them that this message was also attested to by God through signs, wonders, various miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Heb 2:4). The following section focuses on these three issues regarding the message of salvation.

##### *a) Hētis archēn labousa laleisthai dia tou kyriou*

The word *hētis*, which is the indefinite pronoun, refers to 'whoever', 'who', 'which', 'what', 'whosoever', 'whichever', 'whichsoever', 'whatever', 'anything which' (BDAG 2000:729; Louw and Nida 1996:814; LSJ 1996:1263). *Labousa* refers to 'receive', 'to

make', 'to have' (Greenlee 2008:47; Louw and Nida 1996:803). *Archēn* on the other hand, which is the adverbial accusative, refers to 'beginning', 'origin', 'source', 'foundation', and so on (BDAG 2000:137; LSJ 1996:252; Louw and Nida 1996:636). Lastly, *laleisthai* is the direct object and refers to 'speak', 'chat', 'talk', 'prattle', and so on (BDAG 2000:582; LSJ 1996:1025). Greenlee (2008:47) correctly concluded that this phrase means: 'which, having received a beginning to be spoken'. Looking at a range of translations shows that this has been translated in different ways (2008:47).

There are three main views regarding the translation of this phrase (Allen 2010:195; Greenlee 2008:47). Firstly, *labousa* is treated as the finite verb either alone or combined with *archēn* (Greenlee 2008:47; cf. Allen 2010:195). It 'expresses an action prior to the following verb' (Greenlee 2008:47; cf. Allen 2010:195; Lenski 1938:67). This is followed in most translations except NAB and NASB. Based on this, Greenlee (2008:47) translates it as 'it began to be spoken and then was confirmed to us'. In the second view it, 'is treated as a participle indicating a state or action prior to following verb' (Greenlee 2008:47; cf. Allen 2010:195). The New American Bible (NAB) adopted this translation. Lane (1998:38) argued that 'the message of salvation began to be declared through Him', that is the Lord. Lastly, this can also be a temporary adverbial participle alone or with *archēn* (Allen 2010:195; Greenlee 2008:47). This is the case in the NASB translation 'after it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us ...' 'The present tense of the infinitive *laleisthai* refers to the process of the Lord's speaking' (Greenlee 2008:47). According to Westcott (1903:39) 'the addition of the verb calls attention to the present preaching and to the fact that this is based on the original preaching of Christ'.

*Dia* with the genitive either refers to 'through', 'by' (BDAG 2000:796; Greenlee 2008:47). In the various translations there is a split on the preferred use of through or by (Greenlee 2008:47). Since the Son was the agent and God is the primary source of this message, *dia* within the context of this passage is better translated as 'through' (Greenlee 2008:47). Hughes (1977:77) asserted that '... it was first "spoken by God through the Lord," who is the mediator and embodiment of this salvation'. Lane (1998:39) posited that 'the foundation of the Christian economy is traced to the ministry of the Lord'. It is only through the Lord that God declared the message of

salvation (Lane 1998:39). In Hebrews 2:2 the mediatorial role of the angels was described, and here the author describes the mediatorial role of the Lord. So these two verses are in parallel, and what is clear in both cases is that God is the one speaking (Ellingworth 1993:141; Greenlee 2008:47). The message of salvation seen here, as is apparent within the wider context of Hebrews, encompasses both the words and deeds of the Lord (Ellingworth 1993:141; Lane 1998:39; O'Brien 2010:88). The title of Jesus, *kyriou* (Lord) is also important to comprehend this understanding of salvation in this context (Lane 1998:141). Further this 'title 'Lord' indicates the Son's supreme dignity' (Greenlee 2008:47). Therefore based on this, God's final revelation commenced with Christ's ministry (Cockerill 2012:121; O'Brien 2010:88). All those who believe in Christ as the Son of God and His earthly ministry are assured of receiving this salvation, which was confirmed by God. This is far superior to the message spoken through the angels. Hence, it demands more careful attention. Rejecting it has eternal consequences and this must be avoided at all costs. Therefore, those listeners who were already drifting away from the faith must think twice. This is further central to the author's rhetorical strategy as will be shown in chapter six.

b) *Hypo ton akousanton eis hēmas abebaiothē*

*Hypo*, refers to; by, under, under control of, under obligation, about (BDAG 2000:1035, 1036). *Ton* on the other hand refers to; this one, that one, the (2000:686). The aorist active verb, *akousanton* on the other hand refers to; hear, grant a hearing, learn about, listen to, heed, be called, understand (2000:37, 38). The preposition *eis* with the accusative object is primarily translated as 'to' by most of the translators (Greenlee 2008:48). The KJV however translated it as 'unto' (2008:48). What is important about this is that it implies the relaying of the message to the hearers (Greenlee 2008:48). Westcott (1903:39) posited that 'the use of the preposition suggests an interval between the first preaching and the writer's reception of the message'.

The word *abebaiothē* is either an aorist passive indicative or active voice (Greenlee 2008:48). The aorist indicative refers 'to be confirmed', 'to be verified', 'to be

attested', 'to be guaranteed', 'to be made firm', 'to be delivered with assurance', 'to be passed on' (BDAG 2000:172; Greenlee 2008:48; Louw and Nida 1996:339). The active voice on the other hand refers, 'to cause to believe', 'to establish in belief' (Greenlee 2008:48; Louw and Nida 1996:376). Louw and Nida (1996:376) translated the whole phrase as 'those who heard Him caused us to be able to believe'. What is important about the aorist tense is that it indicates a completed action (Greenlee 2008:48). What is further important about *abebaiothē* like its cognate term in verse 2 (*bebaios*, binding), is its legal imagery (Allen 2010:195; Attridge 1989:67; Ellingworth 1993:141; O'Brien 2010:88). Based on this legal usage, 'the message has been proved valid, and is therefore to be relied on' (Ellingworth 1993:141). Guthrie (1998:85) on the other hand argued that 'the word "confirm" carries the sense of firm or guarantee'. In other words, the message of salvation as it was first proclaimed by the Lord, and confirmed by those who heard Him, is absolutely reliable.

What is important in this phrase is that the author makes it clear that neither he nor his listeners heard the message of salvation directly from the Lord (Guthrie 1998:85; Koester 2001:211; O'Brien 2010:88; Vanhoye 2011:97). This is based on the word *hēmas* (us), which also includes the author himself with his hearers who heard (*ton akousanton*) the message from the Christian ear-witnesses. This passage does not make clear whether these Christian ear-witnesses were either the apostles or other ear-witnesses who had heard the Lord (Allen 2010:195; Grudem 1994:367; O'Brien 2010:88). Both are plausible as there were many other witnesses of the message proclaimed by Lord. Clearly, the author's main focus here was on the message of salvation which was initiated by the Lord, and not the people and their offices who proclaimed this message (Allen 2010:195).

What the author wants to relay to his listeners is that this message of salvation they heard from Christian witnesses is the same message that was initiated by God through the Lord (Koester 2001:211). O'Brien (2010:88) posited that 'though others brought the message of salvation, the true mediator of the message is the Son Himself, which is the whole point of the prologue and this paragraph'. This is a very important assertion by the O'Brien to these listeners. Thus, drifting away will be rejecting the message, whose source is God the father and the agent is the God

Man, the Lord (see Heb 1-2). These believers have no better choice but to consider this message valid and hence deserving more abundant attention.

What is further important about the above analysis is that the author was reminding the listeners how their faith began. Based on this the author wanted these listeners to remember all the great experiences when they first heard message of salvation. This was further going to give them courage to hold fast to their confession even in the midst of sufferings.

c) *Synepimartyrountos tou theou sēmeion te kai terasin kai poikilas dynamesin kai pneumatou hagiou merismois kata tēn autou thelēsēsin*

The author did not end that the message was confirmed by the ear-witnesses, but ultimately God testified to it through supernatural miracles. The present active participle, *synepimartyrountos* used by the author in this verse refers 'to add one's witness to', 'to witness together with', 'to testify at the same time' (BDAG 2000:969; Louw and Nida 1996:417). This word is only used by the author of Hebrews in the whole of NT and does not also appear in the LXX (Allen 2010:196; O'Brien 2010:89; Attridge 1989:67n.59). This excludes the cognate usage which appears twelve times in the Hebrews and in NT texts. The word 'renders testified' (O'Brien 2010:89). To O'Brien (2010:89) this unusual compound participle 'may be used in semitechnical legal sense to speak of God's corroboration of the testimony to His salvation'. In other words, the first hearers of the message of salvation from the Lord were not alone, but God also confirmed this message of salvation. What is important about this confirmation is that it was not based on legal terms, but verbal speech.

Instead God confirmed the message of salvation by signs (*sēmeion*), wonders (*terasin*), various miracles (*poikilas dynamesin*) and gifts (*merismois*). The use of these supernatural miracles are not accidental, but are designed to spur the believers for renewed commitment to the faith. Probably they had intimate experience of these miracles when the message of salvation was first proclaimed to them by the ear-witnesses (Cockerill 2012:122). During the apostolic age, these manifestations were common after the proclamation of the Good News (see Acts 2:43; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12; Rom 15:19) as it was during the Lord's ministry (e.g. John 20:29-31; Acts 2:19, 22).

God also redeemed the Israelites to the Promised Land from Egypt slavery through signs and wonders (Exod. 7:3, 9; 11:9-19; Deut. 4:34; 6:22; Ps 135:9; Jer 32:20-21). Signs and wonders were also important during Israel's history 'with true prophecy' (Is. 8:18; 20:3). O'Brien (2010:90) argued that 'by mentioning that God had corroborated the message of salvation through 'signs and wonders', our author is assuring his friends that what had been done in their midst *was part and parcel of God's gracious redemptive activity*, an activity that has been effected through Moses at the exodus, the prophets, and the saving ministry of Jesus and his apostles'.

In the NT times (see Matt 11:10; 14:2; 15:38; Mark 6:4; 1 Cor 12:10, 28; Gal 3:5) signs and wonders were also associated with various kinds of supernatural acts. Further, this was pointing to divine activity. Also the activity of the Holy Spirit was associated with signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; Rom 15:19). The mention of these four supernatural acts by the author of Hebrews is not accidental, but what these believers knew based on personal experiences (Cockerill 2012:122). Through these supernatural acts the message of salvation initiated by the Son was proved to be indeed valid and reliable (O'Brien 2010:90). Further, these experiences were clear signs that the believers were now living in the last days. They no longer lived under condemnation, and they were free indeed by the grace of God. The devil no longer had control over their lives, since Christ was now in control of all things. How then can they escape such a great salvation? Their only choice is indeed to go '... back to those foundation events, to encourage them to remember God's saving acts in history (Deut. 6:20-24; John 20:30-31), then the members of this congregation should realize that God has spoken to them decisively in Christ' (O'Brien 2010:90). O'Brien (2010:90; citing Johnson) further argued that 'they are "faced with a reality and a demand - from which they cannot truly escape"'.

So, the author in this passage exhorts his listeners to pay careful attention to the message of salvation that they heard. This is grounded on the deity of Christ, incarnation and His works. Based on His deity, the listeners are required to pay careful attention to the message of salvation. Christ is the source of this salvation, and neglecting it results in severe consequences, even worse than for those who disobeyed the Law of Moses. Based on His suffering and solidarity with humanity,

believers are encouraged to hold fast to the faith. Christ actively obeyed till His eventual shameful death on the cross, and therefore the listeners can follow His example. As co-heirs with Christ, if they hold fast till the end, they are assured of inheriting salvation.

As briefly mentioned in the various sections above, this exegetical study has revealed six aspects of faith. In the hypothesis it was claimed that there were six aspects of faithfulness addressed by the author in this epistle in order to persuade believers to renewed commitment to their Christian faith. Therefore to prove this, it is important that these aspects are further discussed. The next section below will therefore focus on these six aspects of faith.

### **5.3 The Aspects of Faith in Hebrews 2:1-4**

#### **5.3.1 How Faith Begins**

The author in Hebrews 2:3b-4 reminds his listeners how their faith began. They heard the message of salvation from the Christian ear-witnesses to the Lord who is the pioneer and the founder of this salvation. Also this message was attested to by God through supernatural acts. As a result, they no longer live under condemnation since Christ has defeated the devil and freed believers from the fear of death. This was made possible because of Christ's nature, as God Man and His sacrificial work on the cross. Throughout this epistle, the author describes in detail how Christ founded salvation.

Reminding his audience by describing how their faith began was intentional considering the status of the audience at that time. Because of social pressures, probable these listeners had forgotten the beginnings and supernatural experiences associated with their Christian faith. So reciting this truth to this Christian community was critical to convince them of renewed commitment to the faith.

### **5.3.2 Maintenance of Faith**

The exegetical study has revealed that paying careful attention means remaining tightly attached, anchored (Heb 2:1). This is the maintenance of faith which is the second aspect of faith. This does not mean that the strong currents of the sea will cease, but since believers are firmly attached they will be able to withstand these strong currents. This is true, as they will not only listen and heed the message of salvation, but they will apply it in their Christian lives. This message of salvation was an integral part of their lives during the early stages of their Christian walk, and without it there was nothing they could do. During the second stage of development, these believers remained firmly attached to the anchor, and as a result the strong currents didn't move them.

Throughout Hebrews the author has further developed this aspect of maintaining faith. The example of Christ's faithfulness, obedience and perseverance even in the midst of hardships and sufferings has been expounded by the author (see Heb 3:1-6; Heb 12:1-11). The positive examples of faith by the Israelites' heroes of faith were also central (see Heb 6:9-20; 10:32-39; 11:1-40). The positive example of their leaders is also used by the author to encourage his listeners to maintain their faith (see Heb 13:7). Mutual love and encouragement is another aspect of maintaining faith. Believers are being exhorted to encourage one another (Heb 3:12-14). They must be concerned for one another as the community of believers (Heb 12:15-16). This is not new to the believers, as they have shown mutual love and encouragement for one another in the past (Heb 6:10; 10:32-34). Therefore, the believers are encouraged and instructed that they must revitalise the same kind of solidarity they once showed.

They belong in one big family of God, and like Christ they must exhibit the same concern for fellow brethren. Christ, as senior brother, sacrificed all for their sake. Therefore they must follow His example and care for one another as long as they live. This caring for one another includes both reproof and encouragement (O'Brien 2010:148). This is exactly what the author is aiming to achieve with this sermon, and

they must do likewise (see Heb 13:22). This is not done by choice, but is a requirement within the family of God (see O'Brien 2010:148).

### **5.3.3 The Key Ingredients for the Maintenance of Faith**

The author, when exhorting his listeners to hold fast to the confession of faith, employed words such as listen and hear. This is another aspect of faith which is the key ingredient for maintaining of faith. In other words, without listening and hearing, one would not be able to maintain faith. In Hebrews 2:1, this is evident as the author calls his listeners to pay more careful attention to what they have heard. Using the word "heard" is not accidental in this passage, as already argued during the detailed exegesis above. The theme of hearing in Hebrews 2:1-4 demands attentiveness and complete submission to the message of salvation.

This theme of hearing is further developed by the author in other passages in Hebrews (see Heb 3:7-4:13; 5:11). The author in Hebrews 3:7-8, exhorted his listeners to hear God's voice and not to harden their hearts. O'Brien (2010:140) wrote that, 'hearing His voice is not limited simple to listening audible, but also involves paying attention to what is said and obeying Him (Matt. 11:15; 13:9)'. In Hebrews 5:11 the author told his listeners that although he had much to tell them, it was difficult, as they became lazy to hear. Clearly, this further indicates that without the capacity and vitality to hear, this has serious implications for the maintenance of faith. It is therefore clear that when believers willingly listen to God's voice, this draws them closer to God and they become spiritually mature. This ensures that believers are able to obey God like Christ. Other key ingredients for the maintenance of faith in addition to hearing include spiritual maturity (Heb 6:1-2), peace and holiness (Heb 12:14-17) and acceptable worship to God (Heb 12:28-29; 13:1-21). All of these key ingredients are central to being able to maintain the faith. So, these ingredients as shown by the author throughout Hebrews are necessary for the believers in their journey to the city of God.

### **5.3.4 Promises and Rewards**

Maintenance of faith is not without promises and rewards according to the author of Hebrews. The author encourages his listeners to hold fast to their confession of faith as this assures them of eternal rewards. In Hebrews 2:1-4, the author did not explicitly describe the promises and rewards associated with maintenance of faith. However, it was mentioned during the exegesis that the legal term 'reward' has both a positive and a negative connotation. The author in this passage used it negatively as he was warning the listeners against drifting away, but the positive connotation is also implied. If these listeners pay careful attention to the message of salvation, there are positive rewards that await them in heaven.

The great salvation (Heb 2:3) as used by the author has an eschatological connotation. This is further strengthened by the fact that the message of salvation in Hebrews as argued in the exegesis encompasses both the words and deeds of Christ. Christ's message of salvation, although it did focus on the then age, ultimately was the promise of an eternal future (see Matt 4:17; 5:20; 7:21; 8:11; 12:28; 13:11, 41-43; 21:31; 25:31-46; Mark 9:47; 10:15, 23; 14:25; Luke 16:16; 17:20-21; 22:22-30; John 3:3). This was not only about being in the presence of the Lord forever, but the rewards of being a faithful servant were an integral part of His teachings (see Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27). Even the apostles continued with the same message of salvation, which was first proclaimed by the Lord (see Acts 1:6; 2:14-36; 17:2-3; 1 Rom 14:17; Cor 4:20; 6:9-11; 15:3-4; 50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 1:13; 2 Peter 1:10-12; Rev 11:15; 20; 4-6; 21-22). Therefore the promise of the eternal rewards in the author's exhortation is central. The believers were urged to pay careful attention to the message of salvation, because there were greater rewards that awaited them in heaven. So, promises and rewards are another aspect of faith in Hebrews. These rewards are further fleshed out throughout the epistle. In Hebrews 4:1, the author assures his listeners that through maintenance of faith they enter God's rest.

### 5.3.5 Feature of Neglecting Faith

In Hebrews 2:1, the author used the maritime metaphor *pararyomen*. This metaphor is the feature concerned with neglecting faith. It signifies gradual and undetected slipping away from faith. Because of this the listeners were in this particular danger which could eventually mean losing their faith. The author in other warning passages employs different metaphors which make this feature of neglecting faith even more vivid and serious (see Heb 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:26-39; 12:14-29). In Hebrews 3:7-19, the author used different terms based on the unbelief of the wilderness generation. This Christian community was in danger of falling into the same trap of disobedience and unbelief as the wilderness generation, the Kadesh-Barnea experience (see Num 14:1-39; Duet 1:34-38). This is clear from the author's use of Psalm 95:7-11 which depicts the neglect of faith. They are warned not to harden their hearts like the wilderness generation (Allen 2010: 257; Cockerill 1998:89; O'Brien 2010:141). If this Christian community were to harden their hearts they would be rebelling against the will of God, like the wilderness generation.

Another feature of neglecting faith includes: 'dull of hearing' (Heb 5:11); 'falling away' (Heb 6:6); 'sluggish' (Heb 6:12), 'shrinking back' (Heb 10:39). Dull of hearing indicates that the listeners are not just mentally lazy, but they are spiritually resistant to listening (O'Brien 2010:206). This is due to their unwillingness to 'work out the deeper implications of the gospel in their lives' (O'Brien 2010:206). This involves their response both with faith and obedience, but these Christians at this stage are spiritually lethargic (Lane 1998:136). Therefore they are not ready for solid food but for milk, as they are like children (Heb 5:12-14). They have been Christians for a length of time, but are not growing spiritually. The next phrase "falling away" is associated with rejecting the faith and God. Shrinking back (Heb 10:38-39) shows the believers lack of steadfastness and reliability (Allen 2010:534; Lane 1998:306; O'Brien 2010:392). Shrinking back within the context of Hebrews is believed to be a cognate term with turning away from the living God (Heb 3:12) or deliberate persistence of sin (Heb 10:26). Therefore this refers to rejecting both the faith and God.

### **5.3.6 Consequences of Neglecting Faith**

The last aspect of faith is the consequences of neglecting faith. Neglecting faith has serious consequences to the Christian community. Hence the author does not only identify the features of neglecting faith, but also warns them of the consequences. In Hebrews 2:1-4, the author tells his listeners that if they drift away from the faith they are assured of retribution. To highlight this, the author drew from the example of how God dealt with the wilderness generation in the old dispensation because of disobedience. Therefore, in the new dispensation the listeners should expect even more severe punishment. It was further clear during the exegesis that this punishment has the implication of eternal judgment (see also Heb 3:7-4:13).

Hebrews 10:26-39, gives an even sterner warning for those “who have trampled the Son of God underfoot” (Heb 10:29, NIV). According to the author, “anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Heb 10:28, NIV). The only thing left for those rejecting all that the Son of God has done, is to, “expect only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God” (Heb 10:27, NIV). In Hebrews 10:31, the author further said that “it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”. It is beyond doubt that those who drift away and eventually fall short are assured of eternal judgment. In Hebrews 12:14-29, the author repeats the stern warning and associated consequences of rejecting God.

It is thus clear that these aspects of faith were central in the author’s strategy to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers. The believers had only two options to choose from, either to hold fast to the confession of faith or reject the faith. There are rewards (consequences) for both options. Holding fast to the confession of faith will ensure that these believers inherit salvation. Rejecting the faith on the other hand, will result in these believers being rewarded by punishment which might result in eschatological death. The positive example of Christ’s faith and endurance, which resulted in Him being crowned with honour and glory, is their encouragement. The negative examples of the wilderness generation signal a stern warning to the believers. The believers have all the support they need to be able to hold fast to the

confession of faith till the end of their race. Christ, as their merciful and faithful high priest, is able to help them through their sufferings and hardships. Therefore they must fix their eyes on Him and follow His example. Further, as the family of God, they are required to support one another in their journey to the city of God following Christ's example. Therefore, the life of faith and endurance till the end was achievable for these believers. The Israelite heroes of faith demonstrated this faith, so there is nothing that can stop the listeners. They must forget about the temporary hardships and sufferings, and instead focus on what awaits them in the eschatological future. Their senior brother wants the listeners to follow His example, since they are then assured of receiving their inheritance.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the theme of faith in Hebrews. A detailed grammatical historical exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4 has been done. This commenced with examination of the immediate context (Heb 1:1-14; 2:5-18). This step helped to understand the basis of the author's exhortation in Hebrews 2:1-4. The next step examined the internal structure of Hebrews 2:1-4, focusing both on the syntactical and semantical issues of the passage. This further provided the basis to systematically conduct detailed clause by clause exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4. This then concluded with a summary of the six aspects of faith in Hebrews.

It was evident from the study that the author based his warning and exhortation on the superiority of Christ as God Man. The superiority of Christ as God and Lord over the angels demanded that the listeners pay more abundant attention to the message of salvation. His superiority over angels as a man both demanded and encouraged the believers to pay more abundant attention to the message of salvation. The result of paying more careful attention to the message of salvation is the inheritance of salvation. The author demanded this faithfulness and obedience from the listeners lest they drift away. The danger associated with drifting away was that the listeners would be severely punished with the possibility of eschatological death. So, to the author the best option for these listeners was to pay careful attention to the message of salvation.

## CHAPTER 6

# A CALL TO HOLD FAST TO THE CONFESSION OF FAITH: A RHETORICAL EXEGETICAL STUDY OF HEBREWS 2:1-4 WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE ROLE OF FAITH IN THE AUTHOR'S RHETORICAL STRATEGY

### 6.1 Introduction

The next step in the study is determination of the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy. The findings in chapter five are vital to achieving the objectives of this chapter. In chapter five, six aspects of faith were ascertained. It was evident that these aspects of faith played a central role in the author's rhetorical strategy. The listeners were given two choices, both impacting on the eschatological future. Either they held fast to the confession of faith or neglect and/or reject the faith. The first choice would ensure that they inherit salvation. The second choice would result in severe punishment and possibly eschatological death.

In this chapter, the focus is on the author's rhetorical strategy and how he wove the theme of faith to achieve his purpose. In other words, how effective were the use of the two choices of faith in meeting the author's rhetorical goal? It has been established already that the author's goal was to convince his listeners to give renewed commitment in the Christian faith. So, the role of faith is central to achieving this rhetorical goal. Therefore, to achieve the objectives of this chapter, classical Greco-Roman rhetorical analysis based on Kennedy's modified procedure has been adopted (1984:33-37). The following sections will therefore employ this modified procedure as described in chapter three.

## **6.2 Detailed Rhetorical Exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4**

### **6.2.1 Rhetorical Unit of Hebrews 2:1-4**

Determining how a passage fits within a rhetorical unit is a critical step in rhetorical analysis. This helps in determining the effect of the text on its original audience (Kennedy 1984:33). So, to establish the overall author's strategy in Hebrews 2:1-4, the study will consider Hebrews 1:1-14 and 2:5-18. What is important about this rhetorical unit is that Hebrews 2:1-4 is an exhortation, while the surrounding sections (Heb 1:1-14 and 2:5-18) are expositions. In other words, Hebrews 1:1-14 and 2:5-18 are the grounds of the exhortation (Heb 2:1-4). Therefore, the effect of the author's exhortation in Hebrews 2:1-4 can only be established by considering the overall argument of the rhetorical unit.

In both Hebrews 1:1-14 and 2:5-18, the author wove the inartificial proof (OT quotations) and artificial proofs (ethos, logic and pathos). These proofs were necessary in order for the author to convince his listeners to hold fast to the confession of faith (Heb 2:1-4). First, looking at the ethos, the author relied on the paternal ethos of God as father (Peeler 2010:43-47). In Hebrews 1, the author focused on God's familial relationship with His first born Son. In Hebrews 2:5-18 the focus was on God's relationship with His adopted children. What is important about this familial relationship is that God has parallel goals for all His children (Peeler 2010:46). In other words, like the first born Son, the adopted children were also destined for honour and glory (see Heb 2:9, 10). This implies that they will need to be perfected through suffering in faith and endurance, before they attain these eternal rewards (Heb 2:10). So, like their senior brother they are required to be faithful and to endure in suffering till the end. Further, like their senior brother, God has a keen interest in their lives, and hence is actively involved in ensuring that they attain the glory and honour.

Secondly, the author draws heavily on logic as part of his argumentative strategy. He compares Jesus with various renowned personages, including angels, Moses, Joshua, the Levitical priests, and Melchizedek to prove His superiority and therefore

His higher status (Olbricht 1993:375; 2002:355). In Hebrews 1:1-14 and 2:1-18, the author founded his argument on the superiority of the Son over angels, and exhorted his listeners to hold fast to the confession of faith. Lastly, the author appeals to emotions (i.e. pathos). In both Hebrews 1:1-14 and 2:1-18, the author arouses several emotions such confidence, hope and fear in his listeners (Gorman 2012:79-81). The ultimate purpose in inducing these emotions is so that the listeners are disposed to the author and are eager to pay attention to his speech. This becomes even more important, if the author, as part of his speech, is going to challenge his audience to take action regarding their situation. The following sections will help to establish the effectiveness of the author's strategy in Hebrews 2:1-4 to persuade his audience to hold fast to the confession of faith.

### **6.2.2 Rhetorical Genre of Hebrews 2:1-4**

In chapter two, the literary and rhetorical genres of Hebrews were described. In terms of the literary genre, it was concluded that Hebrews is a *paranaetic* homily. Hence the primary purpose is to exhort the listeners to make a renewed commitment to their Christian faith. He achieved this by interweaving both the exposition and exhortation sections. Looking at the rhetorical genre of this *paranaetic* homily, it was concluded that the author wove both the epideictic and deliberative speeches.

In Hebrews 2:1-4, both the epideictic and deliberative genre of speeches are employed. As already concluded in chapter two, it is not helpful to identify which genre is taking priority, as this is dependent on the audience (DeSilva 2000:57; Koester 2001:82). To those who still have a firm commitment to their faith, Hebrews is epideictic. The author's purpose is for them to maintain the present values. On the other hand to those who are drifting away from the faith, it is a deliberative speech. The author's purpose is to dissuade them from this sinful habit, and persuade them to reaffirm their Christian faith. It is therefore sufficient to conclude that even in our current passage, both the epideictic and deliberative are present. Prioritising either one of these speeches will indeed be a fruitless exercise. What is therefore important in this study is that Hebrews is a *paranaetic* homily. The author based his argumentative elements and strategies on classical Greco-Roman rhetorical

practices. His ultimate goal was to convince his listeners to renewed commitment to their Christian faith. It will be evident in the sections below how the author achieved this goal in Hebrews 2:1-4.

### **6.2.3 Rhetorical Situation**

With the understanding of the rhetorical unit and the genre of Hebrews, the next step is definition of the rhetorical situation. Two issues will be investigated as part of the rhetorical situation. The first issue is the implied situation of the listeners. The second issue is the ethos of the matter.

#### *6.2.3.1 The Ethos of the Listeners*

The socio-historical situation of the first listeners was described in chapter two. During stage three, because of the social pressures, these listeners were demoralised, lacked zeal and suffered from spiritual malaise (Asumang 2014:43). These believers started to drift away from the faith, and also neglected to support those in need within the Christian community. Fellowship was also forsaken. They became sluggish in hearing the Word of God (Heb 5:11). As a result, they became like children and were not growing into maturity (Heb 5:12). They were in serious danger of apostasy.

Clearly this is what the author was afraid of, and hence his solemn admonishment to the listeners to deal with this serious situation. However, in the midst of this serious situation the author had still hope for the listeners (Heb 6:9). Some continued to do good works even in the midst of sufferings and hardships, which was pleasing to God (Heb 6:9-10). So, the author saw fit to exhort the listeners to pay careful attention to the message of salvation. This included encouraging them to continue supporting one another as they had done before. They had to continue with the good works till the end of their race. This required faith and endurance from the believers in the midst of sufferings and hardship. In Hebrews 6:12, the author tells his listeners that they were to achieve this by imitating those who through faith and patience inherited the promises.

So, spurring these listeners to follow the positive examples of faith is central to the author's rhetorical strategy. This is even more evident in Hebrews 11:1-12:3. But, his overall argumentative strategy is built around the Christology, and this is maintained throughout Hebrews. This includes Christ as the Son and as the high priest. What is important in the author's strategy is his focus on 'the more advanced implications of the Christian confession, the perfect teaching' (Übelacker 2005:319). To the author, elementary teachings of the Christian faith would be fruitless to convince these listeners, and only advanced teachings would be effective (Heb 6:1-3). In other words, the seriousness of the listeners' situation required advanced teachings to actively and effectively transform their worsening condition of faith, especially with some on the brink of apostasy. So, based on this, the author was constant in spurring the listeners to renewed commitment to Christian faith. Painting the dire consequences of sleepwalking into apostasy was one of his key strategies. Thus he addressed holding on to the faith as a way of avoiding this danger.

#### *6.2.3.2 The Ethos of the Matter*

Another important issue in mapping the rhetorical situation of Hebrews is the ethos of the matter. Übelacker (2005:321; citing George A. Kennedy) wrote that 'the ethos of the matter concerns the reputability of the case defined'. So, based on the author's knowledge of the listener's complex situation, does it really warrants being taken seriously as valid? In other words, is the author's fear of the situation reputable so that the listeners would take heed and take action to change it? Übelacker (2005:321) posited that 'already in the opening sentence of Hebrews the author actually tells his addressees that the matter he is coming to discuss has the higher degree of authority, validity, and importance, since it is the God of their father who is speaking in these last days'. This matter is very crucial and urgent according to the author, as it concerns the very eternal life of the listeners (2005:321). In chapter five, it was argued that eschatology is a central theme of Hebrews. Whatever decision the believers took regarding their faith would have an impact on their eternal life.

The meaningfulness and effectiveness of the author's argument based on the ethos of the matter depends on the believers' regarding it as a priority and of the highest

goal in their lives (Übelacker 2005:321). This is the assumption that we need to make, otherwise the author's argument would have been fruitless (2005:321). In chapter five, it was argued that the message of salvation includes everything that these believers were taught. This was based on what Christ taught, and then the apostles' message based on what Christ said and did. The eternal life of believers was central both in Christ's teachings and also to the apostles. Therefore, there is a strong possibility that eternal life was also the highest goal and priority for these believers. During the second stage of their development, there were clear indications of this. They were prepared to suffer and lose everything because of their hope in eternity with Christ. Even during stage three, while some succumb to the social pressures, there is no doubt that eternal life was still their highest goal and priority. This is true even though at this stage they needed to be strengthened and motivated as they were moving forward to the city of God. The fact that the author rooted his argument in the Word of God further strengthens this.

Based on this, the matter was a 'common and accepted tradition' within this Christian community (Übelacker 2005:321). Therefore, for the author to focus on it was the only effective way to convince these listeners to renewed commitment to the Christian faith. Christ's superiority both as the Son and the high priest was central to author's argument, as he addressed the matter. What is even more important is that it was only through Christ that they would be able to come near to God and live with Him forever in eternity. So, the author's argument based on Christ's superiority both as fully God and fully human was pivotal to achieving his rhetorical goal. The fact that Christ is far greater than the renowned personages was the author's strategy to build the reputability of the matter (Übelacker 2005:321-322).

Based on the rhetorical situation there is no doubt that the author was dealing with a very serious and complex situation. This situation had important implications for the believers' eternal lives. The detailed exegesis of Hebrew 2:1-4 in chapter five sheds some further light on the situation of the listeners. The nautical metaphor *pararyomen* (drift or slip) describes the situation of these believers, and then we are to think of them as slowly moving away from a life of vibrant faith. That is quite an important description, because it explains the author's attempt to jolt the

hearers with the warnings. So, the situation of drift may well represent the situation of intellectual assent to the Word of God without deep-rooted heartfelt commitment to it. Therefore, it needed to be urgently and effectively dealt with. This would ensure that the believers remained on track in their faith journey to the city of God. So, in order to reverse the situation the author had to formulate his argumentative strategy based on advanced teachings of Christian belief. The comparison of Christ both as the Son and the high priest with different personages was his effective and persuasive strategy.

#### **6.2.4 Rhetorical Problem**

The interest in this step is in ascertaining what would have hindered the author in achieving his rhetorical goal. In chapter two (i.e. section 2.2.1.4) issues such as the author's authority, his influence, being trusted by the listeners, his relationship with the listeners, his pastoral heart as well as his great concern for the listeners' wellbeing have been described in greater length. Further, his knowledge of the OT (LXX) which was the tradition of the listeners was also described. This further earned him respect from the listeners. It is sometimes argued that the author wrote from prison (Asumang 2007:16; DeSilva 2000:27). Certainly there is an indication that he shared in the experience of suffering which his listeners were also undergoing. If this is true it would have given him and his message credibility and authenticity with his hearers. Therefore, based on the author's benevolence and ethos, there was nothing that could have hindered him in achieving his rhetorical goal. The audience would have gladly listened and responded positively to the author's exhortations and warnings.

Another important issue at this stage is to ascertain how the author perceived and handled the situation (Übelacker 2005:322-326). This is critical, as it could have affected the listeners' response as the author addressed their situation. What is further critical in this is that the listeners also had their own expectations (Kennedy 1984:36). Anything contrary to their expectations might not be acceptable to them. Therefore, the audience would not respond positively to the author's exhortations and warnings. Übelacker (2005:322-326), has described in detail how the author

perceived and handled this situation of the listeners. Firstly, the author treated the listeners as still an integral part of the family of God. The listeners were still the chosen people (3:1, 14; 4:9). They are Jesus's brothers and sisters (Heb 2:11). That is why he sees them as children of God (Heb 2:16; 6:12). The author also calls them brothers and sisters (Heb 3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22). Therefore, although they are in this serious situation, to the author they are still part of the family, because of their salvation. To him, because of the listeners' situation, they need "inspiration and encouragement" to be able to reach their destiny and attain their rewards.

It has already been mentioned that in achieving this, the author, focused on Christ as the Son and the high priest. He developed this throughout the sermon, comparing Christ with different renowned personages, and proving that indeed Christ is much superior. Further, the author in his argument exhorted his listeners to keep certain good habits (Übelacker 2005:323). According to Übelacker, habits in antiquity were pivotal in developing ethos (2005:23). So, when the author focused first on good habits, like good works (Heb 6:10) and hospitality (Heb 13:1-7), he was advancing the ethos of these listeners. Jesus as well developed His ethos as God Man through habits, in His case obedience to and complete trust in God, even suffering was central. Therefore, it was critical that these listeners practise these good habits. Further, the author in several instances (see Heb 6:10, 12; 12:1-3, 14; 13:7) exhorted the listeners to imitate good examples or pursue good behaviours. To the author, Christ, who remained faithful and obedient till the end, is the believers' ultimate example. As a result, Christ attained the promises of God and is now seated at the right hand of God. Therefore, the listeners must follow His example. They are assured of their promise, as Christ has already attained it for them, provided they run the race of faith till the end. Further, the author throughout the sermon (e.g. Heb 3:12, 18, 19; 4:6, 11; 12:15-17; 13:9) exhorts the listeners not to imitate bad examples or pursue bad behaviours as these were going to lead them only into destruction. Also, in Hebrews 2:1-4 the author reminds them of the positive start of the fellowship. He also contrasts them positively with the exodus generation, thus implicitly demanding of them a better response of faith than that generation.

Another important strategy of the author as he convinces his listeners to make a renewed commitment to faith is drawing on what they are familiar with (Übelacker 2005:324). In Hebrews 2:1-4, he exhorts them to pay careful attention to what they have heard. There are also other many examples of this exhortation by the author throughout the sermon (see Heb 3:19; 4:1, 14; 7:26; 8:1; 10:19-22, 30; 12:2, 17). Further, the author draws on the listeners 'presumed knowledge', this is clear from Hebrews 1:1-2a (Übelacker 2005:325). Also his extensive use of OT texts and the history of Israel including its value systems, further presume that they are familiar with these traditions. While the author understands the situation and the danger (Heb 6:4-6) of his listeners, faith and endurance (Heb 10:36-39) is their solution (Übelacker 2005:325). This is the habit they need to pursue all the days of their lives, as it is the only licence for eternal life, which is their highest goal. That is why in Hebrews 2:1-4, the author calls his listeners to pay careful attention to the message of salvation. As already argued in chapter five, this would ensure that the listeners completely submit to the message of salvation. Even more importantly, the message of salvation becomes their priority by taking heed of its teachings all the days of their lives. The implication of this would be that the listeners have a strong relationship with God through their unwavering faith and commitment to the message of great salvation. This is clearly what the author was trying to inculcate in the believers' minds. They had to make a cognisant decision to be faithful and obedient to God and Christ till the end. As sufferings and hardships were reality, however, paying careful attention to the message of salvation was absolute. Hence the need for faith and endurance were the believer's obligation based on Christ's superiority as God Man (Heb 1:1-2:18).

What is therefore clear based on the author's ethos and how he handled the complex situation is that the listeners most probably responded positively to his warnings and exhortations. He treated them as part of his spiritual family, showing heartfelt concern for their wellbeing and destiny. Further, his handling of their situation, encouraging them to continually practise good habits contributed to their positive response. Basing his arguments on what they were familiar with was an effective strategy. Therefore, the only thing that could have hindered the listeners from changing their ways was sinful and hardened hearts due to their wilful disobedience. As a skilful and

an effective orator, the author made the environment conducive for those who were open to his exhortations to hold fast to the confession of faith. To the author it was simple, what awaited the listeners in the eschatological future was far better than their current situation. Therefore, they must follow the example of Christ, which is faith and endurance, as they run the race of faith till the end.

### **6.2.5 The Rhetorical Invention of Hebrews 2:1-4**

Another important issue in our rhetorical study is the examination of the three rhetorical appeals (i.e. logic, ethos, and pathos). The interplay of these three rhetorical elements provides the required persuasive effect in the author's argumentative strategy. In other words, these appeals will shed some light whether the author succeeded in persuading the listeners to hold fast to the confession of faith. Therefore, in this section the focus will be on how the author employed these appeals in Hebrews 2:1-4 to achieve his rhetorical goal. The specific interest is the role of the theme of faith in the author's strategy.

#### *6.2.5.1 Appeal to Logic*

The author's argument in Hebrews 2:1-4 was that if those who disobeyed the Law of Moses were punished, the listeners must expect even more severe punishment, if they neglect and/or reject the message of salvation. The author in Hebrews 1:1-14, has already proved beyond doubt that while the angels are noble, Christ is far better than the angels. He is the Son of God and all things are under His subjection. Further, the author also proved the superiority of Christ, as the believers' high priest (Heb 2:5-18). Therefore the author's appeal in Hebrews 2:1-4 is based on tangible logical proofs.

The persuasive effect of the author's appeal in this passage is further strengthened by the use of OT (LXX) texts. It has already been argued that the OT (LXX) texts were accepted as an authoritative and integral part of the traditions of this Christian community. Therefore, the author's dependence on the OT texts as the inartificial proofs was effective in convincing the listeners to make a renewed

commitment to the Christian faith. The author's exhortation (Heb 2:1), to pay careful attention to the message of salvation should have therefore been taken seriously by the listeners. The superiority of Christ based on Hebrews 1 demanded that the listeners take action. While the superiority of Christ as the high priest motivated and strengthened them to make the right decision, in their case, they had to maintain the faith by paying careful attention to the message of salvation. This would guarantee them to attain eternal rewards. Drifting away on the other hand, would have resulted in them being severely punished with the possibility of eschatological death. So, evidently, the author persuasively convinced the listeners that it was only faith that would guarantee them eternal rewards. In other words, through faith God guaranteed to fulfil His promises of eternal rewards to the listeners. Therefore, faith, in the author's rhetorical strategy, was the deciding factor on where the listeners would spend their eternity. The author was simply saying to them, you are assured of eternal destiny, but you must play your part. Make a conscious decision to remain faithful and obedient to God and Christ till you reach your destiny which is Mount Zion, the city of God.

#### *6.2.5.2 Appeal to Ethos*

It has already been mentioned that the author in his argument primarily relied on God's character to convince the listeners to make a renewed commitment to the Christian faith. This gave persuasive effect to the author's rhetorical strategy as the believers trusted God. This was further strengthened by their familial relationship with God as their Father (see Heb 2:5-18). Further, the author in his warning and exhortation in Hebrews 2:1-4 identifies with the listeners. This is clear in Hebrews 2:1 and 2:3 where the author uses plural including himself. Based on this solidarity, the listeners would trust the author, and be disposed to his warning and exhortation.

Based on the character of God, the listeners were again commanded to pay careful attention to the message of salvation. Doing the opposite would mean that they 'deny the integrity of God's character' (Koester 2010:628). Also, they were commanded to pay careful attention, as God their Father disciplines His children

for wrongdoing, and also as part of His eternal goal. The ultimate goal of this discipline is that they would be perfected in preparation for their eternity with God. This should have further strengthened and encouraged them to maintain their faith. Further, the ethos of God motivated the listeners to maintain their faith. The author in Hebrews 1-2, and throughout Hebrews, presented God as the loving and caring Father. God as the Father wants His children to spend eternity with Him. Therefore, the listeners would have confidence and be motivated to maintain their faith. The author's identification with the listeners and his knowledge of their tradition also motivated them. The listeners, based on this, would have been convinced that indeed the author only wished the best for them. It is again clear, based on the ethos that the role of faith is to ensure that the listeners' attain their destiny. The author used the ethos of God to show the listeners that if they maintained their faith were guaranteed to spend eternity with their loving and caring Father. So, what separated these listeners from spending eternity with their Father was their condition of faith. This is further confirms the key role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy.

#### *6.2.5.3 Appeal to Pathos*

The author of Hebrews throughout the sermon appealed to the emotions of the listeners as part of his persuasive strategy (Gorman 2012). In Hebrews 2:1-4, he appealed to the emotions of confidence, hope and fear. These are all related to the theme of faith in the letter. Based on a *fortiori* argument, the author triggers the emotion of fear in the listeners (Gorman 2012:81). If the wilderness generation was punished for its disobedience during the Mosaic Law, the listeners were to expect even greater punishment if they neglected the great salvation. The allusion to the OT texts was central in the author's persuasive strategy, in raising the emotions of fear in his listeners. The listeners were familiar with this tradition, and therefore they understood its reality. The author was basically replaying what their forefathers (see Heb 1:1-2a) went through in the wilderness because of their disobedience. The impact of this was compelling to the listeners, and would have

most probably created sorrow and a fear of falling into the same trap as their forefathers.

Therefore, they would have been determined to change their sinful ways. They would have chosen to pay careful attention to the message of salvation (Heb 2:1). In chapter five, it was argued that although the author did not explicitly mention that paying careful attention to the message of salvation has eternal rewards, this is implied. Thus, the author further appealed to the emotions of confidence and hope. It has been argued under the ethos of the matter that eternal life was the listeners' priority and highest goal. So, being reminded of the rewards of maintaining faith gave them confidence and hope of the reality of eternal life. What remained for them was to hold fast to the confession of faith till the end. The promise of the inheritance of salvation was guaranteed. Again, these believers were to play their part by holding fast to the confession of faith, and God would fulfil His promise. This further helped the listeners to see life differently, even in the midst of their sufferings. There was no doubt in their minds that it was only faith and endurance that were going to ensure that the promised eternal rewards were realised. Therefore, they had no other choice but to reaffirm their faith and move forward to a heavenly homeland with confidence and hope of eschatological future.

It is clear based on the examination of invention that the author as a highly skilled rhetorician wove the three artificial proofs as well as the inartificial proof (i.e. OT (LXX) texts) to achieve his rhetorical goal. The interplay of these proofs, make the author's argumentation more effective, both appealing and demanding that the listeners take action based on the current situation. So, based on these proofs the listeners' best choice was to hold fast to the confession of faith till the end. The eternal life, which was their highest goal, was guaranteed provided they maintained their faith. Faith and endurance was therefore the answer for this hope of eternal life with all its benefit to be realised.

## 6.2.6 The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews 2:1-4

This step in the analysis of Hebrews 2:1-4 focuses on subdivision, and on how it meets (or fails to meet) the rhetorical situation (Kennedy 1984:37; cf. Aune 2003). To achieve this, a clause by clause analysis of Hebrews 2:1-4 will be carried out (Kennedy 1984:37). This will include 'its assumptions, its topics, and its formal features, such as enthymemes, and of the devices of style, seeking to define their function in context' (1984:37). Kennedy (1984:37) further posited that 'this process will reveal how the raw material has been worked out or rhetorically amplified both in context and in style'. Below is a rhetorical analysis of Hebrews 2:1-4, taking into account the aforementioned important issues;

### 6.2.6.1 Clause by Clause Analysis

In chapter five it was concluded that the author presented two choices of faith and associated eternal consequences to the listeners. The author in presenting the two choices extensively employed several key rhetorical devices. His ultimate goal was to convince his listeners to make changes to their situation. In other words, the author's aim was to reignite the zeal and passion of the listeners' faith in the midst of sufferings and hardships. They had to be attentive once again to the message of salvation, and live accordingly.

In the beginning of Hebrews 2:1, the author employed the transitional phrase "*dia touto*". This phrase, as already argued in chapter five, connects Hebrews 1:1-14 with this exhortation (Heb 2:1-4). So, based on the superiority of Christ as the Son and the Lord, the author 'draws a logical conclusion (*dia touto*) ...' (DeSilva 2000:103). Rhetorically, this conjunction plays an important role in the author's persuasive strategy. The author in Hebrews 1 has convincingly proved that Christ was indeed far greater than the renowned angels. Therefore, the significance of *dia touto* was to draw the listener's attention to what the author was about to say in Hebrews 2:1-4. In other words, the stern warning and exhortation in Hebrews 2:1-4 is based on the fact that the listeners accepted that Christ was superior (Crowson 2000:18). The role of *dei* in Hebrews 2:1 is to provide the force of this warning and exhortation. Crowson

(2000:18) posited that 'the force of the word is such that the Christian must not view this as something optional to him'.

Therefore, the warning and exhortation that follows was obligatory. The listeners needed to take it seriously and act decidedly with clear minds of what awaited them based on their decisions. Their hope of eternal destiny was on the line. Hence it was prudent and principled of them to think about the consequences of their actions and make the right choice. The fact that God joined in confirming the validity of the message of salvation through supernatural acts should have made them think carefully about their decisions (Heb 2:4); more especially knowing how He dealt with the wilderness generation (Heb 2:2). The listeners had personal experiences of these supernatural acts. Therefore, there was no doubt in their minds that the message of salvation was greater (Heb 2:3). Rhetorically, this had further persuasive force. It was argued that the listeners were familiar with the teachings of Christ and the apostles regarding the age to come. Therefore, they were clear on what these supernatural acts signified regarding the last days and the eschatological future. This should have indeed inspired and energised them to hold fast to the confession of faith.

Another critical issue in this passage and the overall rhetorical unit (Heb 1:1-2:18), which further strengthens the passage's persuasive effect, is the extensive use of enthymemes (Morrison 2005:10; cf. Olbricht 2002:355-361). According to Olbricht (2002:359),

The overarching claim is that the Son is prior to and superior to angels, and that in His death as human in every respect He opened up for humankind a new relationship with God as eternal high priest and sacrifice. He seeks to establish the superiority of Christ over angels on a basis, not so much of accepted commonplaces (the ground for enthymemes), but of Scripture. Of course, the conclusions, established from the Scriptural texts, now form propositions for enthymemes.

What is important is that the author's argumentative strategy informs his listeners about the doctrine and expects their actions to be in harmony with the doctrine. So, the primary purpose of the author's expositional section is for hortatory purposes

(Morrison 2005:5). This is also evident in Hebrews 1-2; the author informs the listeners about Christ, His nature and His works. In Hebrews 1:1-14, the primary claim (Heb 1:4a) made by the author is the superiority of Christ as Son and Lord over the angels. Then he provides grounds and warrants based on the catena of OT (LXX) texts in Hebrews 1:5-14 (Morrison 2005:5-9). The important assumption in Hebrews 1:1-14, is that the listeners were in agreement with the author's claim about Christ as he cited their traditions from the LXX (2005:9-10). Rhetorically, this established camaraderie between the author and his listeners. Then, 'the rhetorical purpose of this comparison can then be seen by the use the author makes of it in the parenthesis that begins chapter 2' (Morrison 2005:10).

*Dia touto*, in the beginning of Hebrews 2 draws a conclusion based on what the author has asserted in Hebrews 1:1-14 (Morrison 2005:10). Since the listeners were in agreement with the author's argument, were expected to exhibit this in their daily living. Their ways were to be in harmony with what they knew and believed about Christ and Christian belief. It is therefore based on this that the author exhorted the listeners to hold fast to the confession of faith (Heb 2:1). The message of salvation was supposed to be their focus. They were to live their daily lives accordingly and in anticipation of the eschatological future. Morrison (2005:10) posited that, 'the author wants the readers to be more attentive to a recent message of salvation than to the traditional focus of Judaism'. Simply put, the listeners were to 'look to Jesus, not the law' (Morrison 2005:11). To the author, since they were in agreement, their actions should have been in harmony with their high Christology. The author was exhorting the believers to reconsider their actions, if indeed they regarded Christ superior. The implication of this was that Christ should have been the centre of their lives. Their actions should have been informed and guided about what Christ said and did.

The contrast of the two technical nautical metaphors, *prosechein* (hold fast) and *pararyomen* (drift away) in Hebrews 2:1 was not accidental. The superiority of Christ demands greater attention and anything short of that is a clear sign of *pararyomen*. If Christ is indeed superior, as these listeners believed, then greater attention to and priority of the message of salvation was inevitable. So, the author's primary purpose in exhorting the listeners was that they do not *pararyomen*. Through faith they could

remain firmly attached to the firm and solid anchor, who is Christ. This would have ensured that they reach their eternal destiny.

In Hebrews 2:2-3, based on the conjunction *gar* in the beginning of Hebrews 2:2, the author gives an explanation of why the exhortation in Hebrews 2:1 was necessary. In Hebrews 2:3a, based on the rhetorical question, the author makes it clear that those who transgress the message of Christ will surely be punished. The reason the author is sure about this is that those who rejected the law were punished (Heb 2:2). In other words, if they decided to reject the message of salvation, the author prophesied a great danger for them (Heb 2:2). Like the OT prophets, the author authoritatively proclaimed the Word of God to his listeners and expected a response. Westcott (1903:37) is right that, 'the necessity of heedful care is grounded on the certainty of retribution. This certainty is proportional to the authority of the revelation'. In Hebrews 2:3b-4, the author proves the validity of the message of salvation. This is further to justify what he has said in Hebrews 2:2-3a. The reason that people who transgressed the law were punished is because of its validity. In the remainder of this passage, the author provides the proof that indeed the message of salvation is valid.

The fact that those who neglect salvation will be punished is further strengthened by God's familial relationship and His purpose for His many children. It has already been argued that God, as a caring and loving Father, has greater plans for His children. Therefore, to ensure that His purpose becomes a reality He disciplines them. Through this, the many children, like their senior brother, would attain perfection, which is a requirement for eternal destiny. Therefore, considering the overall rhetorical unit (Heb 1:1-2:18) and the overall argument in Hebrews, punishment of the transgressors is significant rhetorically (Mackie 2012:97). It has already been argued that the author treats the listeners as members of the family of God. The reason for this is because of their confession of faith. So, by drifting away they put this privilege at serious risk (Mackie 2012:112). Since God is a loving and caring Father, to ensure that they don't drift away He punishes them. Those who take heed of God's correction will remain members of God's family. However, those who wilfully continue to disobey God, like the wilderness generation, might eventually lose their membership. The implication is that they would no longer be children of God.

Rhetorically, this has a strong persuasive effect. Losing the status of being the children of God, means losing their status and according to their value system this is serious. Therefore, as described in chapter two, the listeners naturally will try by all means to ensure that their eternal status is not compromised. Therefore, it is highly likely that they did take heed of the author's warning and exhortation. They probably considered and followed the author's challenge to hold fast to the confession of faith. This was going to ensure that the eternal status as members of God's family was reaffirmed. The author was indeed sure, based on this rhetorical strategy, that the believers would pursue the aim at all cost. Opting to drift away from faith, and eternally losing their status as the family of God was unnatural based on their upbringing. So, to retain their membership as an integral part of the family of God, faith and endurance was the listeners' only option. While the author recognised the pain and suffering of the believers, he nevertheless exhorted them to persevere in faith. He did not promise them that suffering would cease, instead he interpreted it as God's discipline for His children (Heb 12:3-17). If believers persevered till the end, the outcome was going to be perfection like their senior brother. In Hebrews 12:11, the author said that, 'all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness' (NASB). This is what God wants for all His legitimate children. Therefore they were to endure till the end while firmly fixing their eyes on Jesus who is the author and perfecter of faith (Heb 12:1-3). The loss of earthly status was nothing compared to their heavenly status as the family of God and the eternal rewards. Therefore they were to hold fast to the confession of faith till the end.

#### *6.2.6.2 Rhetorical Features and Devices Employed in Hebrews 2:1-4*

The author also extensively employed various rhetorical devices in his rhetorical strategy to persuade the listeners to renewed commitment to faith. These rhetorical devices further enhance the rhetorical weight of the piece. Table 6-1 summarises rhetorical devices present in Hebrews 2:1-4 (Attridge 1989:21; Heath 2011:384; Lane 1998:34-36; O'Brien 2010:81-82).

The use of alliteration in this paragraph is striking. In all instances (i.e. Heb 2:1, 2), the author starts his argument with the letter “p”. In Hebrews 2:1, he repeated this rhetorical device, “*prosechein perissoteros .... pararyomen*”. It has already been argued in chapter five, that the combination of *dei prosechein perissoteros* and *pararyomen* forces attention from the listeners towards the author’s stern warning and exhortation. So, the function of the alliteration in this verse is to grab the attention of the listeners. Combined with the nautical metaphor, this creates a vivid and lasting picture of a ship in the sea and an anchor in the listeners’ minds. This indeed has rhetorical weight, as the listeners have a vivid picture of a ship firmly attached to the anchor. The currents of the sea cannot move it, because of the solid anchor that it is firmly attached to. While at the same time, they have a vivid picture of a ship drifting away and no longer attached to the solid anchor. Consequently, the heavy currents of the sea toss it away. It slowly, and in an undetected manner, moves away from the anchor and becomes lost in the seas. The alliteration in Hebrews 2:2, “*pasa parabasis kai parakoē*” (every transgression and disobedience) further functions as a strong warning and reminder of how God dealt with His people under the old dispensation. Since this is part of their tradition, it does not only bring back those memories, but also gives a stern warning not to repeat the same mistakes. This stern warning is given further rhetorical force by the use of the rhetorical figures, paronomasia and hendiadys, *parabasis kai parakoē*. The repetition and phonetic assonance of these two nouns is to ensure that the listeners vividly remember how God dealt with those who disobeyed the law. More importantly, they create urgency for the listeners to take action regarding their situation. According to Jobes (2002:184, citing Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.3.66), ‘one of the functions of paronomasia is to attract the ear of the audience and thereby draw their attention to that element of the argument’. This is what the author wanted to achieve with the use of this rhetorical device in this passage. His primary purpose was for his listeners to pay careful attention to the message of salvation. It was therefore critical to the author to attract the attention of the listeners, by showing the seriousness of drifting away by the interplay of these rhetorical figures. The use of the legal terms in this passage further augments the rhetorical force of the author’s warning and exhortation.

Using the rhetorical question (Heb 2:3a), the author indicates that believers in the new dispensation are also guaranteed severe punishment if they disobey. This is a clear conviction from the author, and also the listeners would have been in agreement with the author on this. The rhetorical force created in Hebrews 2:2, reinforces the solemnity of the rhetorical question in 2:3a and hence demanding introspection from those who had already succumbed. Moreover, the legal terms used in the remainder of this passage, prove the validity of the message of salvation. This further provides the rhetorical force for the author's warning and exhortation. It draws the listeners' attention and demands that they take action and change their situation. The experiences of their forefathers in the wilderness have been made alive in their minds, and they had to choose what was better for them. This is further reinforced by the periodic sentence (Heb 2:2-4). He stirs the listeners' emotions, by appealing to the experiences of their forefathers in the wilderness and what they should expect if they follow their negative examples. The rhyming words ending with *sin*, in Hebrews 2:4 further provide the rhetorical force of this exhortation. The listeners are not only reminded of God's supernatural acts during the old dispensation, but also in their times. These believers had experienced God's supernatural acts in their lives, and therefore this encourages and strengthens them to hold fast to the confession of faith even in the midst of sufferings. This reminds them of the authoritative nature and validity of the message of salvation. Therefore, drifting away is only disastrous and must be avoided by all means.

Furthermore, by using the hook word, salvation (Heb 1:14; 2:3), the author forces the listeners to consider carefully their decision regarding their faith. As already argued in chapter five, salvation in the context of Hebrews has an eschatological orientation. Therefore, their best option would be to hold fast to the confession of faith and inherit the salvation. This is the author's ultimate objective. If they don't change their ways, they will not inherit salvation. Hebrews 2:3 is the centre of the chiasmic structure of Hebrews 2:1-4 (Heath 2011:143). Therefore, it is not accidental that this is at the centre, as it is the main idea of the passage (Rhee 2001:15). In other words, the warning and exhortation in Hebrews 2:1-4 revolve around salvation. In Hebrews 2:3, salvation is used in the negative sense and it implies eternal punishment. In Hebrews 1:14, salvation is used in the positive sense and implies that believers will become

heirs in eternity based on their faithfulness and endurance till the end. Therefore this shows that salvation plays a pivotal role in the author's rhetorical goal. The author was telling his listeners' that too much is at stake, involving their very purpose and dream of living, which is the eternal destiny. If they don't pay more attention to the message of salvation, there is no way they can escape punishment. While, if they pay careful attention to the message of salvation, inheritance of salvation is assured.

Item	Rhetorical Device	Passage/Verses	Description of the Rhetorical Device
1	Alliteration	Heb 2:1, 2, 4	Heb 2:1: <i>prosechein perissoteros,.... pararyomen</i>  Heb 2:2 - <i>pasa parabasis kai parakoē</i>
2	Metaphors	Heb 2:1	<i>prosechein, pararyomen</i>
3	Hendiadys	Heb 2:2	<i>parabasis kai parakoē</i>
4	Paronomasia	Heb 2:2	<i>parabasis kai parakoē</i>
5	Rhetorical Question	Heb 2:3a	<i>pos hēmeis ekpheuremetha tēlikautēs amelēsantes sotērias</i>
6	Hook Word	Heb 2:3; cf. 1:14	<i>sotērias</i>
7	Legal Terms	Heb 2:3-4	<i>bebaios, endikon, misthapodosian, synepimartyrountos, abebaiothē</i>
8	Periodic Sentence	Heb 2:2-4	In this sentence (vv 2-4), the author moves that listeners the way around to prove the

			validity and authority of the message of salvation and the consequences associated with it for those who neglect and/ reject it.
9	Rhymes of words end with [sin]	Heb 2:4	<i>terasín, dynamesín, thelēsin</i>

**Table 6-1: Rhetorical Devices in Hebrews 2:1-4**

### 6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the author's rhetorical strategy in addressing pastoral problems of the first hearers; further, to ascertain the role of the theme of faith in this strategy. A classical Greco-Roman rhetorical exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4 has been conducted. Kennedy's modified procedure was adopted to examine this passage. This commenced with an examination of the rhetorical unit which is important to determine the author's strategy (Heb 1:1-14 and 2:5-18). In the second step, the rhetorical genre of the passage was examined. This was followed by determination of the rhetorical situation, and then followed by determination of the rhetorical problem. Then analysis of rhetorical invention of the passage was conducted. Lastly, analysis of the rhetorical structure of the passage was done, which involved a clause by clause analysis. This included examination of the use of enthymemes by the author and rhetorical devices.

Based on this rhetorical exegetical analysis it was possible to determine the author's rhetorical strategy. This included how the author wove together the various fabrics of the ancient rhetoric to achieve his rhetorical goal. The author's rhetorical strategy centred around the eternal destiny of the listeners. He achieved this by employing advanced teachings of the Christian faith, more specifically the Christological teachings and their implications. He relied on rhetorical proofs such as ethos, logic and pathos. The interplay of these artificial proofs and with the author's extensive use of OT (LXX) texts strengthened his persuasive argument. His ultimate goal was the

believers' to understand that only faith and endurance would guarantee them the promised eschatological future. Faith in the author's strategy was therefore the key for the believers to inherit the eternal salvation.

# **CHAPTER 7**

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The objective of this thesis was to ascertain the role of the theme of faith in the author of Hebrews' rhetorical strategy to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers. To achieve this objective, the traditional historical-grammatical combined with classical Greco-Roman rhetorical exegetical methods were employed. Initially, a grammatical and linguistic analysis of faith-related words throughout Hebrews was undertaken. Then detailed exegesis using the two exegetical methods with specific focus on Hebrews 2:1-4 was carried out. The historical-grammatical exegetical method was important to delineate the theology of faith in Hebrews. The classical rhetorical analysis was pivotal in establishing the role of the theology of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers.

The overall findings from the study are that the author of Hebrews drew from negative and positive examples of faith in order to strengthen and encourage his listeners to hold fast to the confession of faith. Through these examples of faith, the author was able to counteract the situation of the listeners by focusing their attention on the eternal destiny. If the believers continued to follow the negative examples of faith were guaranteed eternal judgement. On the other hand, by following the positive examples of faith and endurance were guaranteed to inherit eternal salvation. Therefore their sufferings on earth were only temporary. The promised eternal rewards were their best choice and worthy of enduring temporary sufferings and hardships. Christ, their senior brother, had shown them the way and they were to fix their eyes on Him and follow His example of faith and endurance. Christ, as their senior brother and high priest, would help and guide them along their journey to the city of God.

The following summarises the findings of the study, and further the implications of the study are described.

## **7.2 Summary of Findings**

### **7.2.1 Summary of Chapter One**

Chapter one which also serves as an introduction to the thesis, gave background to the task, as well as providing the definitions of the major terminologies, rationale and methodology of the study. Three significant directions of development in the recent studies of Hebrews including the social history and situational context of Hebrews, new methods of interpretation, as well as renewed interest in the theological themes, were described. There was general agreement that the social historical situation of Hebrews developed in three stages.

The second major direction is the application of the new methods of interpretation. Three of these methods are discourse analysis, literary analysis and rhetorical analysis. These methods have immensely contributed to the present study of Hebrews. The third major trajectory is the theological themes (namely Christology, Eschatology, and Soteriology) of Hebrews and their contribution to the theology of the NT. The theology of faith is one of these theological themes. Significant progress has been made in defining the character, concept and nature of the theme of faith in Hebrews. This was evident based on the agreements amongst the scholars on the dimensions of faith (christological, ethical, eschatological and ecclesiological).

However, and more critically, there has been little attempt made to combine the insights of these three major directions of development in shedding light on the epistle of Hebrews. Therefore, the objective of this study was to ascertain the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy to address the socio-historical situation of the first hearers of Hebrews. The aim was to draw insight from these three major directions (i.e. social historical situation, theology of faith and rhetorical analysis) of developments and ultimately ascertain the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy to address pastoral problems of the first hearers.

Considering the limitations of rhetorical analysis, it was proposed that this method be combined with the traditional historical-grammatical method.

It was hypothesised that in order for the author of Hebrews to convince his hearers to make a renewed commitment to the Christian faith he employed comparisons, warnings and encouragement, threats of punishment and promises of rewards. The author in his rhetorical strategy interwove six aspects of faith throughout Hebrews. These aspects include; (1) how faith begins, (2) maintenance of faith, (3) key ingredients of maintaining faith, (4) promises and rewards of maintaining faith, (5) neglect of faith, and (6) consequences of neglecting faith. Through these aspects of faith, the author most likely succeeded in persuading his listeners not to follow the negatives examples of faith. However, they are required to follow the positive examples of faith and ultimately Christ's example of faith and endurance as they migrate to the heavenly homeland, the city of God.

### **7.2.2 Summary of Chapter Two**

Chapter two delineated the background information to the epistle to the Hebrews. The focus was on the socio-historical circumstances, social location of the hearers, their ethnicity, authorship, the date Hebrews was written, the genre, the literary structure and the uniting theme of Hebrews. The background information was critical in order to achieve the objective of the study. However, there are some issues such as authorship, the date when Hebrews was written, the ethnicity of the first hearers and their location were still an unresolved puzzle. The literary structure and the uniting theme were also still a matter for debate. However, the limited internal evidence was helpful in reconstructing the background information of Hebrews. Therefore, based on this, the background of Hebrews was set out as summarised below.

The author is unknown, even though he is not Paul, but most likely someone in Pauline circles. However, there was valuable information within Hebrews describing this unknown author. He was in the second generation of believers. He was a highly educated Jewish man and skilled in rhetoric. He was influential and a respected

leader. He had a pastoral heart and a good relationship with his hearers. He was knowledgeable in the traditions of the listeners, including his perceptive knowledge of the OT (LXX) texts. Greco-Roman and Christian culture heavily influenced this author and most likely his listeners.

The date of writing of Hebrews is unknown, and any date between AD 60 and 90 is possible. The listeners' ethnicity was a mixture of Jewish and Gentile Christians. However, the Jewish Christians were a majority. These Christians were possibly living somewhere in the Roman Empire outside Palestine. In terms of their social location, they resided as strangers in an urban setting. They fellowshiped in house churches scattered all over the city. The leadership structure of these house churches was a plurality of leadership.

The social history of the believers developed in three stages. The first stage involved the proclamation of the gospel and their conversion, as well as the formation of the Christian community. The second stage involved their persecution by an unbelieving society. However, they remained steadfast and continued supporting one another as the family of God. During stage three, they were demoralised and suffered spiritual malaise. This was as a result of perpetual friction and persecutions although not as severe as during the second stage. Therefore, the long period of persecutions severely affected them. So, they either had to continue suffering while remaining faithful to Christ, or reunite with the unbelieving society and forsake the faith. Some believers succumbed to the pressures and drifted away from the faith. It was therefore during this stage that Hebrews was penned.

In terms of the literary genre, Hebrews is a homily with some features of a letter. The rhetorical genre on the other hand is a combination of epideictic and deliberative speeches. The literary structure is still debated although great progress has been made. However, the recent structure proposed by Heath (2011) was adopted for this study. Lastly, the uniting theme of Hebrews is also still debated. However, the migrant of the camp of God's people was adopted as the uniting theme of this study.

### **7.2.3 Summary of Chapter Three**

Chapter three focused on developing the methodology required for the rhetorical exegesis. The primary focus of this chapter was on rhetorical criticism. Hence, the historical background of rhetorical criticism, its theory and application in NT studies were examined. Further, the rhetorical strategy of the author of Hebrews was investigated by using concepts from classical rhetoric. Then, a modified procedure based on Kennedy's procedure was proposed.

Rhetorical criticism has been employed in biblical studies for many years dating back to St Augustine. However, it was only during the last three decades that interest in this method was renewed. This method has made significant contributions to biblical studies. Rhetorical theory is divided into classical rhetoric and modern rhetoric methods. Modern rhetoric is further divided into neo-rhetoric, socio-rhetoric and rhetoric of inquiry. Several scholars over the years used either one of these methods or a combination. Combining these methods has added advantages for exegesis. However, this study proposed to employ classical rhetoric combined with the traditional historical-grammatical method.

The theory of classical rhetoric as preserved in ancient rhetoric handbooks was examined. Categories of classical rhetoric important for biblical studies included invention, arrangement and style. Through interplay of these categories the rhetor would be able to present an effective and persuasive argument to convince his audience to take action based on their situation.

The author of Hebrews only employed invention and style in his rhetorical strategy. The author skilfully wove both the proofs and rhetorical devices throughout his sermon to effectively convince his listeners to keep a renewed commitment to the Christian faith. Lastly, a modified procedure based on Kennedy's procedure was developed. This procedure was required for detailed rhetorical analysis in chapter six of the study.

#### 7.2.4 Summary of Chapter Four

Chapter four examined the denotative and connotative meaning of faith-related words as well their semantic range. Within Hebrews, the positive form of *pist* words denotes active obedience and firm conviction of the promise of God. This faith was first exemplified by men and women of faith, but reached its climax in Christ. The men and women of faith were faithful and obedient till the end, while they patiently waited on God's promise. Christ endured sufferings including dying a shameful death on the cross. However, He remained faithful and obedient and more importantly fulfilled God's promise. Therefore, Christ is the pioneer and perfecter of faith; believers must fix their eyes on Him and follow His example of faith. They were then assured of greater heavenly rewards. However, following the negative examples of faith would result in punishment.

In the rest of NT, *pist* words are primarily related to the life, words and works of Jesus Christ. The primary focus is the intimate and personal relationship of believers with Christ. However, there are also some similarities between Hebrews and the rest of the NT. Paul and the author of Hebrews emphasised endurance and faith with expected eternal rewards. This faith involved patience and confidence in the reality of eternal future. In the LXX, there is a wider semantic range of meanings of faith. However, the LXX only provided the foundation to the author of Hebrews. The Inter-Testamental Jewish Literature and extra-biblical literature provided the background on the semantic range of meanings of the *pist* words. However, none of these are helpful in terms of defining faith in Hebrews.

The *peithomai* word group within Hebrews again denotes obedience and firm conviction of the eschatological future. The listeners were exhorted to follow the positive examples of faith and obedience. They were to avoid disobedience, as this was an invitation of God's wrath. In the rest of NT and LXX, the *peithomai* word group has similar connotative meanings (conviction, obedience, disobedience) with the Hebrews. However, the contexts were different. Further the biblical writers share a similar usage with classical Greek literature.

Lastly, an analysis of several metaphors employed by Hebrews further helped to define faith in Hebrews. The listeners were drifting away from the faith, which was the solid ground, and were slowly moving into a dangerous territory where they would be lost. Emanating from their weaker faith, the author likened the listeners with the infants. Their condition was extremely bad; to the point that it was likened to apostasy. Therefore, they deserved milk suitable for infants instead of the solid food suitable for the mature in faith. Nevertheless, considering the complexity and seriousness of their situation, the author opted to teach them advanced lessons on the Christian faith. His ultimate goal was to convince them to make a renewed commitment to the faith. He exhorted them to follow Christ's example of faith and endurance. Like athletes, extreme determination, commitment and a focus on the finish line, which was the eschatological future, were the requirements. They were to joyfully endure sufferings and hardship in anticipation of eternal inheritance.

### **7.2.5 Summary of Chapter Five**

Chapter five was an exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4 using the traditional historical-grammatical method, with specific focus on the theme of faith. Although there are other options, the literary unit adopted in this study was Hebrews 1:1-2:18. Hebrews 2:1-4 is the link between the doctrinal sections (Heb 1:1-14; Heb 2:5-18). Hebrews 1:1-14 focused on the superiority of the Son over the angels based on His eternal nature as God. Hebrews 2:5-18 focused on the superiority of the Son as God Man.

The deity and humanity of Christ provided the foundation for the warning and exhortation in Hebrews 2:1-4. His eternal nature demanded the listeners to pay careful attention to the message of salvation. Since Christ as God was superior to angels, paying more abundant attention to the message of salvation was a necessity. The author employed *a fortiori* argument between the angels (lesser) and Christ (greater). God, during Israel's history, severely punished those who disobeyed the message of the law spoken through the angels. Therefore, since Christ is superior, those who disobey the great message of salvation are assured of even more severe punishments. The only better option for the hearers was to hold fast to the confession of faith. This was further justified by the fact that the message of salvation was valid

and authoritative. It was confirmed by the Christian ear-witnesses to the message of salvation proclaimed by the Lord. Further God attested to it through supernatural acts.

Christ's human nature on the other hand encouraged and strengthened the listeners to pay more abundant attention to the message of salvation. This was because of Christ's suffering and solidarity with humanity. Through faith and endurance even His death and eventual enthronement provided an example and hope to the listeners. This strengthened and encouraged them to focus on the greater eternal rewards, even in the midst of sufferings. Also, since the believers were adopted as the family of God, their status was much greater than their earthly status. Therefore, this was a further encouragement for them to hold fast to the confession of faith. However, belonging to the family of God also demanded that they also pay careful attention to the message of salvation. Drifting away from the faith was going to result in eternal judgement. So, although their current situation was difficult, the author managed to re-focus their attention on the promises of God and eternal rewards.

### **7.2.6 Summary of Chapter Six**

Chapter six was also an exegesis of Hebrews 2:1-4 using classical rhetorical analysis with specific focus on the role of the theme of faith. Kennedy's modified procedure was adopted. The main focus was determination of the situation of the listeners, the ethos of the matter, the validity of the matter, the author's ethos, his rhetorical appeals, and then clause by clause analysis of Hebrews 2:1-4. These steps were central to establishing the role of the theme of faith in the author's rhetorical strategy to address the pastoral problems of the first hearers.

So, the author, in order to address the socio-historical situation of the listeners, employed advanced teachings of the Christian faith. The author throughout Hebrews used Christ's superiority as the Son and High Priest in order to persuade the believers to hold fast to the confession of faith. Christ, their senior brother, had already shown them that it was possible to be faithful and obedient to the end. Therefore, they were required to follow His example of faith and endurance.

In other words, through the interplay of classical rhetorical strategies the author of Hebrews presented an effective and persuasive warning and exhortation. He convincingly proved to his listeners that it was only through holding fast to the confession of faith that they were guaranteed eternal destiny. What stood between them and their eternal destiny was their condition of faith. They had to make a decision to pay careful attention to the message of salvation, and then the inheritance of salvation was theirs. Further, they would eternally remain members of the family of God and co-heirs with Christ. Choosing to neglect and/or reject the message of salvation was catastrophic. Eternal judgement and possible eschatological death would be their reward.

### **7.3 Application within the South African Context**

The epistle to the Hebrews is relevant to address the pastoral problems of believers in the 21st century church. Like the first hearers of Hebrews, some sections of the Church in South Africa are experiencing spiritual malaise. They have succumbed to social pressures, and indeed some have neglected the faith. Like the first hearers of Hebrews, some have become sluggish in listening to the Word of God. Some are like infants who can only be fed with milk and not solid food. They no longer differentiate between good and evil. This is evident in areas such as morality and various syncretic tendencies such as the mixture of Christianity with materialism, or the mixing of Christianity with ancestral worship. Other issues include lack of true Christian fellowship, lack of unity and genuine love for one another. Another critical issue that has a serious influence on Christians' spirituality is postmodernism. The characteristics of this include pluralism and relativism (Haase 2009). Haase (2009:92) posited that 'postmodernism is capable of clarity, it favours relativism and pluralism, and is hostile to concepts rooted in uniqueness, exclusivity, objectivity, and transcendent truth'. It is not an exaggeration that the message the Lord spoke to the church in Laodicea is relevant to some sections of Christianity (Rev 3:14-19). Therefore the Lord says to the church today, 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold or hot; I wish that you were cold or hot' (Rev 3:14). Therefore, the church needs to reignite her zeal and repent from her sinful ways (Rev 3:19).

The message of Hebrews is therefore urgently required by the church today. As it was in the case of the first hearers, the problems are very complex and require an advanced teaching about the Christian belief. Therefore, the superiority of Christ, His high priestly ministry and implications for the life of faith of every believer must be prioritised. This will help the believers to fidelity and faithfulness as they migrate to the heavenly homeland. This is because their eyes will be fixed on Jesus and follow His example of faith and endurance. The purpose of this section is therefore to highlight the implications of the rhetorical role of faith in Hebrews to the Church in South Africa and believers.

Firstly, how the book of Hebrews can be used as model for developing particular programmes for the Church in South African will be examined. The focus will be on how the Church in South African could emulate the examples set out in the book of Hebrews. Secondly, the specific implications based on Hebrews 2:1-4 will be investigated. The focus will be on; (1) Paying more attention to the message of salvation, and (2) Drifting away from the message of salvation.

### **7.3.1 Hebrews as the Model for the Church in South Africa**

The manner that Hebrews dealt with the pastoral issues of the believers is exemplary for every generation. Firstly, the author of Hebrews, as one of the leaders, made it clear that he was speaking on behalf of God. Throughout his sermon he rooted his stern warnings and exhortations in the Word of God. Like the prophets of old, the author did not rely on his knowledge and understanding, but solely on the Word of God. His extensive reliance on biblical texts and more specifically on the OT (LXX) texts is exemplary for every leader in every generation. This is critical, since the author was declaring to his hearers that indeed the Word of God is authoritative and sufficient for life and ministry. Through his citations and Christological interpretation of the OT texts, the author applied the Word of God to his listeners' situation. The primary purpose was for them to take seriously what the Word of God says, and how they can live in harmony with its sound teachings. Put succinctly, it was not sufficient for the believers to have high Christology without demonstrating it in their lives. Hebrews was exhorting the believers to ensure that their behaviour was in harmony

with the wholesome teaching of the Christian belief. To be able to have lasting impact on the believers and their situation the church must dig deep to advanced teachings of the Christian belief, in order to address their pastoral problems. This is a serious challenge for the church today; not to dilute the Word of God. The church must diligently and authoritatively proclaim the truth with the ultimate purpose of helping believers to be aligned with the Word of God.

Secondly, the manner in which the author handled the situation of the believers is exemplary. While the situation of the believers was serious, the author demonstrated genuine love and great concern for his fellow brethren. Their wellbeing and eternal destiny was his greatest concern and priority. Further, throughout his stern warnings and exhortations he made the believers still feel part of the family of God, and that he hoped better things for them. This approach by the author, and its effectiveness to address the pastoral problems of the believers, is commendable. Therefore, instead of the church condemning the believers because of their sins, it should follow the example of Hebrews. It was clear from the study that this was not a sign of timidity or compromise by the author, as throughout the sermon he exhibited his authority and boldness as he addressed the pastoral issues of the listeners. Therefore, the church today must show compassion and genuine concern for backsliding believers. However, the truth of the Word of God must be spoken without fear or compromise. This is what God wants from every leader of the church. It is the responsibility of the church to ensure that believers whom God has entrusted to them are taught the whole truth.

Thirdly, the leadership of the house churches of Hebrews led by example. The fact that the author could exhort his listeners to follow the example of their leaders is decisive for the church today. This is even more critical considering that today some Christian leaders are cited as playing active roles in the increase of divorce, immorality and syncretism in the church. God has entrusted the church leaders to lead His people in a godly way, both in word and deed. Therefore, it is important for the leaders to live by example (see Tit 2:1-10). For the leaders to have a lasting impact, their conduct must be in harmony with sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13, 2:2). Thus, for believers and the rest of the society to

take seriously the teachings of Scripture, it should start with those appointed by God to lead His people. The lives of the leaders must be exemplary, for believers to emulate. This is a serious challenge for the church leadership today. Self-introspection for every leader is an urgent requirement.

Fourthly, Hebrews' approach to the life of the church is mainly corporate. He challenges believers towards mutual love and support as part of his strategy to encourage them to maintain their faith. We are living in times when individualism has become an integral part of our lives. Even worse, true fellowship, loving one another as fellow brothers and sisters in the family of God and supporting one another, are often not prioritised. Therefore, the church has the responsibility to seriously teach its members the importance of these values of the Christian belief. In our journey to Mount Zion, the city of God, it is important that communal love becomes an integral part of our lives. God wants all His children to finish the race, and for this to happen, we must play our role. Christ sacrificed all for His junior siblings, and so we as believers must following His example of self-giving and self-sacrifice for the wellbeing of fellow brethren. Therefore, the church must inculcate these teachings in every believer.

### **7.3.2 The Implications of Hebrews 2:1-4**

#### *7.3.2.1 Pay More Abundant Attention to the Message of Salvation*

The author, in his exhortation of the listeners to pay careful attention to the message of salvation, drew from the superiority of Christ as God Man. Based on the detailed exegesis of Hebrews 2:1 (*Dia touto dei prorsoteros prosechein hēmas tois akoustheisin*), it was clear that the superiority of Christ both demands and encourages the believers to a life of faith and endurance. Christ Himself lived by this example, and the listeners were to follow Him. Through this life of faith and endurance Christ was perfected and crowned with glory and honour. The believers were also guaranteed to be crowned with glory and honour, as they were part of God's family and co-heirs with Christ. The only condition was that they had to remain faithful and obedient till the end.

The lesson for believers even in this day and age is that we must take seriously the author's exhortation. The believers' hope of spending eternity with God and Christ is solely dependent on faith and faithfulness till the end. We are living in a fallen world. This means hardships and sufferings will remain an integral part of our earthly existence. Like Christ, our senior brother, we need to remain faithful and obedient till the end. Our strength and encouragement should be in the fact that Christ sympathises with us in our struggles and sufferings. Further, as our high priest, Christ is ready to walk with us and hold our hands as we move forward to Mount Zion, the city of God. He promised never to leave us or to forsake us.

### *7.3.2.2 Drifting Away from the Message of Salvation*

The author of Hebrews' primary reason to exhort his listeners to pay careful attention to the message of salvation, was so that they *mēpote pararyomen*. In other words, their other option was to choose to neglect the message of salvation. However, the author attached serious consequences to this option (Heb 2:2-3a). The author reminded his listeners of God's punishment of those who disobeyed His law in the wilderness. Then he proclaimed an urgent and strong warning that those who neglect the message of great salvation must expect even more serious punishment, with the possibility of eschatological death.

The lesson in this is that God remains the same, and He does not take sin lightly. In other words, even in these postmodern times, God promises to severely punish those who neglect the message of salvation. Punishment and eternal death are a reality. This is indeed a serious challenge to the 'hyper grace' teachings (see Van der Merwe 2011; Whitten 2012; cf. Brown 2014). I must be quick to make it clear that teaching grace responsibly based on the truth of the Word of God is urgently required by the church today more than before. However,

The truth is that the modern grace message is quite mixed, combining life-changing, Jesus-exalting revelation with serious misinterpretation of the Scripture, bad theology, divisive and destructive rhetoric, and even fleshy reaction. And, in all too many cases, it is being embraced by believers who are

not just looking for freedom from legalism but also from God's standards.  
(Brown 2014:13)

God promises that those who wilfully and stubbornly sin and rebel against Him are guaranteed eternal judgement and eventual eschatological death. God is indeed still the same God of the Israelites, who demands obedience and faithfulness from His chosen people. This is indeed contrary to some of the teachings of this modern grace message, that wrongly teaches that God forgave believers all their past, present and future sins (Whitten 2012:20; cf. Brown 2014:39-50). Therefore as the chosen people, we must not take lightly His stern warnings that permeate the whole canon of scripture.

The challenge, therefore, is for all the believers to take the Word of God seriously. We must understand that God is the God of love and justice as His nature. So, sin and rebellion will never go unpunished. Thus, our better choice, as the author of Hebrews impressed on his listeners, is to hold fast to the confession of faith. This calls for complete submission, commitment, perseverance and living out the faith like our senior brother, Christ. We need to fix our eyes on Him and follow His example.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

The epistle to the Hebrews is a *paranaetic* homily written to address the socio-historical situation of the first hearers. Therefore, in order to address the socio-pastoral problems of the first hearers the author extensively employed the theories of classical rhetoric. As a skilled orator, the author wove these categories of classical rhetoric throughout his sermon in order to convince his listeners to make a renewed commitment to the Christian faith. The author, by reminding his listeners of how God dealt with those who rebelled against Him, skilfully lured them to follow the positive examples of faith and endurance which guaranteed eternal rewards. So, it is only through faith and endurance that the promise of eschatological future with all its associated rewards is guaranteed for every believer and in every generation.

## WORKS CITED

- Alford H. 2010. *Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.
- Allen D.L. 2010. *Hebrews. The New American Commentary*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group.
- Allen D.M. 2009. *The Irrevocable Nature of Salvation: Evidence from Hebrews*. Testamentum Imperium, an International Theological Journal, Vol. 2, pages 1-24.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2007. *Deuteronomistic Re-presentation in a Word of Exhortation: An Assessment of the Paranaetic Function of Deuteronomy in the Letter to the Hebrews*. PhD. University of Edinburgh.
- Amador J.D.H. 1999. *Where Could Rhetorical Criticism (still) Taking Us? Current in Research: Biblical Studies 7*, pages 195-222.
- Arndt W., Danker F.W., & Bauer W. 2000. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Aune D.E. 2010. *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament (Aune D.E., Ed.). Chapter 7 (Historical Criticism), pages 101-112*. United Kingdom: Willey-Blackwell, A John Wiley and Sons Publishing Company.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2003. *The Westminster Dictionary of the New Testament and the Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Version.
- Asumang A. 2014. *Strive for Peace and Holiness: the Intertextual Journey of the Jacob Traditions from Genesis to Hebrews via the Prophets*. The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary, Volume 17, pages 1-52.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2007. *Unlocking the Book of Hebrews: A Spatial Analysis of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. USA, Origen: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2005. *The Tabernacle as a Heuristic Device in the Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. MTh, South African Theological Seminary.

Attridge H.W. 1989. *The Epistle to the Hebrews. A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Balz H.R. 1990. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (Balz H.R., & Schneider G., Eds.)*. παραρρέω. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Balz H.R., & Schneider G. 1990. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (Balz H.R., & Schneider G., Eds.)*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Baugh S.M. 2006. *The Clouds of Witness in Hebrews 11*. Westminster Theological Journal 68, pages 113-132.

Becker O. 1986. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Coenen L., Beyreuther E., & Bietenhard H., Eds.)*, Faith, Persuade, Belief, Unbelief. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Black C.C. 1989. *Keeping Up with Recent Studies: XVI. Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*. The Expository Times, 100:252, pages 253-258.

Bloomquist L.G. 2010. *Rhetoric in the New Millennium: Promise and Fulfilment (Hester J.D. and Hester J.D., Eds.)*, Part I (Mapping New Rhetorics): Chapter 5: *Rhetoric, Culture, and Ideology Socio-rhetorical Analysis in the Reading of New Testament*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity Maiden Lane, New York: T&T Clark International. Kindle Version.

Biggs C.R. 2003. *The Wilderness-Sufferers: A Pastoral Biblical-Theological Study of Suffering from Hebrews*. IIM Magazine Online, Volume 5, Numbers 3-7, January 31-February 20.

Brandt T. 1986. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, & H. Bietenhard, Eds.), *Fullness, Abound, Multitude, Fulfil, Make Room*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Brown C. 1986. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Brown M.L. 2014. *Hyper-Grace: Exposing the Dangers of the Modern Grace Message*. Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House. Kindle Edition.

Bruce F.F. 1990. *The Epistle to the Hebrews (Revised Edition)*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Bullinger E.W. 1898. *Figures of speech used in the Bible*. London; New York: Eyre & Spottiswoode; E. & J. B. Young & Co.

Bultmann R. 1985. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Kittel G., Bromiley G.W., & Friedrich G., Eds.)*, pages 852-857. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1964. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Kittel G., Bromiley G.W., & Friedrich G., Eds.)*, Vol. 6, pages 174-182. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Cahill M. 1994. *A Home for the Homily: An Approach to Hebrews*. *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 60, pages 141-148.

Carson D.A. 1996. *Exegetical Fallacies (2nd ed.)*. Carlisle, U.K.; Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster; Baker Books.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1986. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Brown C. Ed.)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Classen C.J. 1992. *St. Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric*. *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pages 319-344.

Cockerill G.L. 2012. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1998. *Hebrews: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House.

Colijn B.B. 1996. "Let Us Approach": Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 39/4 (December), 571-586.

Constable T.L. 2013. *Notes on Hebrews*. Published by Sonic Light: <http://www.soniclight.com/>. Accessed 26 April 2013.

Cornelius E.M. 2000. *Rhetorical Criticism and the Hermeneutics of the New Testament*. In *Die Skriflig* 34(2), pages 253-274.

Cosby M.R. 1988. *The Rhetorical Composition of Hebrews 11*. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 107/2, pages 257-273.

Crowson M. 2000. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications.

Deissmann G.A. (1901). *Bible Studies: Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

DeSilva D.A. 2004. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*. USA: Intervarsity Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2000. *Entering God's Rest: Eschatology and the Socio-Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews*. *Trinity Journal* 21NS, pages 25-43.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2000. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2000. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetoric Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Dods M. (n.d.). *The Epistle to the Hebrews. In the expositor's Greek Testament: Commentary (Vol. 4)*. New York: George H. Doran Company.

Easter M.C. 2011. *Let Us Go to Him: The Story of Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews*. PhD, Dissertation. New Zealand: University of Otago.

Ellingworth P. 1993. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. USA: Wm Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Eusebius of Caesaria. (1890). *The Church History of Eusebius (McGiffert A.C. Trans.). A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume I: Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine (Schaff P. & Wace H., Ed.)*. New York: Christian Literature Company.

Fee G.D. 2002. *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.)*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.

Fiorenza E.S. 2010. *Rhetoric in the New Millennium: Promise and Fulfilment (Hester J.D. and Hester J.D., Eds.), Part I (Mapping New Rhetorics): Chapter 2: The Rhetoric of Inquiry*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Maiden Lane, New York: T&T Clark International. Kindle Version.

Girdwood J., & Verkruse P. 1997. *Hebrews*. Joplin, MO: College Press.

Gleason R.C. 2003. *Angels and the Eschatology of Hebrews 1-2*. New Testament Biblical Studies. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2002. *The Eschatology of the Warning in Hebrews 10:26-31*. Tyndale Bulletin 53.1, pages 97-120.

Gorman H. 2012. *Persuading Through Pathos: Appeals to the Emotions in Hebrews*. Restoration Quarterly 54:2, pages 77-90.

Gowler D.B. 2010. *Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and its Reception*. Journal of the Study of New Testament, 33 (2), pages 191-206.

Gray P. 2003. *Brotherly Love and the High Priesthood Christology of Hebrews*. Journal of Biblical Literature 122/2, pages 335-351.

Greenlee J.H. 2008. *An Exegetical Summary of Hebrews (2nd ed.)*. Dallas, TX: SIL International.

Grogan G.W. 1998. *The Old Testament Concept of Solidarity in Hebrews*. Tyndale Bulletin 49.1, pages 159-173.

Grudem W. 1994. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Grundmann W. (1964-). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel G., Bromiley G.W., & Friedrich G., Eds.), *Dei*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Guthrie G.H. 2007. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Beale G.K. and Carson D.A., Eds.), *Hebrews*, pages 919-995. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2003. *Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research*. Currents in Biblical Research 1:2, pages 271-294.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1998. *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

Haase J.M. 2009. *Postmodernity: Impact and Implications*. DTh, University of Zululand.

Hagner D.A. 2011. *Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Hall G. 1998. Rhetorical Criticism, Chiasm, and Theme in Deuteronomy. Stone-Campbell Journal 1 (Spring), pages 85-100.

Hamm D. 1990. *Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Jesus Factor*. The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 52 no 2 (April), pages 270-291.

Hay D.M. 1989. *Pistis as "Ground for Faith" in Hellenized Judaism and Paul*. Journal of Biblical Literature, 108/3, pages 461-476.

Heath D.M. 2011. *Chiastic Structures in Hebrews: A Study of Forms and Function in Biblical Discourse*. PhD. University of Stellenbosch.

Heath M. 1997. *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.-A.D. 400 (Porter S.E., Ed.)*. Chapter 4 (Invention), pages 87-119. Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill.

Hester J.D. 2010. *Rhetoric in the New Millennium: Promise and Fulfilment (Hester J.D. and Hester J.D., Eds.)*, Chapter 1: *Rhetoric in and for the New Millennium*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Maiden Lane, New York: T&T Clark International. Kindle Version.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2004. *Rhetorics and Hermeneutics: Wilhelm Wuellner and his Influence (Hester J.D. & Hester (Amador) J.D, Eds.)*. Chapter 1: *The Wuellnerian Sublime: Rhetorics, Power and the Ethics of Commun (icat)ion*, pages 3-23. Emory studies in early Christianity. New York: T&T Clark.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1984. *The Rhetorical Structure of Galatians 1:1-2:14*. Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 103, No. 3, pages 223-233.

Hughes P.E. 1977. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Irons L. 2007. *Entering God's Rest: Realized Eschatology in Hebrews 3:7-4:11*. [www.upper-register.com/papers/rest\\_hebrews.pdf](http://www.upper-register.com/papers/rest_hebrews.pdf). Accessed 08 June 2012.

Isaacs M.E. 2002. *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. Reading the New Testament Series. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing.

Jobes K.M. 2002. *The Function of Paronomasia in Hebrews 10:5-7*. Trinity Journal, Volume 13, pages 181-191.

Joslin B.C. 2010. *Christ Bore the Sins of Many: Substitution and the Atonement in Hebrews*, pages 74-102. <http://www.sbts.edu/resources/files/2010/07>. Assessed 08 Oct 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2007. *Can Hebrews be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches*. *Currents in Biblical Research* vol. 6.1, 99-129.

Kaiser W.C., Jr. 1981. *Towards an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.

Kennedy G.A. 1997. *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.-A.D. 400* (Porter S.E., Ed.). Chapter 2 (*The Genres of Rhetoric*), pages 43-50. Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1984. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press.

Kittel G., Friedrich G., & Bromiley G.W. 1985. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (abridged in One Volume)*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

Koester C.R. 2010. *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (Aune D., Ed.). Chapter 36 (*Hebrews*), pages 613-630. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, A John Wiley and Sons Publishing Company.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2005. *Conversion, Persecution and Malaise: Life in the Community for which Hebrews was written*. *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies*; vol. 61 No 1/2, pages 231-251.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2002. *Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity*. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Vol. 64, pages 103-123.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2001. *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Yale Bible, Vol. 36. New Haven, London: Yale University Press.

Lane W.L. 1998. *Vol. 47: Hebrews*. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

Lenski R. C. H. 1938. *The interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*. Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern.

Liddell H.G. 1996. *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Liddell, H.G., Scott, R., Jones, H.S., & McKenzie, R. 1996. *A Greek-English lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Louw J. P., & Nida E. A. 1996. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies.

MacLeod D.J. 2005. *Christ, the Believer's High Priest: An Exposition of Hebrews 7:26-28*. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (July-September), pages 331-343.

Mackie S.D. 2012. *Early Christian Eschatological Experience in the Warnings and Exhortations of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. *Tyndale Bulletin* 63.1, pages 93 - 114.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2008. *Confession of the Son of God in the Exordium of Hebrews*. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 30.4, pages 437-453.

Mason E.F. 2010. *The Epistle (Not Necessarily) to the "Hebrews": A Call to Renunciation of Judaism or Encouragement to Christian Commitment?* *Perspective in Religious Studies*, 37 no. 1 (September), pages 7-20.

McCrudden K. 2002. *Christ's Perfection in Hebrews: Devine Beneficence as an Exegetical Key to Hebrews 2:10*. *Biblical Research* vol. 47, pages 40-62.

Michaelis W. 1964. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel G., Bromiley G.W., & Friedrich G., Eds.), *Flow*, vol.6. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Michel O. 1986. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Coenen L., Beyreuther E., & Bietenhard H., Eds.). *πίστις*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Moffatt J. 1924. *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark International.

Morrison M. 2005. *Enthymemes in Hebrews*.

[www.angelfire.com/md/mdmorrison/nt/enthymemes.pdf](http://www.angelfire.com/md/mdmorrison/nt/enthymemes.pdf). Accessed 31 January 2014.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2002. *Rhetorical Criticism: History, Purpose and Method (updated 2004)*. <http://www.angelfire.com/md/mdmorrison/nt/rhetorical.pdf>. Accessed January 2013.

Oberholtzer T.K. 1988. *The Warning Passages in Hebrews Part 1 (of 5): The Eschatological Salvation of Hebrews 1:5-2:5*. *Bibliotheca sacra*, (January - March), pages 83-97.

O'Brien P.T. 2010. *The Letter to the Hebrews. The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Olbricht T.H. 2008. *Rhetorical Criticism in Biblical Commentaries*. *Currents in Biblical Research*, Vol. 7.1:11-36, Los Angeles, London: SAGE Publications.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2002. *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts (Eriksson A., Olbricht T.H., Ubelacker W., Eds.)*, Chapter 22, *Anticipating and Presenting the Case for Christ as the High Priest in Hebrews*. USA: Emory University.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1997. *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C. – A.D. 400 (Porter S.E., Ed.)*, *Rhetoric Defined (Chapter 6, Delivery and Memory)*. Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1993. *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference (Porter S.E. and Olbricht T.H., Eds.)*, Part I, *Hebrews as Amplification*, pages 374-387. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press

Peeler A.L. 2010. *The Ethos of God in Hebrews*. *Perspective in Religious studies*, *Journal of the NABPR*, 37, pages 37-51.

Perelman C. 1982. *The Realm of Rhetoric* (William K. Trans.). Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Nortreb Dame Press.

Perelman C. and Olbrechts-Tyteca L. 1969. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. (Wilkinson J. and Weaver P., Trans.) Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Perry P.S. 2009. *Making Fear Personal: Hebrews 5:11-6:12 and the Argument of Shame*. *Journal for the Study of New Testament* 32.1, pages 99-125.

Pogoloff S.M. 1992. *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians*. SBL Dissertation Series 134. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press.

Porter S.E. 1997. *Vol. 25: Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*. New Testament Tools and Studies. Leiden; New York: Brill.

Porter S.E. & Stamps D. L. 2002. *Vol. 195: Rhetorical criticism and the Bible*. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*. London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press.

Pshenichny G. 2009. *The New Testament Faith of the Old Testament Righteous One: Abraham in the Letter to the Hebrews*. *Theological reflections* #10, pages 25-40.

Quintilian 1922. *Institutio Oratoria* (Butler H.E., Ed.). Medford, MA: Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd.

Ramey W.D. 1997. *Literary Analysis of Hebrews 1:1-4*. Christian Publishers' Bookhouse. Online: [http://www.inthebeginning.org/chiasmus/xfiles/xheb1\\_1-4.pdf](http://www.inthebeginning.org/chiasmus/xfiles/xheb1_1-4.pdf). Accessed 23 November 2013.

Reed J.T. 1997. *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C. – A.D. 400* (Porter S.E., Ed), *Rhetoric in Practice* (Chapter 7, *Epistles*). Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill.

Rhee S.Y. 2001. *Faith in Hebrews: Analysis with the Context of Christology, Eschatology, and Ethics*. Studies in Biblical Literature, Vol. 19. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2001. *Chiasm and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 12:1-29*. Westminster Theological Journal 62, pages 269-284.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2000. *Christology and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 5:11-6:20*. Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 43/1 (March), pages 83-96.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2000. *Christology and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 1:1-2:4*. Bibliotheca Sacra 157 (April – June), pages 174-189.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1998. *Chiasm and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 11*. Bibliotheca Sacra 155 (July – September), pages 327-345.

Richardson C. 2009. *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith: Jesus' Faith as the Climax of Israel's History in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. PhD. University of Aberdeen.

Robbins V.K. 2010. *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament (Aune D., Ed.)*. Chapter 13 (*Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*), pages 192-219. United Kingdom: Willey-Blackwell, A John Wiley and Sons Publishing Company.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1985. *Reviews of Goerge A. Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*. Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Springs), pages 145-149.

Rowe G.O. 1997. *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C. – A.D. 400 (Porter S.E., Ed.), Rhetoric Defined (Chapter 5, Style)*. Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill.

Runge S.E. 2010. *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis (4)*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Ryken L., Wilhoit J., Longman, T. Duriez C., Penney D., & Reid D.G. 2000. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Salyer G.D. 2010. *Rhetoric in the New Millennium: Promise and Fulfilment* (Hester J.D. and Hester J.D., Eds.), Chapter 3: *Reading Scripture as/for Public Knowledge*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity. Maiden Lane, New York: T&T Clark International. Kindle Version.

Sampson F. S. 1856. *A Critical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Dabney R.L, Ed.). New York: Robert Carter & Brothers.

Sand A. 1990. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Balz H. R., & Schneider G., Eds.). Vol. 3, pages 62-63. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Silva M. 2007. *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Kaiser W.C. Jr. & Silva M., Eds.). Chapter 3 (*Let's be Logical Using and Abusing Language*), pages 49-65. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Scott B.R. 1998. *Jesus's Superiority over Moses in Hebrews 3:1-6*. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (April-June), pages 201-210.

Smith K.G. 2009. *A Practical Guide for Studying God's Word*. RSA, Johannesburg: SATS.

Spellman C.E. 2011. *When Hope Screams: Learning How to Suffer as Sons from the Book of Hebrews*. *South Western Journal of Theology*, Vol. 53, No. 2, pages 112-134.

Stamps D.L. 1997. Vol. 25: *Handbook to exegesis of the New Testament*. *New Testament Tools and Studies* (Porter S.E., Ed.), (Rhetorical and Narratological Criticism, pages 217-239). Leiden; New York: Brill.

Stanley S. 1994. *The Structure of Hebrews of Three Perspectives*. *Tyndale Bulletin* 45.2, pages 247-271.

Still T.D. 2007. *Christos as Pistos: The Faith(fulness) of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69:4, pages 746-755.

Strong J. 2009. *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and the Hebrew Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Swanson J. 1997. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Thayer J.H. 1889. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Thomas R.L. 1998. *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries : Updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

Thompson J.W. 2008. *Hebrews*. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Thurén L. 2002. *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference (Eriksson A., Olbricht T.O., & Übelacker W., Eds.), (Chapter 4, Is There Biblical Argumentation?)*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1997. *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C. – A.D. 400 (Porter S.E., Ed.), Individual Writers and the Rhetorical Tradition (Chapter 19, the General New Testament Writings)*. Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill.

Tiedtke E., & H.-Link, G. 1986. *New international Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Coenen L., Beyreuther E., & Bietenhard H., Eds.). δεῖ. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Trotter A.H. 1997. *Vol. 6: Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews. Guides to New Testament exegesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Übelacker W. 2005. *Rhetoric, Ethic and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse (Olbricht T.H., & Erikson E., Eds.), Chapter 18 (Hebrews and the Implied Author's Rhetorical Ethos), pages 316-334*. New York: Emory University.

Utley B. 2013. *Free Biblical Commentary. The Superiority of the New Covenant: Hebrews*. Biblical Lessons International, [www.freebiblecommentry.org](http://www.freebiblecommentry.org). Accessed 24 April 2013.

Vanhoye A. 2011. *A Different Priest: The Letter to the Hebrews (Arnold L., Tran.)*. Rhetorica Semitica. Miami, FL: Convivium Press.

Van der Merwe A. 2011. *Grace, the Forbidden Gospel: Jesus Tore the Veil: Religion Sewed it Back Up*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press. Kindle Edition.

Varner W. 2007. *A Discourse Analysis of Matthew's Nativity Narrative*. Tyndale Bulletin 58.2, pages 209-228.

Watson D.F. 2010. *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament (Aune D., Ed.)*. Chapter 11 (*Rhetorical Criticism*), pages 166-175. United Kingdom: Willey-Blackwell, A John Wiley and Sons Publishing Company.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2002. Vol. 195: *Rhetorical criticism and the Bible (Porter S.E. and Stamps D.L., Eds.)*. (*Why We Need Socio-Rhetorical Commentary and what it Might Look Like*), pages 129-159. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series. London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press.

Weima J.A.D. 1997. *What does Aristotle have to do with Paul? An Evaluation of Rhetorical Criticism*. Calvin Theological Journal 32, pages 458-468.

Weiser A. 1985. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Kittel, G., Bromiley, G. W., & Friedrich, G. (Eds.))*, pages 849-852. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1964-). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Kittel, G., Bromiley, G. W., & Friedrich, G. (Eds.))*, Vol. 6, pages 182-196. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Westcott B.F. 1903. *The Epistle to the Hebrews the Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (3d ed.). London: Macmillan.

Westfall C.L. 2006. *The Structure of Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*. [www.hebrews.unibas.ch/documents/2006Westfall.pdf](http://www.hebrews.unibas.ch/documents/2006Westfall.pdf). Accessed 09 June 2012.

Whitten C. 2012. *Pure Grace: The Life Changing Power of Uncontaminated Grace*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image. Kindle Edition.

Wilson A.J. 2005. *Warnings within the Argument of Hebrews*. MTh, Brunel University.

Witherington III B, 2009. *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament*. Cascade Books; Eugene: Oregon.

Wuellner W. 1997. *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C. – A.D. 400 (Porter S.E., Ed.), Rhetoric Defined, (Chapter 3, Arrangement)*. Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1987. *Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking us?* *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49, pages 448-463.