

An Analysis of Rhetorical Criticism as Exemplified by Hebrews Chapter 11

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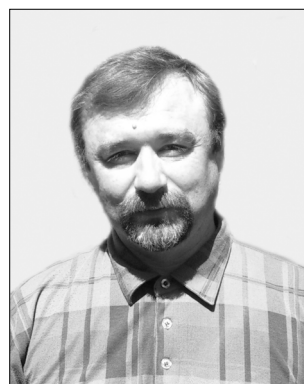
INTRODUCTION

Rhetorical criticism as a method of study of the biblical text was developed in the second half of the twentieth century. Commentators refer to rhetoric, seeing in it a good complement to other methods of studying the Scriptures. This approach assumes that the New Testament writers were familiar with rhetoric through their education, or through interaction (of any kind) with the oral or written Hellenistic culture.

The goal of this article is to learn the basics of rhetorical analysis of the biblical text as one of the methods of Bible study, to see its strengths and weaknesses, and to answer the question of whether or not rhetorical analysis can contribute to understanding the meaning that is attached to the text by the author.

To achieve this goal it is necessary to give a brief overview of the main elements of rhetoric, and in the final section, which could be called practical, there will be an attempt to conduct a rhetorical analysis of Hebrews 11. This selection was made because of the presence of a well-styled message and a clearly marked composite drawing of this semantic passage.

The lack of a sufficient number of sources on this subject forced the author to devote more attention to the work of two theologians specializing in rhetorical criticism. It is the research of Watson F. Duane and Cosby R. Michael, whose rhetorical analysis of Hebrews became the foundation of the second, practical section of this article.



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1. Definition of rhetorical criticism and its current status

In the classic sense, rhetoric is the science of the laws of eloquence and their practical application. Rhetoric originated in ancient Greece, in about the fifth century B.C.; as a science it developed up until the third century B.C.; and it flourished in ancient Rome during the classic period of ancient eloquence, at the time of the policies of the orator Marcus Tullius Cicero (first century A.D.). The main task of the ancient rhetoricians was the ability to convincingly convey their arguments to the audience, more than to achieve a particular impact on the audience. Aristotle defined rhetoric as the ability to find ways of convincing on any subject.^[1] This definition shows the versatility of rhetoric, that is, the philosopher emphasized the ability of the «science of eloquence» to find ways of persuading with respect to any existing subject.

With such «versatility» rhetoric could not fail to attract the attention of authors and commentators of Scripture. However, modern scholars of biblical rhetoric operate with a fixed text of material (usually set out in the epistolary genre), so it is quite natural that in their definitions the emphasis is on the rhetorical analysis of an already existing text. W. M. Wroth defines rhetorical analysis as research of the specific linguistic and structural features of the text in its present form, without examining its age, social use, or historical development.^[2] D. Watson, in turn, emphasizes the connection of rhetoric with the social environment. He argues that rhetoric is the connection between the text and the social environment, evaluating the latter through the former.^[3] In another study Watson stresses the importance of conducting rhetorical analysis from the angle of Greco-Roman, modern rhetorical and literary theories,^[4] although G. Kennedy and H. Betz place more emphasis on the features and rules of classical Greek rhetoric.^[5] Even the above definitions show that the supporters of rhetorical criticism do not agree on everything.

Over the last three decades of the twentieth century, rhetorical criticism of the New Testament was developed following a certain dissatisfaction with form criticism and redaction criticism, as well as the growth of interest in rhetoric in other areas, particularly in classical literature. The key point was the report of James Muilenburg, «Form Criticism and Beyond», addressed to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968. He presented a proposal and methodology for using rhetorical criticism in biblical studies. Muilenburg argued that through the use of rhetorical criticism, biblical studies can advance past the boundaries offered by critical forms.^[6]

Another expert who contributed to the return to rhetorical criticism was George Kennedy, a professor of classical literature at the University of North Carolina. He

^[1] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*. <http://lib.ru/POEEAST/ARISTOTEL/ritoriki.txt> (accessed 31.08.2013).

^[2] W. M. Wroth, «Rhetorical Criticism, Hebrew Bible,» in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation. K – Z*, ed. by J. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), p. 397.

^[3] F. Duane Watson, «Rhetorical Criticism, New Testament,» in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation. K – Z*, ed. by J. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), p. 401.

^[4] D. Watson, «Rhetorical Criticism,» in *Jesus and the Gospel*, ed. by J. Green (Moscow: BBI, 2003), p. 528.

^[5] Quoted by Asensio M. Gustavo, «Halliday's Functional Grammar as Heir to New Testament Rhetorical Criticism,» in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, ed. by Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 86.

^[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 400-401.

was the first to develop a methodology for rhetorical criticism of the Gospel and Epistles of the New Testament according to Greco-Roman rhetorical techniques. In addition, W. Wuellner in his major publication, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans: An Alternative to the Donfried-Karris Debate over Romans" (1976), explored the way Paul lined up his arguments in Romans, as well as comprehensively studying the structure of the letter.^[7] Besides the above-mentioned names, one can also highlight the work of F. D. Watson; Dennis L. Stamps; A. Erickson; Hans Dieter Betz, Mark D. Given, who all contributed to the rhetorical study of the biblical text.

As noted above, supporters of rhetorical critics suggest that the creators of the New Testament were familiar with rhetoric either through their education, or through all kinds of interaction with the Hellenistic culture. This leaves a number of important issues that still need to be answered. Has rhetoric influenced the epistolary genre to such a degree that it can be used to analyze the New Testament epistles? Did Greco-Roman rhetoric influence the Jewish culture of the first century? Can rhetoric be used to analyze the work of Jewish authors? What role does Hebrew rhetoric play in early Christian rhetoric? There are many questions which elicit varying answers. Some researchers limit the influence of rhetoric in the New Testament epistles to determining the style and standard set of rhetorical devices. Others see the epistles of the New Testament as speech in the epistolary genre that must be analyzed based on Greco-Roman rhetorical theory. There are those who recognize that rhetoric affects the epistles to different extents and at different levels. Opinions differ between those who maintain that the biblical authors consciously implemented rhetoric, and others who state that this was mere imitation and unconscious borrowing. According to the author of this study, rhetorical analysis has a place in modern research if only because the New Testament epistles were meant to be read in churches, and therefore it is logical to assume that they were written as speeches, with the use of the conventional set of rhetorical devices of that time. If this is so, rhetorical criticism has a right to a place in the long line of research methods.

It is also important to note that modern rhetorical analysis of the New Testament goes along with literary criticism, linguistics, semantics, stylistics of the text, and analysis theory of speech. Almost all authors agree that rhetorical criticism is best used in conjunction with other conventional methods. On this basis, it can be argued that rhetorical criticism may anticipate an interdisciplinary future.

2. Scheme of rhetorical analysis

Rhetorical analysis is usually carried out according to the following pattern:

- Delimitation of rhetorical units
- Identification of the rhetorical situation

^[7] Thomas H. Olbricht, "Classical Rhetorical Criticism and Historical Reconstruction: A Critique," in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*,

ed. by Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 109-110.

- Identification of the type of rhetoric and its status
- Analysis of the selection and arrangement of the material, the emotional component, the evidence from the example, and the style and figures of speech
- Evaluation of the rhetorical effectiveness of the material

Since it is assumed that the study is of a fixed text, special attention should be paid to the positioning of the material being analyzed (*dispositio*).^[8]

In *dispositio*, as a rule, the material is placed as follows:

- introduction (*exordium*)
- narration (*narratio*)
- proof (*probatio*)
- proof by example (*ratio*)
- positive or negative aspects of the evidence (*confirmation / confuratio*)
- a further confirmation of the argument (*exornatio*)
- rebuttal of the opponent's argument (*refutatio*)
- approval (*propositio*)
- conclusion (*peroratio*)

Defining a text section helps determine which function the excerpt carries in terms of the whole message taken together, as well as facilitating the identification of the genre of the message (polemical, apologetic, etc.).

2.1. Introduction (*exordium*)

The introduction is the initial component of the rhetorical unit, which aims to make the audience attentive and receptive. *Exordium* introduces the topics that will be developed in the proof section (*probatio*) (e.g., 1Cor. 15:35; Jn. 13:1). The introduction should suit the occasion and should have the right proportion. The content and style of the introduction help in building the rhetorical situation of the New Testament epistles. If the author speaks frankly and openly in the introduction, it is likely that his audience is friendly. If he uses an indirect approach, it may indicate the presence or possibility of a conflict. In a case like this, the author will most likely use methods that will help overcome the prejudices of the audience (e.g., hint at the situation of the opponent in order to ridicule him). Often in the introduction the author will emphasize his strongest arguments and will avoid the weaker side of a situation.

2.2. Narration (*narratio*)

Narration (content) is speech that informs the audience about the nature of the situation. It should be concise, clear, and should end where the point of controversy begins (e.g., 1Cor. 15:3-11; John. 13:2-30). It can also contribute to the understanding of the rhetorical situation. Narration is not limited to the beginning of the conversation; it can be placed at any point in the conversation, especially in complex cases.

^[8] A glossary of rhetorical terms is given at the end of the article.

2.3. Proof (*probatio*)

Proof develops judgment *exordium* and *narratio*. Typically, it consists of *confirmatio* (proof of the orator's judgments) and *refutatio* (weakening and refutation of the opponent's judgments) (e.g., 1Cor. 15:20-28; John. 14:1-16:28).

There are many suggestions on how to build *probatio*. For example, one may start with a strong argument, place the weak argument in the middle, and then end with a strong argument. Following this structure helps to understand the outline of the author's problems with the audience by means of what he considers the strengths and weaknesses of his argument. If the opponent's arguments are weak they can be repeated verbatim, but if the arguments are strong, they are not repeated (e.g., 1Cor. 15:12). However, the arguments of the opponent are never repeated with further evidence as that only serves to further strengthen them.

When rebuttal evidence of the opponent is presented (*refutatio*), it often includes the use of humor and irony. The orator could pretend to agree with the opponent, and add something more dramatic to refute the accusations, then simulate repentance and use distortion based on irony or reservation (e.g., Job 12:2). A joke helps to delude the expectations of the opposition and send the argument in a direction the opponent does not expect. It must be remembered that when using jokes, the author does not seek to express his objections, or repeat the words of the opponents directly.

2.4. Conclusion (*peroratio*)

The conclusion of the rhetorical passage is the point at which the orator summarizes his speech (semantic passage). The structure of a resume can be different: it could be instruction, or repetition of the arguments that have been provided, or it could contain the listing of the strongest arguments, etc. Therefore the *peroratio* of the message indicates the most important aspects of the situation and how the author evaluates them. It becomes clear which aspects the author considers most important for the audience.

The conclusion shows what change the author desires most from his audience and suggests that the audience can achieve this change (e.g., 1Cor. 15:58; Jn.16:29-33). If the author, in summarizing, calls for compassion, it indicates that he is defending himself from opponents (e.g., Gal. 6:17). In deliberative rhetoric, resume is only used when there are diverse opinions, and it shows that the audience does not agree with the author on everything. The conclusion is usually more emotional than the introduction in order to help the speaker present his arguments in a more favorable fashion.

3. Rhetorical study of Hebrews 11

This part of the analysis will attempt to conduct a rhetorical analysis of Hebrews 11, which should contribute to a better understanding of the strategy of the letter's author to reach his goal of convincing Jewish Christians, «Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess» (Heb. 10:23).

3.1. Rhetorical situation and type of rhetoric

In the context of Hebrews it is evident that the recipients of the letter were undergoing persecution (10:32-34; 12:3-4), and some of them had stopped gathering together (2:1-3; 10:25, 29); perhaps the Jewish Christians had begun to return to Judaism. It cannot be stated that persecution had become something unexpected, because the local church already had had difficulties and overcame them «joyfully» (10:34). Rather, for some Christians, this had become a crisis of faith. They were asking questions, such as: Am I on the right or on the wrong path? Is it worth paying such a high price for this way? The author's goal is to strengthen the wavering Christians and encourage them not to forsake their gatherings (10:25). To achieve this goal the author, throughout the epistle, shows the superiority of the "new above the old": Christ above Moses (3:1-6); Christ above the High Priest (5:1-14); the New Testament above the Old (8:6, 7:22). The Christians were waiting for «a kingdom that cannot be shaken» (12:28), but they must hold fast to the confession (10:23). The author emphasizes that God's judgment awaits those who commit the sin of apostasy (10:26-31). However, the author's purpose is not to frighten, but to encourage the readers that a better future awaits them (10:35-37).

Further, the author reminds the readers about the weapon that will bring them victory: faith without wavering (10:38-39). In chapter 11 to confirm his words, the author lists the heroes of the faith of past times, those who remained faithful to God despite difficulties. The list of examples is a logical continuation of the didactic unit (10:19-39).

Chapter 11 of Hebrews can be defined as deliberative rhetoric since this kind of rhetoric is characterized by persuasion and dissuasion, which is what the author demonstrates. Furthermore, the author proceeds according to categories of useful and harmful, which also indicates the use of deliberative rhetoric. The status of the rhetoric is establishment, since the author focuses on what and how must be understood and the way it is suitable to proceed in the given situation.

3.2. Limitations and plan of the rhetorical units

Thus, chapter 11 is preceded by the admonitory block 10:19-39, and the last two verses of which formulate the main idea of the passage, namely the need for faith without wavering. Following chapter 11, in chapter 12:1-11 the author urges his listeners to be patient after the example of Christ. This topic «pushes away» from the list of the heroes of the faith: «Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses ...» (12:1), which, in turn, is evidence of the beautiful style of the author.

In the *exordium* (introduction) (11:1-2), the author gives a basic *propositio* (approval), which is often called the definition of faith (11:1). Followed by a *probatio* (proof) of this statement, in the form of a list of eighteen *ratio* (proof by example), arranged in narrative form, with two *sonfirmatio* (11:6 and 11:13-16). This is followed by an *exornatio* (further confirmation of the argument) (11:32-38) consisting of three brief lists. The completing section is *peroratio* (conclusion) consisting of two verses (11:39-40).

A rhetorical plan of Chapter 11 may be represented as follows:

1. *Exordium* (11:1-2)
2. *Probatio* (11:3-31)
 - 2.1. *Ratio* 1. Faith in the knowledge of God's creation (11:3)
 - 2.2. *Ratio* 2. Faith of Abel (11:4)
 - 2.3. *Ratio* 3. Faith of Enoch (11:5-6)
 - 2.3.1. *Confirmatio*. Without faith it is impossible to please God (11:6)
 - 2.4. *Ratio* 4. Faith of Noah (11:7)
 - 2.5. *Ratio* 5. Faith of Abraham - the way to a foreign country (11:8)
 - 2.6. *Ratio* 6. Faith of Abraham – anticipation of the City of God (11:10)
 - 2.7. *Ratio* 7. Faith of Sarah (11:11-16)
 - 2.7.1. *Confirmatio*. Desire for what is better (11:13-16)
 - 2.8. *Ratio* 8. Faith of Abraham – the sacrifice of Isaac (11:17-19)
 - 2.9. *Ratio* 9. Faith of Isaac (11:20)
 - 2.10. *Ratio* 10. Faith of Jacob (11:21)
 - 2.11. *Ratio* 11. Faith of Joseph (11:22)
 - 2.12. *Ratio* 12. Faith of Moses – violation of the king's commandment (11:23)
 - 2.13. *Ratio* 13. Faith of Moses – desire to suffer with the people of God (11:24-26)
 - 2.14. *Ratio* 14. Faith of Moses – leaving Egypt (11:27)
 - 2.15. *Ratio* 15. Faith of Moses – the Passover (11:28)
 - 2.16. *Ratio* 16. Faith of the people - the Red Sea (11:29)
 - 2.17. *Ratio* 17. Faith of the people – the walls of Jericho fall (11:30)
 - 2.18. *Ratio* 18. Faith of Rahab (11:31)
3. *Exornatio* (11:32-38)
 - 3.1. First additional list: Names (11:32)
 - 3.1.1. Rhetorical question (11:32a)
 - 3.1.2. Assurance of lack of time (11:32b)
 - 3.1.3. Immediate additional list (11:32b)
 - 3.2. Second supplementary list: Deeds of the heroes of faith (11:33- 35a)
 - 3.3. Third supplementary list: List of sufferings (11:35b-38)
 - 3.3.1. *Exclamatio* (11:38a)
4. *Peroratio* (11:39-40).

3.3. Analysis *exordium* (introduction) (11:1-2)

The introduction consists of two verses in which the author gives a definition of faith and connects it with γὰρ with the assertion that οἱ πρεσβύτεροι (the ancients) testified to a similar belief, i.e., had a deep faith and can act as examples. Given the rhetorical features of the chapter, the introduction should be restricted to the first two verses, although most modern commentators attribute three verses to the introduction on the basis of the thematic unity of the components of the chapter.^[9] Given the characteristics of the lengthy *probatio* (proof) (11:3-31), it should start with verse 3,

^[9] For example, see Zane C. Hodges, *Poslanie k kinigi otkrovenie*, P. S. Kharchlaa, ed. (Kiev: *evreiam, Tolkovanie novozavetnykh poslanii i* Pressa Ukrainy, 1996), p. 515.

as it is this verse that begins the anaphoric use of the dative πίστει (faith) (11:3-31).^[10]

This study will not address the issue of possible translations of ὑπόστασις and ἔλεγχος in 11:1. The magnitude of the debate on this issue does not allow for an adequate overview within the boundaries of this article. From the perspective of rhetoric one should pay attention to Cosby's suggestion for verse 1 paronomasia^[11]:

Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις, Now faith is being sure of what we hope for
πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων and certain of what we do not see

As we know, paronomasia refers to figures of sound, so that the sound parallels between πίστις and ὑπόστασις and the repetition of genitive endings may indicate that the author targeted his attention on the rhythmic and intonation features of speech. This method is used by the author of Hebrews in 5:8 ε;maqen ... ε;paqen, and paronomasia in 11:33-34 will be used together with asyndeton.^[12] The reason for and results of such use still need to be addressed; at this stage it can be argued that the rhythmic features of the text messages were of concern to the author. The author's attention to such things shows that he was interested not only in giving a theological formulation, but also in its quality. He thought through the verbal representation of the textual material. Most likely, the author intended that the rhythmic elements expressed verbally would give a certain credibility to the *propositio* (affirmation) of verse 1. However, on the other hand, it is important to note that the author did not aim to fill the text with phonetic delights. In this case, as in other New Testament epistles, the rhetorical elements act as «helpers.»

3.4. Anaphora and the rhythmic intonation of the list in Heb. 11:3-31

The first thing that attracts our attention while reading chapter 11 is the enumeration or list of heroes of the faith. In practice the use of the opinions and life examples of «exemplary people» to prove a point of view is a very common thing. However, more frequently there are only references to one or two famous people, whereas lists like Hebrews 11 are rare. A large number of lists has reached us, in which the goal was to prove or illustrate certain truths. In the Bible there are lists of the names of contemporaries who were involved in certain events (lists in Ezra and Nehemiah); genealogy (Genesis 35:22-26, Matt. 1:1-17); or lists of people with special qualities (David's warriors in 2Sa. 21:15-22). However, long lists of famous people which operate together as examples in order to confirm an idea are relatively rare.

The compositional particularity of chapter 11 is that the author, to defend his point of view, gives many examples of famous people. He cites examples from the time of

[10] More details about this will be discussed in the next section, «Anaphora and rhythmic intonation list Hebrews 11:3-31.»

[11] Paronomasia is a stylistic figure playing on several similar-sounding words, but with a different meaning; Michael R. Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11: In Light of Example Lists in Antiquity* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), p. 40.

[12] Cosby sees paronomasia in the combination Σάρρα στείρα, which, in his opinion, emphasizes Sarah's barren condition (11:11), but in the opinion of this author that conclusion appears somewhat strained; Michael R. Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11: In Light of Example Lists in Antiquity* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), p. 81.

Cain and Abel, while adhering to a strict chronological sequence. The multiplicity of examples is intended to show that the assertion of verse 1 is true not only for the author and his readers, but also for people of all ages, starting with Cain and Abel.

The presentation of the examples changes throughout the list. There are brief statements in which all the information is located in one extended sentence (e.g., vv. 3 and 4). However there are examples with a detailed description of the deeds of the heroes of faith with brief commentaries (e.g., vv. 8-10). Each of the eighteen examples starts with a dative πίστει (faith). This stylistic device is called anaphora—the repetition of the initial parts of words, the syntactic or rhetorical constructions of adjacent segments of speech.^[13] Using this technique allows the author to focus on the main idea of the passage—that overcoming existing difficulties (in this case, persecution) is only possible with faith. The author emphasizes that faith was the motivation for the great deeds of the οἱ “οἱ προεσβύτεροι (the ancients, 11:3). Furthermore, anaphora shows that the author has a vast number of examples to argue. One gets the impression that he could cite more examples to prove his assertion in verse 1.

Although the examples of chapter 11 differ structurally, we can note a certain rhythmic quality. The author builds the first line of examples of heroes of the faith, as follows:

- Πίστει (faith)
- + name of the hero of faith
- + act motivated by faith (often in the form of the aorist).

In 11:3-31, ten names are attached to the eighteen datives πίστει (faith). Particular attention is given to Abraham and Moses. Three times the use of πίστει (faith) accompanies the events of Abraham’s life (11:8, 9, 17). The events of Moses’ life are adjacent to four datives (11:23, 24, 27, 28). This amount of attention is not surprising, given the attitude of the Jews to these historical figures. Verses 29 and 30 are dropped from this scheme, in the first of which the author uses the aorist διέβησαν “passed” to refer to an object of action (11:29) in the third-person pronoun, indicating the people of Israel, and in verse 30 the wall of Jericho stands as the object. Action often is denoted as active or passive aorist.

Another feature of anaphoric use is present in 11:3-31 as examples stylistically dissimilar to each other and rhetorically balanced. We find stylistic diversity in vv. 3-19 and the opposite in vv. 20-31, where the examples are shorter, of a similar length and structure. As a result, the examples in vv. 20-31 have rhythmic similarities, most notable in their oral presentation. Especially vv. 21-22 are very similar, where it talks about Jacob and Joseph. Both verses have the following structure:

- πίστει (faith)
- + hero’s name (Jacob or Joseph)
- + death + sons (Joseph or Israel)
- + description of the actions with the use of two aorists.

^[13] D. N. Aleksandrov, *Ritorika* (Moscow: Unity, 2000), p. 482.

Although the second lines of these two verses differ in their structure, when they are pronounced out loud their rhythmic similarity is evident. To this we can add a similarity of content in the deathbed statements of Jacob and Joseph, which also serves to increase their identity.

Verses 27-29 can serve as another example of rhetorical balance in the passage by telling of the outcome of events. They resemble each other enough to be able to talk about their rhythmic identity. The structure of the verses is as follows:

πίστει (faith)
 + aorist
 + accusative noun
 + explanation, beginning with the words γὰρ ἵνα ἦς

The second line of each verse of 11:27-29, although formulated in various ways, consists of about the same length. As a result, these verses have a very similar tone when read aloud. Their compositional similarity helps in understanding and memorizing their common theme. Also, the brevity of the examples in vv. 27-31 rhythmically leads the reader to the assertion that the author will start *confirmatio* (confirmation): he lacks the time to talk about all the heroes of faith (11:32).

3.5. Analysis *confirmatio* (s) (11:6 and 11:13-16)

Section 3-31 contains two *confirmatio* – a confirmation that the author found necessary to add to the list of examples. In a conventional (non-rhetorical) structure they could be attributed to the author’s mini-commentaries. *Confirmatio* in a narrative style explains the examples that have been given previously. For example, 11:6, most likely belongs to the first three examples. The proof of this connection can be a repetition of the verb εὐαρεστέω (please) in vv. 5 and 6.

The second comment is located in the largest section of the chapter, the story of Abraham (including Sarah) (11:8-19). The *confirmatio* (s) 11:13-16 may even be called a preaching insert. It is interesting that in this confirmation the author does not reflect on the amazing birth of Isaac, which would have seemed quite logical, since this topic is surrounded by this theme (11:11-12 and 11:17-19). Thematically *confirmatio* (s) refers to vv. 8-10, as in it the author focuses on the fact that the heroes of faith have not received the promises (11:13) and directs the readers to direct their gaze to “heaven» (11:16). The author seeks such a change of mind from the readers. He wants them to see something bigger and better (11:10, 14-16, 40). According to the author of the epistle, the patriarchs understood that the true fulfillment of the promises of God is in the future—in the heavenly homeland (11:13-16). This confirms the thematic unity *confirmatio* contains in vv. 8-10, which speaks of the temporary life on earth and of God’s preparation of a new city (11:10).

It may seem that such placement of material reduces rhetorical effectiveness because if vv. 13-16 were placed after v. 10, their relationship would have been more obvious, and the unity of content in vv. 11-12 and 17-19 would be clearer. However, most likely, the author deliberately interrupted the anaphoric commentary series of confirmation (11:13-16). Perhaps this is a particularity in work with a long list of

examples, because a long listing (names, examples of actions) has its drawbacks, such as monotony. If we follow this logic, the composite structures of the chapter 11 *confirmatio* (s) not only perform its primary role, confirmation of the main lines of the argument, but also reduce the weaknesses of anaphora.

3.6. Analysis of *exornatio* (further confirmation of the argument) (11:32-38)

Verse 32 introduces the next section, which begins with the rhetorical question *Καὶ τί ἔτι λέγω* “And what more shall I say?” The Apostle Paul has used this method (e.g., 1Cor. 15:29-30, 32, 35). In this case, the rhetorical question is used for the same purpose as the anaphora, i.e., it shows that the examples confirming the statement of v. 1 are more than enough.

This section differs from the previous one. In 11:32 the use of the anaphoric *πίστει* (faith) is left out, but the list of heroes of the faith and their cases continues. The list of 11:32-38 can be called a list of names and of additional cases. Cosby refers to the method used in Heb. 11:32-38 as the “staccato effect.”¹⁴¹ Every subsection is built in a manner that makes this rhythm. Staccato (from Italian, meaning “short” or “abrupt”) is the reception of sound, in which the sounds are used briefly and abruptly. *Exornatio* can be divided into three smaller groups:

- an additional list of names (11:32)
- a list of the deeds of the heroes of faith (11:33 - 35a)
- a list of the sufferings experienced by “the ancients” (11:35b -38).

Each name or phrase that describes an action looks independent (abrupt), which also allows the author to create the desired effect, i.e. the presence of a large number of examples. On the other hand, despite the abruptness of the phrases, they only achieve their goal in conjunction with one another.

In v. 32 the author provides a number of additional names without any commentary on the actions of these people. Verses 33-35a are a series of phrases of the same length and composition, that describe the actions taken by famous people in history. It is not mentioned who performed these actions. Verses 35b -38 describe how faithful people have suffered for their faith. It also does not give any names. Just as the staccato effect in music makes individual sounds more energetic and determined, in this passage 11:32-38 the frequent use of names and events contributes to this effect. In addition, with the effect of staccato and with the phrase: *ὧν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος* (the world was not worthy of them, 11:38a), the author creates a certain emotional background (introduces an element of pathos), because very few believers would be indifferent to the actions in 11:35b-3. Voice energy, pauses, and emotions, etc., play a greater role in the verbal expression of this passage.

One of the distinguishing marks of *exornatio* is the violation of chronological order, which is strictly adhered to in *probatio* (proof) (11:3-31). In the biblical narrative, the characters follow each other in the following order: Barak (Judg. 4-5), Gide-

¹⁴¹ Michael R. Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition Lists in Antiquity* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), p. 24.

on (Judg. 6-8), Jephthah (Judg. 11-12), Samson (Judg. 13-16), Samuel (1Sam.) and David (1-2 Sam.). In v. 32 the list is as follows: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel. Obviously, this list refers to the heroes of faith in free chronological order, and is not limited; this shows the secondary importance of this passage for the author in his message.

The assertion that the author did not have enough time (11:32) can also be attributed to rhetorical technique. In literature on rhetoric there is not much information on why this technique is used. A similar reference to lack of time in a negative context is found in Acts 24:25. Typically, such a technique is used when it is necessary to interrupt a conversation (or a section of text). Then it is quite logical that the statement about the lack of time is present on the boundary between sections. In addition, the reference to the lack of time is in balance with other rhetorical techniques in chapter 11 and also aims to show the existence of a large number of examples of heroic manifestation of faith. They are so numerous that there is simply not enough time to list all the examples.

In 11:33-34 the author uses two rhetorical techniques. First, he uses asyndeton. The proposal is built in such a way that the similar parts are connected without the help of any conjunctions. This method creates the feeling of having a larger amount of examples than is reflected in the text.

In addition, the statements in vv. 33-34 are of equal length and structure, which indicates the presence of device called izokolon. This is a figure, the parts of which actually consist of an equal number of syllables. The effect is achieved not just with the complete coincidence of syllables, but also with the length or fullness of sounds in the lines that balance a quantitative discrepancy in the existing number of syllables. As a result, the number of syllables would seem equal, although this is not so. The important first phrase of v. 33 is:

οἱ διὰ πίστεως κατηγωνίσαντο βασιλείας,	who through faith conquered kingdoms,
εἰργάσαντο δικαιοσύνην,	administered justice,
ἐπέτυχον ἐπαγγελιῶν,	gained what was promised;
ἔφραξαν στόματα λεόντων,	who shut the mouths of lions,
ἔσβεσαν δύναμιν πυρός,	quenched the fury of the flames,
ἔφυγον στόματα μαχαίρης,	escaped the edge of the sword;
ἐδυναμώθησαν ἀπὸ ἀσθενείας,	whose weakness was turned to strength;
ἐγενήθησαν ἰσχυροὶ ἐν πολέμῳ,	who became powerful in battle
παρεμβολὰς ἔκλιναν ἄλλοτρίων	routed foreign armies.

The repetition of aorist endings in the third-person plural and accusative and genitive noun endings give the passage a certain rhythm. Cosby even perceives a chaotic structure in the use of the aorist verb endings,^[15] which can be represented as follows:

[15] Michael R. Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11: In Light of Example Lists in Antiquity* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), p. 62.

- A. κατηγονίσαντο
 εἰργάσαντο
 Β. ἐπέτυχον
 Β. ἔφραξαν
 Β1. ἔσβεσαν
 Β1. ἔφυγον
 Α1. ἐδυναμώθησαν
 ἐγενήθησαν

The final statement of v. 34, parembola παρεμβολὰς ἔκλιναν ἄλλοτρίων (routed foreign armies), has a different sequence of words which is likely to indicate the conclusion of the rhythmic series. The rhythmicity is particularly noticeable with the oral presentation of the passage. This technique has the same goal—to create the impression that the number of the heroes of faith is great.

The next thing that is worth paying attention to is the thematic focus of staccato. The course of the passage 11:33 - 35a is “positive”: the heroes through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; the women received their dead by resurrection, and so on. However, from the middle of v. 35, the indefinite pronoun ἄλλοι δε is used. The direction changes: others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection... (11:35b -38). In this case, the author uses the antithesis (or contrast) by which he indicates the imperfection of life on earth. Those who did great things (11:33-35a), “of whom the world was not worthy,” received suffering and persecution (11:35 b-38). Thus, it can be argued that in chapter 11 contrasts are used to direct the gaze of the audience away from earthly, temporal elements to the fact that “God had planned something better for us” in the future (11:40).

Interestingly, in the third additional list of persecution suffered by the heroes of faith (11:35b-38), the author does not give the rhythmic structure that he used earlier (11:33-35a). Here compositional similarity is limited to repeating the aorist passive ending *θησαν* and the participle *ούμενο* (11:37).

Another distinction in the list of antitheses (11:33-38) is that the author in the listings of persecution does not use asyndeton, and vice versa, in verse 38 he uses polysyndeton. The author arranges all (or almost all) of the similar parts together with *καὶ*. The effect of this stylistic figure, in conjunction with the staccato, is intended to emphasize the magnitude of the suffering endured by the heroes of faith.

3.7. Analysis of *peroratio* (conclusion) (11:39-40)

The conclusion 11:39-40 does not have much rhetorical power, but it nevertheless fully performs its function. It summarizes the above material and makes a conclusion. Verse 39 has a direct connection with the introduction (11:2). In both verses the verb occupies a key place “μαρτυρέω”. The author emphasizes the fact that none of these people had received what was promised (11:39). There is “something better for us” (11:40), and the author directs the attention of the listeners to that fact. This eschatological perfection and best native land are in heaven (11:16). The unique feature of the conclusion is that it uses the personal pronoun *ἡμῶν* (us), in contrast

to the use of “they” throughout the chapter. Most likely, this usage makes the smooth transition to chapter 12 (in 12:1 using “we”), which is further proof of the clarity and balance of the author’s style.

4. Results of the rhetorical analysis of Hebrews 11

After studying and exploring the nature and characteristics of the rhetorical analysis of a biblical text as one of the possible options for Bible study, it can be argued that this approach has contributed to the understanding of the passage being studied. Despite the still-existing traditional skepticism among biblical scholars about the value and importance of rhetorical criticism, it continues to be firmly consolidated as a specialized area of biblical interpretation. In the study of the Hebrews 11, rhetoric helps to identify the situation, to see the author’s purpose and intentions, and to establish the boundaries of the sections in the chapter. Rhetorical analysis showed exactly how the author presented and proved his main assertion (11:1-2). Despite the prevailing view that in the New Testament epistles the rhetorical effect was achieved largely through compositional techniques, it was observed that the author of Hebrews actively uses phonetic techniques. In addition, rhetorical analysis confirms the high quality and beauty of the author’s style.

On the basis of rhetorical analysis, it can be argued that the rhetoric in the studied passage demonstrates the central place of faith in the life of “the ancients” (11:2). The writer of Hebrews chose this method to strengthen those who believe in the Lord, who stood on the Christian way and endured persecution. He uses the kind of rhetoric and strategy that would be effective in the given situation. He does not address the question of his authority, as it is not questioned; he does not use arguments of logical consequences, contradictions, or a summary of irony. Those techniques in this particular case would not have served the goal. The dominant rhetorical method used by the author in chapter 11 is anaphora—the repetition of initial words. This method allowed the author to show a large number of examples of heroic expressions of faith throughout salvation history. Also the author uses paronomasia, the staccato effect, asyndeton and polysyndeton, izokolon, chiasmus, a rhetorical question, contrast, and a statement about the lack of time. These techniques are aimed at maintaining the basic rhetorical method (anaphora) and serve to achieve the main objective by creating an impression of a large number of similar examples that could be cited to confirm the author’s words.

The availability of rhetorical techniques that focus on the rhythmic components of the text (especially the combination of letters and syllables, melody and rhythm) show that the author paid attention to the process of perception of the written text, in its oral presentation. The author did not aim to fill the text with phonetic delights; however, it can be argued that the rhythmic features of the text were not a matter of indifference to him. This suggests that the author was sure that his message would be presented to the church in a verbal way. If so, the message recipients can legitimately be called listeners, and not just readers, which allows us to regard the New Testament epistles as speech, with the use of conventional set of rhetorical devices of that time.

In addition, the rhythmic similarities of the examples used in chapter 11 are intended to focus the attention of readers to understand and remember the main ideas of the author. This can be parallel with the structural construction of Hebrew poetry in which one thought is repeated several times in different words (synonymous parallelism). The repetition of ideas using rhythmic elements will act similarly to the effect that is achieved through parallelism. It is likely that understanding and remembering the main ideas of the author is the reason for the use of poetic elements by the author of Hebrews.

The format of this article does not allow the author to analyze the use of hyperbole (11:12), the paraphrase used in most of the examples, which is the use of synonymous phrases (11:16), which, do not play the main role, but support and reinforce the more important rhetorical techniques and make their contribution to the composite picture of the passage. All of the above lead to the following result: rhetorical analysis can be a good complement to other methods of studying the Scriptures..

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APPENDIX

Glossary of rhetorical terms:

- Confirmatio* – confirmation
Complexio – thanks
Dispositio – location
Exclamation – exclamation
Exordium – introduction
Exornatio – further confirmation of the argument
Narratio – summary
Peroratio – conclusion
Probatio – proof
Propositio – approval
Ratio – the proof of the example
Refutatio – rebuttal evidence opponent