

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

#### 1.1 Introduction

In this world of uncertainty people look for what can be achieved as soon as possible. The way they think of salvation is not an exception. Most people seek a kind of formula assuring them of salvation in a moment when they hear the gospel. The author of Hebrews says that the way of salvation is different from what many people expect. Salvation requires endurance or perseverance on the part of the believers. There is no ready-made formula like a ready-made fast food.

This assertion will invite the discussion of the theological problem of assurance. Hebrews has been and is a major source for the controversy over the problem of apostasy of "believers."<sup>1</sup> But this problem is not the main focus of this dissertation. Hebrews is a "word of exhortation" (13:22) to real people whom the author knew personally and to whom he expects soon to be restored (13:19). The author is interested not in producing a doctrinal treatise, but in encouraging and exhorting the readers in their struggle of Christian life. The

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<sup>1</sup> This problem is usually discussed in relation to passages like 2:1-4, 6:4-8, 10:26-31, and 12:14-17, 25-29; for the details, see Carlston (1959, 296-302); Marshall (1969, 132-54; 1990, 306-24); McCown (1981, 169-94); McCullough (1974, 1-7); Nicole (1975, 355-64); Osborne (1975, 144-66); Prince (1980, 93-180); Verbrugge (1980, 61-73); Moody (1981, 337-65); Toussaint (1982, 67-80); Mugridge (1987, 74-82); Oberholtzer (1988<sub>b</sub>, 319-28; 1988<sub>c</sub>, 410-19; 1989, 67-75); Volf (1990); R. A. Peterson (1991<sub>a</sub>, 40-57; 1991<sub>b</sub>, 95-112; 1992, 10-24; 1993, 17-31); Carson (1992<sub>a</sub>, 1-29); McKnight (1992, 21-59); for a bibliographic essay, see R. A. Peterson (1990, 119-25).

seemingly harsh warnings have a practical purpose to encourage the readers to persevere in their Christian pilgrimage and his uncompromising emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice does not leave any other option for salvation.

He is presupposing the conversion of the readers. "Faith in God" (6:1; cf. 11:6) is considered to be a part of elementary teachings about Christ. It is a major concern of the author that the readers should hold fast what they have already confessed (3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23). As we will see later, that is why faith is characterized, not as faith in Christ in Pauline fashion,<sup>2</sup> but as faith in God and his faithfulness which produces faithfulness on the part of the readers. This does not mean that the concept of faith in Christ is absent in Hebrews. Rather, it is presupposed. In Hebrews, faithfulness is inconceivable without faith in Christ.

The author wants to encourage and exhort the readers, who are believers but still in serious spiritual danger. He has the practical purpose of a pastor rather than the theoretical purpose of a theologian. To meet the practical needs of the readers, the author wrote Hebrews, which is carefully planned and persuasively argued. We know that exposition and exhortation alternate in Hebrews. Even though "the doctrine leads to the exhortation" and "the exhortations are based on the doctrine" (Dahl 1951, 401), the emphasis is clearly on the

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<sup>2</sup> That is why Gen 15:6, which, for Paul, is the basic text for the doctrine of justification by faith (Rom 4:3, 22; Gal 3:6; cf. Heb 11:7), is not cited even though many events in Abraham's life are used to illustrate his faith. Paul and the author of Hebrews use the term πίστις "in different though not contradictory ways" (Ellingworth 1991, vii-viii).

exhortations. The purpose of the author is practical. As regards the exhortation it is my conviction that the exhortation to perseverance is the dominant motif.<sup>3</sup>

As will be shown later, the macrostructure of Hebrews reflects this emphasis on exhortation. After the major christological motivation is presented in the central part of Hebrews (4:14-10:31), the final third part (10:32-13:17), almost all of which consists in exhortations, follows. The christology in the central part is surely significant, but that serves as a motivation to encourage and exhort the readers to strengthen their feeble arms and weak knees (12:12) and go to Jesus outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore (13:13).

Swindoll wrote in one of his letters<sup>4</sup>: "Encouragement and endurance belong together. It takes encouragement to endure. Without it we lose heart, we begin to weaken, and it isn't long before we entertain thoughts of quitting." The thought of the

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Saydon who maintains: "The master-idea of the Epistle is perseverance in faith. All sections are subordinated to this end. The exhortation is based on the dogmatic fact of the pre-eminence of the Christian religion and corroborated by the promise of reward to those who remain loyal to their Christian faith and by the threat of punishment to the apostates" (1961, 26); Borchert who comments: "Perseverance is the key to understanding Hebrews (12:1)" (1985, 328); Hagner who says that "it is a major and probably the major purpose of the book to warn the readers of a danger and exhort them to faithfulness" (1990, 11); G. H. Guthrie who comments: "The two genres [exposition and exhortation] move along different lines but are hastening towards the same goal. Each in its own way builds toward the same goal of challenging the hearers to endure" (1991, 216). According to De Villiers and Du Toit the overarching theme of Hebrews is: "Christ's revelatory work is so excellent and perfect that the first Christian readers, who are beginning to lag behind in the religious struggle, are summoned once more, as God's people en route to the consummation, to persevere in the faith" (1993, 99).

<sup>4</sup> This quote is from a letter (May 1994) by C. R. Swindoll for the supporters of "Insight for Living."

author of Hebrews runs in a similar way. As much as it is characterized as a word of exhortation, Hebrews is a writing on perseverance. The author of Hebrews encourages and exhorts so that the readers may endure and persevere.

In the following chapter, we will look at the rhetorical situation of the readers which necessitated a word of exhortation from the author. Then before getting into the detailed analysis of the theme of perseverance in the latter part of Hebrews (10:32-13:17), we will investigate the macrostructure of Hebrews. On the macrostructure of the whole epistle, we will follow a tripartite scheme similar to that of Nauck (1960, 199-206). This scheme will be examined closely in chapter 3 where the macrostructure of Hebrews will be analyzed. According to this scheme, the third and final part consists of 10:32-13:17.<sup>5</sup> Before going into a detailed analysis of the individual part of 10:32-13:17, the internal structure or mesostructure of 10:32-13:17 will be analyzed in chapter 4.

In chapter 5, which is the major chapter in this dissertation, through a detailed analysis of the text on the basis of discourse analysis,<sup>6</sup> it will be shown that 10:32-13:17 (including even the greetings at the very end of the epistle) is mainly concerned with the need of endurance or perseverance on the part of the readers.<sup>7</sup> This chapter will also include a

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<sup>5</sup> 13:18-25 is thought to be an epistolary conclusion which might have been added when Hebrews was sent to the readers.

<sup>6</sup> This methodology will be explained below.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lindars' comment: "Finally, because the aim of the epistle is essentially practical, the climax of the argument should be seen, not in the central argument of 7.1-10.18 (extremely important as it is), but in the grand exposition of

discussion of what kind of rhetorical devices the author used to persuade the readers.

## 1.2 Methodology

This dissertation is mainly an exegetical work. The major tool used is called "discourse analysis" or "colon analysis." The latter title is more specific because colon analysis is "a type of semantic discourse analysis" which was "developed in South Africa" (Snyman 1991, 89, 91). Since the article by Louw (1973, 108-18) was published in The Bible Translator, many South African scholars,<sup>8</sup> as well as a few scholars outside of South Africa,<sup>9</sup> have used this method for the analysis of the Greek text.

It has been recognized that the idea which the author wants to convey is effectively communicated through the structural pattern of the pericope, that is, by the way he selects and orders the utterances. As Louw comments, "the way or the manner, i.e., the structure, in which a notion is communicated, is the heart of its effectiveness" (1973, 101). The implication is "that the components selected do not primarily determine the whole, but that the whole determines the components" (A. B. du Toit 1974, 55).

With the above recognition the focus of the text-

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faith which follows it in 10.19-12.29" (1989, 406). His division is different from ours, but his point is obvious.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Louw (1979; 1982; 1988); A. B. du Toit (1974, 54-79; 1977, 32-47); Combrink (1979); also Neot 8 (1974); 11 (1977); 13 (1979); 16 (1982); 26 (1992) including addenda to those volumes.

<sup>9</sup> For example, D. A. Black (1987b, 175-94).

linguistics has shifted from sentence to paragraph or pericope (Louw 1973, 102-103; A. B. Du Toit 1974, 56-57; Snyman 1991, 88; Lane 1991a, lxxxi-lxxxiv). This shift was specifically caused by the recognition of "the interdependence and interdeterminativeness of sentences at a grammatical as well as semantic level" (A. B. du Toit 1974, 54). The reason for focusing on the pericope is because the pericope seems to be not only the unit of "the largest readily perceptible whole having homogeneity and cohesiveness," but also "the smallest unit of a discourse to be taken separately while still having some autonomy of its own and exhibiting its own peculiar structural pattern" (Louw 1973, 103).

In order to work with a pericope, the first thing to do is to demarcate it. To demarcate a pericope, it is necessary to look at the internal cohesion of a given stretch of language and find out where that cohesion breaks. This is done by paying attention, for example, to the following factors:<sup>10</sup>

- 1) Pronominalization - by using pronouns "a network of references" (Snyman 1991, 89) can be created.<sup>11</sup>
- 2) Conjunctions and particles - for example, the colons connected with coordinate conjunctions such as "and" or "but" belong together. Particles like *οὐν*<sup>12</sup> often occur at the end of a section.

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<sup>10</sup> The following list is from a lecture by A. B. du Toit.

<sup>11</sup> A. B. du Toit (1974, 54, 76) gives an example of the so-called "co-occurrence restriction": "The man goes from house to house. He is looking for work"; cf. "the consistent way in which an indefinite article is followed by a definite article": "There is a house on the ridge. The house is very big".

<sup>12</sup> The particle *οὐν* may be considered to indicate "the so-called 'stimulus-response' relation, where the first sentence evokes a certain reaction, and the next conveys the reaction" (A. B. du Toit 1974, 76).



- 3) Stylistic figures - for example, inclusio (a ring composition), parallelism, chiasm, etc.
- 4) Literary forms - for example, parable, healing incident, debate, confession, hymn, short letter within a larger document, etc.
- 5) Unity of place, time,<sup>13</sup> and characters.
- 6) Introductory and concluding formulae.
- 7) Thematic markers - repetition of both words and thoughts.
- 8) Theme binding the whole together.

Once the pericope is demarcated, the next step is to divide it into colons. A colon is defined as "an independent, grammatical construction, consisting of a noun-phrase and a verb-phrase (together with possible embedded elements), which, in itself, is not embedded in some higher-level configuration" (H. C. du Toit 1977, 1).<sup>14</sup> Snyman comments that it is "a syntactic unit" which "constitutes the smallest semantic unit" He continues: "It is important to begin any exegetical study with the text's syntactic features; they have priority since they constitute ways in which basic relationships between fundamental units are most clearly marked" (1991, 90). Low also comments that the colons "are the statement units and are in fact the most significant units of the total discourse, for they, and their clusters, reveal the actual structure" (1973, 104).

The next step is to identify thematic markers. At the

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<sup>13</sup> Or "the correlation of the tenses of principal verbs" (A. B. du Toit 1974, 54).

<sup>14</sup> H. C. du Toit (1977, 1, 6-10) comments that this definition is an initial one and later qualifies it further; cf. A. B. du Toit (1974, 60); Pelser (1992, [i]).

lexical level "lexical cohesion" can be achieved by "the repetition of words<sup>15</sup> forming a kind of 'rhetorical glue' which binds sentences" (A. B. du Toit 1974, 54) as well as the prominence given to those words. Not only "words" but also "phrases" and "thoughts" can be marked by means of repetition, prominence or both of them. Also stylistic figures such as an inclusio or a chiasm, which were used in demarcating the pericope, can be useful in identifying thematic markers.

Once the thematic markers are identified, those must be divided into two categories, which are continuous (global) markers and local markers. These markers may be related to actions, states, objects (actants) or abstract concepts. The continuous markers will help to identify the theme of the pericope. Both in view of this central theme and by means of the local markers<sup>16</sup> the colons must be grouped into colon clusters "to identify the coherent units within the larger whole and to sort out their hierarchical relationships" (A. B. du Toit 1977, 33).

After grouping into colon clusters, a summary will be formulated for each colon cluster. Then the central theme of the whole pericope will be formulated by integrating the summaries of all the colon clusters. Through the whole process

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<sup>15</sup> All the words which belong to the same semantic domain must be considered; for this purpose, see Louw (1988).

<sup>16</sup> Snyman notes that this grouping into colon clusters is based on "(mainly) semantic considerations," but he adds considerations of a different category which include "words marking a transition in the discourse, a change in person, an alteration in the mood of the verb, etc." (1991, 90). The latter considerations are similar to those criteria which were used to demarcate the pericope, but this time they are applied on a smaller scale.



of colon analysis we are able to "gain insight into the argument as a whole" (A. B. du Toit 1974, 74).

The procedure of the colon analysis can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Demarcate the text.
- 2) Divide into colons.
- 3) Identify thematic markers.
- 4) Divide them into continuous markers and local markers.
- 5) Group into colon clusters.
- 6) Identify the sub-themes and the central theme.

In this synchronic approach<sup>17</sup> we start from the surface structure to get to the deep structure because "the surface structure represents the manner in which the author chose to organize his text" (Combrink 1979, 3). As with any exegetical method, the colon analysis is also subject to the danger of subjectivity. While acknowledging this danger, A. B. du Toit (1974, 57) comments:

Discourse analysis does, however, if used correctly, provide us with a systematic and controlled method by means of which we can free ourselves to a large extent of apriori's and where our observation and description of real and verifiable phenomena in the surface structure of a given stretch of language lead us to an understanding of its contents.

Similarly Snyman comments that "colon analysis has proved to be a viable method in demarcating pericopes, in revealing the

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<sup>17</sup> It is necessary to note Combrink's qualifying comment: "This [synchronic] approach does not imply that the history of traditions embodied in the text is of no value for the interpretation. It is, however, our conviction that this textual approach is a necessary step in the interpreting of the text" (1979, 3). The consideration of the situation of the readers in chapter 3 can be regarded as an effort to compensate for what may lack in the linguistic approach.

structure or layout of a text and in following the trend of the argument" (1991, 90).

But in doing the colon analysis, it must not be forgotten that the colon analysis is only a part of the larger exegetical program. The pericope is to be considered in view of its immediate context and the larger context of the writing as a whole. The exegetical program we adopted in this dissertation may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Investigate the rhetorical situation of the readers - chapter 2.
- 2) Determine the macrostructure of the whole epistle - chapter 3.
- 3) Determine the place and function of the text within its mesostructure - chapter 4.
- 4) Discourse analysis - the former part of chapter 5.
- 5) Detailed analysis of the text with special attention to the syntax, the literary aspects (including rhetorical devices) and the rhetorical situation, applying all the methods which can contribute to a better understanding of the text on its synchronic level - the latter part of chapter 5.

For convenience of the reader a folded-page reproduction of the discourse analysis is provided at the end of this work. This facilitates back-reference to the details of the discourse analysis.