

One man's forty-year battle with Academia and the Church over a jaw-dropping, far-reaching new discovery

by David G Palmer

Buried for seventeen centuries in the Greek texts of the New Testament and now unearthed in huge quantities are important features and characteristics that no one through the ages has ever thought existed. If scholars had known the texts of Christian Faith as they should have done, because the information has always been there and readily available, the church would not have been as divided as it is today and no one would have been misled in the ways that they have, believing things that the writers never intended their readers and audiences to believe.

It is forty years now since this discovery first emerged. So what have Academia and the Church been doing about it? They have been ignoring it, or deliberately side-lining it, maybe. But why? Because it undermines what main-stream scholars have been saying about the texts? Or because it raises the possibility that they have failed to do the right thing by them and they are embarrassed? Or is it because it challenges the status quo? Or maybe it is because the source of their learning is not the texts *per se*, but the available secondary literature through which they learn all they think they need to know about them? Or maybe, it is because theirs has been a conservative education and they are convinced that everything that could possibly be known about the texts is already known? Or rather, let it not be so, they have assumed that a discovery could not be of any real importance if it was made by someone who never held a University or College post, or secured a publisher for his work? (It could not, could it, be that one who was 'outside the establishment', independent and a non-conformist was just the kind of researcher who would find something to turn the world of New Testament studies upside down?) For whatever reasons, the significant non-involvement of Academia and the Church in the making of this discovery is noted. Yet these last forty years have been useful: they have seen the unearthing of much more treasure than was first imagined. It may not even yet all be known, but Academia and the Church will surely see now that the New Testament's Greek texts need to be given a place today that is both front and centre, that the texts might be put to a scientifically critical and objective study, for the first time ever.

Scholarship surely matters. And scholars are needed at times like this, who know that they have responsibilities not only to their fellow professionals in things that absolutely do matter, but also to countless others who have committed themselves to lifetime vocations, as well as to the millions who live their lives by the faith they believe in. New Testament scholars are reckoned by people outside of their profession to be experts, experts essentially in regard

to the texts, experts, that is, who could tell us all that *we would ever need or want to know* about them. The Church and Academia are at a crossroads. It is important for the sake of the many that the right direction is taken.

This discovery is to be celebrated. It means we all will be able to read these texts in the ways that their first readers did. And that means, amazingly, that we all will be able to read these texts in exactly the ways that their writers always intended. Further, we will be able to appreciate and understand the texts for what they actually are, and not for what we have wanted them to be. They can be taught, preached and commended as *they were* meant by their writers, and no longer as others in the intervening years might have wanted them to be read to satisfy the expectations that they themselves brought to the texts. Chapter and Verse currently help us in our reading around the texts. Eight-hundred years ago, they were first imposed on the texts. But they are vastly inferior as divisions and sub-divisions of the texts to those that the writers still signal to us in their writing presentations. Be excited about this! The writers themselves (of the first two centuries) have given us all that we have ever needed. It is true that, for at least the last seventeen-hundred years, scholars have not been able to show us these things, but when they are disclosed in all the twenty-seven texts of the New Testament the texts will delight, inform and give everyone every opportunity to interpret their meaning for themselves.

Rudimentary things about the texts have been overlooked. That is one truth. The reason these things have been hidden for so long is down, purely and simply, to deficiencies in New Testament scholarship. That is the second truth. So what of today's New Testament scholars? What have they been doing? The third truth is that they have allowed themselves to be distracted from their core task. In a paper I delivered to the British New Testament Society¹ in 2018, I asked 'What is a New Testament Scholar?' I suggested that the expectations of non-scholars were way different from those of the scholars themselves, and that scholars were expected not only to know important things about the texts, but also to share these things with people who desired to know all that there was to be known about them.

For seventeen centuries, scholars have not known the details of the Greek texts that are essential to a meaningful reading of them. They have not known the writers' discipline of writing to the rules and practices of their era. They have not known, and some have not wanted to know, it seems, that these writings are works of Hellenist (ancient) rhetoric, the products of literary-artists constrained by the requirements of an oral/aural 'world' of communication in which writers reached their *listening* audiences through readers and reciters. The reading enabling features of the texts were always *structure* and *writing style*. It was these that aided *memory* and *presentation* in the early years. It is these that will change our approach to the texts today, from what was subjective and a stab at an interpretation to that which is objective

¹ See my paper, 'What is a New Testament Scholar?' delivered to the British New Testament Conference in 2018: it is on my website, www.davidgpalmer.co.uk/blog. In it, I list something like fifty-four different 'specialisms'.

and unifying in that we all will find ourselves reading the texts in exactly the same way as each other.

What happened that these reading helps disappeared? The earliest loss of valuable detail is to be put at the doors of the priests who, in the late second century, were the first to translate copies of Greek New Testaments into Latin and Syriac. Augustine noted this, and that they did this work of translation incompetently.² The project of assembling the Latin Vulgate version was born of this and it took Jerome his lifetime to complete the project. We note then the earliest loss of these writing characteristics. As translators did their work, to the best of their poor abilities, the texts gave up their meaningful divisions and sub-divisions which are essential to defining their constructions. Translators mistakenly translated the 'words' and not the 'works'. The point was quickly reached, therefore, when scholars viewed the texts as having no structure and no real discipline.³

For almost eleven-hundred years after that, the church read and encouraged everyone to read its own Latin texts. Only with the Reformation, did the Greek texts begin to get the attention they really deserved. The attempts to give priority to the Greek texts were not welcomed by all. A time of turmoil ensued. And things grew very much worse when individuals began to translate the texts into their own mother tongues.

But in 1734, a big step forward was taken by John Albert Bengel, a Swiss Lutheran, who produced his Greek text of the New Testament that year in Tübingen. It very quickly included the first critical apparatus (alternative readings from various manuscripts). And then in 1742, he

² Augustine, *Confessions*, III.5; *On Christian Doctrine*, II, 11; IV.6-7 (*De Doctr. Christ.*, ii, II).

³ Through the centuries, scholars judged these texts to be composed free of the rules that the New Testament writers' (pagan) writing colleagues followed. By the twentieth century, they absolutely saw no reason to look to the Hellenists for help in understanding the literature they were handling. Scholarship had been *persuaded fully* that New Testament Literature was *new literature*. For a sure example of this, Rev J.N. Sanders, Dean of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, can be quoted. He was writing on 'The Literature of the New Testament' in **Peake's** single volume **Bible Commentary**: 'The New Testament can hardly be considered as literature at all, except in the most general sense of the term.... 'The aesthetic motive and the desire to produce fine writing as something worthwhile in itself are foreign to its authors whose aims were urgent and practical.... 'Lk 1.1-4 echoes the cadences and repeats the conventional claims of Hellenistic historians, but there the resemblance ends.... 'Their comparative indifference to pagan literature was on the whole an advantage to the writers of the New Testament. They gained thereby in freshness and freedom from stale conventions and artificial rhetoric. They were not conscious literary artists, obeying a convention and imitating the correct models, like Hellenistic authors, but rather practical men falling into familiar forms when these happened to provide them with effective means of expression.... 'The Literature of the New Testament is in the main something new.' On speeches and sermons, Sanders admits that Thucydides puts speeches into the mouths of his principal personages at appropriate moments and states 'he set an unfortunate precedent', but that Luke didn't follow the precedent. And on artistic/sculptural representations of literature, he notes that samples exist where artists reproduce Hellenistic themes, giving the following example, of Orpheus charming the beasts - as the pattern for Christ the Good Shepherd. See: **Peake's** (single volume) **Commentary on the Bible**, editors Matthew Black and H.H. Rowley, first published in 1962 and reprinted in 1962, 63, 64, 67, 72, 75, 76, 77 and further? It did two things: it reflected the critical position taken in all earlier generations and it *groomed* future generations to believe the same. The Commentary was recommended by the Local Preachers' Department of the Methodist Church (of Great Britain).

produced his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*. The German title reads: *Exegetical Annotations on the New Testament*. In it, Bengel presented his notes on all the texts of the New Testament and built his case for seeing all the texts as works of *chiasmus*, chiasm. To him, every text revealed structure in its most ancient form of ABB'A', where two outer sections, A and A' (A prime), balance each other around two middle sections, B and B', which also balance. Sadly, it was not its time. Bengel's work had to wait until the early part of the twentieth century to be given the attention it fully deserved. And the reason for this, in the main, was that John Wesley took Bengel's notes for his own work in 1754, his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*. Wesley called Bengel 'that great light of the Christian world'. He wanted his work for his own preachers of the Methodist Revival, but he did not want to bother them with the technicalities of the text and so left out all reference to 'chiasm'.⁴ Reading Wesley's *Notes* reveals Bengel's own assessments of the layout of each New Testament book and though it is disappointing to discover any real breakthrough in understanding then, it is heartening to learn that someone in the mid-eighteenth century had begun to ask questions of the texts that others were not asking.

⁴ It has to be admitted that Wesley wronged Bengel, but for his own 'good reason'. We start with the doctrinal standards of Methodism which are laid down in Section 4 of the Methodist Church Act of 1976. It begins: 'The Methodist Church claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ... It tells, 'The doctrines of the evangelical faith... are based upon divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures...' And it tells further that the 'evangelical doctrines to which the preachers of the Methodist Church are pledged are contained in Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament* and the first four volumes of his sermons.' It then states, 'The Notes on the New Testament and the 44 Sermons are not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative theology on Methodist preachers, but to set up *standards of preaching and belief* which should secure loyalty to the fundamental truths... In his 1754 Preface to the *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London Epworth Press, Edition 1976), in paragraph three, Wesley tells that he is not writing for the learned who were 'provided with many other helps'; he was not writing 'for men of long and deep experience in the ways and Word of God (I desire to sit at their feet and learn from them, he said).' He 'writes', he says, 'chiefly for plain, unlettered men, who understand only their mother-tongue, and yet reverence and love the Word of God, and have a desire to save souls.' In the eleventh paragraph of the Preface, Wesley wrote disparagingly of 'the division of the New Testament into chapters.' It was 'made in the dark ages,' he said, 'and very incorrectly, often separating things that are closely joined, and joining those that are entirely distinct from each other.' He determined, therefore, to educate Methodists in the reading of the New Testament by presenting the 'chain of arguments in each book' *in tables* at the beginning of each of his presentations. He thought it would be more use than prefixing the argument 'to each chapter'. He was intent on introducing into Methodism an exegetical approach to the New Testament that he found in the works of J.A. Bengel. Wesley wrote about the New Testament's 'inspired writers' as having employed 'exactly regular series of arguments, a precise expression of their meaning and a genuine vigour of suitable affections'. What he meant by this can be established only by reference to Bengel. He was an able communicator who sought to guide the reader to ascertain meaning for him/herself. His work defined exegesis: readers of the New Testament were to import nothing into Scripture, but to draw out of it everything that it *really* contained. Wesley took to this approach and wanted it for Methodism. Bengel's hope was that his *Gnomon...* would help rekindle interest in the study of the New Testament. He was not disappointed. And none did more than Wesley to promote this. 'Apply thyself wholly to the text,' Bengel directed; 'apply the text wholly to thyself.' The modern critical era began with Bengel's 1734 and 1742 publications. The evangelical awakening and John Wesley gave it impetus. Yes, Wesley's use of Bengel's work was purely pragmatic and much abridged. It was kept as simple as possible lest he 'should leave the ordinary reader behind'. So it was not for him to present all that Bengel wrote about the *grammatico-historical rules* of Greek literature.

So it is that since then, and even all through the era of modern biblical-criticism, translators continued to work with the texts that others punctuated and paragraphed before them. No one 'parsed' the texts and rhetorically examined them for themselves. Did they think the work had been done? That it had been done well enough, that they didn't need to go back to first principles themselves and give their time to 'parting' a text through applying their own skills in Greek grammar and composition? All through the ages, it seems, scholars believed too much in the perspicacity of their predecessors! That is, in every generation, there were few like Bengel who saw the need to determine the writers' divisions of their texts for themselves, that is, the parts, sub-wholes and wholes, the sections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses and words. So many questions about the texts were never raised.

Today, therefore, translators will be surprised to discover that they now have much more to do than translate 'words'. The 'works' are made up of 'words' set in a repeating (*dactylic* and *Homeric*) writing style which aids punctuation and which reveals structure, where the same writing style is employed from the opening of a text to its closing. And structure itself, as Augustine says⁵, is *essential* to revealing meaning and purpose. There is much for many to delight in and there is much for many to do. A huge agenda awaits a rising generation of scholars. A revolution in New Testament reading (and who knows what else) is prompted by this discovery which was first made forty years ago in Cambridge by an undergraduate (of all people!) who just happened also to be a Methodist and an Architect.

Some History about this Discovery:

It was at Wesley House and Fitzwilliam College in Cambridge in 1982, that this breakthrough in the reading of the New Testament texts was first signalled to an undergraduate who was training to be ordained a Methodist Minister (Presbyter), an Architect, in fact, who had trained previously at University College London in the nineteen-sixties and -seventies, who, before he left Cambridge in 1983, knew he had the structural designs of the Four Gospels and Acts just about fully sorted.

It happened this way. On the day of the last of his Cambridge finals, an examination in 'The religious thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', after a bath and evening hall (for a meal), he went to his study and worked there till 4.30am. The session began with his sweeping his books and papers (for his last exam) off his table with the back of his right hand onto the floor. Onto his study table he placed his own folder of collected questions on the Gospels and Acts which he reached down from the top shelf where it had sat waiting for just this moment. That summer, before his and his family's move to Cardiff, for his first post-

⁵ See note 2 above.

ordination ministry, he worked on the texts every day and every minute that he could. As he left Cambridge, he just about knew all that there was to know about their structures. He also knew that he had a lot of new material in his hands that no one else was holding in theirs. He was moved by the thought and was open to re-considering what was his particular 'calling' in life.

In Cardiff, after settling into his new ministry⁶, he approached the University there to see if he might register for part-time PhD studies. What follows, in his own words, with a little editing, is taken from his book, *New Testament: New Testimony to the Skills of the Writers and First Readers*⁷:

When in ministry I arrived in Cardiff and sought to register as a part-time post graduate research student at the University there, the Dean of the Faculty (and Principal of a local Theological College) asked me to say what it was that I had been doing. I'd barely started before he became very rude, 'Do you mean to tell me about the New Testament?' A few minutes later, he was barking, 'Do you want us to write your book for you?' I left awkwardly at the end of the interview. The Vice Dean was swiftly on the phone to me. He'd been there in the interview room. He invited me to his own home later that day. The first thing he said to me, before even I had got over his front door mat, was that if he had been me he would have got up and walked out! It's what I had wanted to do, I told him, but I stayed because I really wanted to make progress with this research.

When I did get to publish in Cardiff in 1988 the results of my research on the literary structures of the Four Gospels, Acts and the Revelation to John⁸, my first book *Sliced Bread...*⁹ was subjected to reviews that demonstrated an almost total resistance to the results of my analysis. All I got, after all that work and the risky expense of borrowing money from the bank to self-publish, was, 'the Revelation maybe, but not surely the gospels.'

When my successful Glasgow University PhD Thesis, *The Markan Matrix...*¹⁰, my second book, self-published in 1999, was reviewed, the first reviewers responded pretty

⁶ He had already spent three years in lay ministry in Holloway and Camden Town in London following two years full-time study at All Nations Christian College in Ware, Hertfordshire. While the Bible College experience left its mark on him in a positive way, each of the three times he tried sending his own books to the college bookstall, outlining changes that were needed in the reading of the texts, the college's conservative evangelical stance prevented the staff from showing interest in what he was doing.

⁷ Palmer, David G., *New Testament: New Testimony to the Skills of the Writers and First Readers* (Fifth, Illustrated Exhibition Edition), Ceridwen Press, Church Gresley, 2016, first published in Sri Lanka in 2004.

⁸ His New Jersey congregation during a summer exchange in 1986 with a United Methodist Minister led him to this book.

⁹ Palmer, David G., *Sliced Bread: the Four Gospels, Acts and Revelation: their Literary Structures*, Ceridwen Press, Cardiff, 1988.

¹⁰ Palmer, David G., *The Markan Matrix: A Literary-Structural Analysis of the Gospel of Mark*, Ceridwen Press, Paisley, 1999.

much in the same way. Though the thesis focused wholly on the Greek text and included a full rhetorical analysis and ‘parsing’ of the text, testing the whole compilation against the rules and practices of writing in that era, exposing the book’s structure and purpose, they could not be excited by it. But eventually another review did surface with the April 2001 issue of *JTS* (Journal for Theological Studies). It was a long and thorough review, but towards its close the writer could only say, ‘Much as one respects the scholarship and conviction that has gone into this book, *sadly it runs counter to too many currents and consensuses in Markan Scholarship.*’ This phrasing astonished me. What was this word ‘sadly’ doing in the summary? I’d put on the back cover of the book that it challenged just about everything that had ever been written about this gospel. I was a little miffed! I felt I was not responsible for other people’s ‘currents and consensuses’. As my PhD was awarded me at a Ceremony at Glasgow University in 1998, in the quad after, I got an unexpected apology from my supervisor; he expressed his thought that I could have had someone else who might have been more helpful to me. I assured him otherwise. But meeting up with him a few years later in Exeter for the annual conference of The British New Testament Society, I tried talking with him, in the bar, about the progress I was making with my literary analyses of other books. He shocked me when he began shouting at me to drop my futile studies!

Resistance from academia has been my constant reward. I was on the mailing list for the British New Testament Society from 2003 and received many notices about events that other people put through the secretary during the first decade of the twenty-first century. But when I attempted to share details of my own events my requests were blocked, or just simply ignored. Am I saying too much? It doesn’t make for comfortable reading, I guess. And it must sound like sour grapes. But I think it needs to be said. It was during that time that I found that the Society seemed unsure of its role. Should we, or should we not have contact addresses for each other? Could we, or could we not call ourselves members? Was the Society there to support research, or not? Or was it there for the Professors and not the Post Graduates and the Post Doctoral scholars? It has, of course, now settled these matters. But for me, throughout that time, I thought I should keep trying to share what I had been discovering because it seemed to me that it was going to seriously challenge the way New Testament Studies is done and even the ways we use the Bible in church, all around the world. But, I still wait for any professional scholar to ask me, May I examine with you what you are proposing?

What no one in academia has done is commit *themselves* to a ‘purely literary analysis’ of the Greek texts of the New Testament Books. But this I did begin to do myself in 1982, after I had been dragged ‘kicking and screaming’ to Cambridge. ‘You have a degree in Architecture. You’ll have one in Theology! And you’ll go this year, or you won’t be going at all!’ This was what I was told by the then Secretary for Ministerial Training. After my two years at All Nations Christian College, I was involved full-time in a busy lay ministry in the Methodist Churches of Holloway and Camden Town and I really didn’t want to leave a very fulfilling appointment. But as I look back, I am so glad that attitude was taken with me. What got me onto my lifetime’s study is this. To save myself from

doing one course, with lectures, its terms' papers and annual exams, I opted instead to tackle an Undergraduate Dissertation on the Central Section of Luke's Gospel. (Everybody then thought the section begins at 9.51. And no one then knew where it ended, or what held it all together! Even now, two volume commentaries on Luke begin their second volume at 9.51. My discovery, from the evidence of the text, is that it is at 9.43b that the section begins!) If I had not taken the 'undergraduate dissertation' option in 1982, I am very sure that I would not be writing as I am today.

The first time I held an Exhibition to promote the findings of my New Testament research was in Leicester in the Spring of 2008. It toured three local churches. Although I had produced pen and ink A1-sized drawings of the Four Gospels, Acts and the Revelation in 1989 (while on a three-month sabbatical) I had not exhibited them before. The idea for a national exhibition tour, therefore, was well set in my mind. I planned it. I would retire a year early (as I would be allowed to do) and, beforehand, seek out a property where I might have a studio in which I could prepare and store artworks at Double A0 size. A public house which closed in October 2008 became our successful target in June 2010 before my (early) retirement in 2012. In October 2014, I had my first artworks that I could take to the Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE) in Manchester, along with some posters, jigsaws, mugs, cards, etc. to promote the results of my research. In February 2015, I had enough artworks to start a tour with An Exhibition in Art: 'Seeing the New Testament for what it is'. The intended conclusion of the tour would be in my old home town of Hull, City of Culture, 2017. So, after the launch at Leicester, it visited Oxford, then Cambridge, Cliff College, various locations in South Derbyshire, Edinburgh, Birmingham (for the Christian Resources Exhibition), Cardiff, London (but not at any prestigious Methodist Church), Paisley, Birmingham, Durham, CRE - London Christian Book Fair, the Derby Book Festival, the British New Testament Conference at Chester and last of all Hull.

I sent posters for display to many Professors and Departments of Theology, Biblical and Religious Studies. As I half-expected, there were mostly no replies and no professional attendances at any one of my talks. Today, I may view some of my choices of venue to have been mistaken, choosing city-central Methodist Churches where I thought I might be welcomed free of charge. It was unfortunate that, at the one where I was asked to pay a rental and give proof of my own third-party insurance cover, I was greeted by the minister (a supernumerary who was temping there for a year) who announced immediately to me that the poster which I had sent ahead had upset already three of his congregation who were world-renown bible scholars! What was it I had written? I wondered then and I still wonder. Even, when at the British New Testament Conference I got permission to set up my stall alongside the usual publishers and so set things there, there was no persuading some Professors to take a look. My stall, as for my exhibition tour included, besides my books, jigsaws, mugs, charts and other things too! It is the charts I think that are my problem. Publishers do not like charts! They prefer pages of words set in chapters. So too, it seems, do New Testament scholars themselves. Indeed, I recall on one occasion sending material to a journal on translation; it was rejected for publishing because it did not fit their publishing format!

Indeed also, I recall my first attendance at a British New Testament Conference. In a plenary session, the speaker referred to Lk. 9.51 as the beginning of the Luke's central section. I said, so that those around me could hear, it's 9.43b. My comment attracted only strange looks. And no one asked me at the conclusion of the lecture why I had said what I did. Over the years since, I have had my own paper proposals accepted by different seminar groups. But seared into my memory and to my embarrassment are two that I would have done differently on reflection. There was one when I made it my purpose to share my proposal for the structure of the Revelation to John and my analysis. The other was when I presented my work on the structure of Acts in its relation to Luke, even also to Mark and Matthew. Present in both seminars were individuals who let me know they were disappointed (and one was very angry) that in my papers I had not engaged with secondary literature. They had good reason. (If I had had a college appointment, of course, I would have had a colleague read or hear my paper beforehand...) I am also reminded of an earlier occasion. A Professor came up to me and said, You're the one, aren't you, who is interested in numbers? (She knew of my PhD thesis on Mark.) I said respectfully that the writer of Mark's Gospel is the one who was interested in numbers and I referred her to Mk. 8.18-21 which satisfied her. (As fellow Methodists, we enjoyed several conversations at meal times.) Yet it is true: scholars are wary of 'numbers', especially when the writers appear to be attaching meaning to the numbers they use. There are many uses of numbers and especially triangular numbers in the New Testament which are used symbolically. They do need to be read as the writers intended them to.

The first texts that were fully-parsed and rhetorically analysed were summarised on a 'msn-users' website on Bible Sunday (the old one) in 2003. Since that time, ***New Testament: New Testimony to the Skills of the Writers and First Readers*** has seen five editions - published between 2004 and 2016. Now, it is available on a website, in a new edition with revisions and additions, five years on from the fifth book publication with many more literal English translations of the texts, for which, see: www.new-testament-new-testimony.com. It is still the only publication on the New Testament since Bengel's *Gnomon...* which attempts a rhetorical analysis of all the texts. And it is still the only one ever to include a Rhetorical Table of all the texts. Included among the documents are art-works, tables, the Greek text - fully-parsed and rhetorically analysed, and 60% of the New Testament in literal English.

'Biblically naïve and theologically naked' is how scholars have at times described church-going people. But now, the tables are turned. Church-goers and those who have stopped church-going, Christians and those who have turned away from the faith will have every right to feel aggrieved. Church leaders and New Testament Professors have not bothered themselves enough with their own readings of the Greek texts. They see so little and understand so little still about the writers' writing skills and writing endeavours. And they are still a long way off from reading the texts as the first readers did.

What are the Benefits of this Literary Discovery?

Because of this comprehensive literary study and purely literary analysis of the Greek texts of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, we can know things today that we never thought there were to be known! And this latter point is necessarily underlined. It is because modern scholarship has never expected to find things as revealed here, that it has been wary of what has been shared about this discovery throughout the last forty years. The resulting accumulation of the results of rigorous analysis is surely helpful now. As a result of this research and its findings, the following are the things we can do today:

- we can jettison 'chapter and verse' and use the books' self-referencing systems;
- we can identify the writers' common writing style;
- we can locate with pinpoint precision the original divisions in the texts and define whole book structures;
- we can establish the leading ideas of the books and the purposes behind them;
- we can reconstitute and critically restore original texts;
- we can read, teach and preach the books as their writers always intended;
- we can acknowledge the symbolic and structural use of numbers and triangular numbers; and
- we can delight in the books in all the ways that we were meant to.

All this together means that we can dispense with the old subjective ways of reading that focused principally on the contents of the writings. Instead, we can read the texts for both their contents and their grammatical form in an exercise of objectivity. And because we can do this we will do it in exactly the same way as each other, anywhere and at any time.

New Testament scholarship faces its biggest challenge ever: new translations, editions, lectionaries, reading schemes, commentaries and training courses are all required. Indeed, New Testament scholarship is in crisis today. It is haemorrhaging undergraduate students and postgraduates in both the UK and the USA, and its work is being seen as less relevant, less helpful and less influential than ever it used to be, both in the world and in the church. Consider what 'sure results' of New Testament Studies can be said to have been shared with the church in the last thousand years, the last hundred, or the last ten. Yet, we now have a new exercise which demands the engagement of everyone because it is an exercise in objectivity. Consider, for example, the facts about Psalm 119. The one who reads it in Hebrew knows what they are reading. Its arrangement is understood because it is easily defined; it discloses itself in the same way to every Hebrew reader. (It is laid out to the Hebrew alphabet where eight lines of text begin with the same letter, followed by eight lines beginning with the next, and so on.) So too, in the future, the texts of the New Testament will be read by Greek readers in the very same way, or if they are translated in a literal way in every language of the world they will be read in the same way by everyone everywhere, whatever their language.

Why is there a need for a disciplined reading of the texts today? Because the texts are disciplined in themselves and if they are read with indiscipline they will not be respected for what they are. It cannot be that they continue to be read in ignorance. Fortuitously, the Christian Church has preserved in its Canon of the New Testament a set of texts that were meant to carry the Good News throughout the known world in the early centuries of this Christian Era. These books were written to operate in a world of oral/aural communication and for publication also, each in their turn, starting with Paul's Letters, given canonicity to wing their way around the Roman Empire in their disciplined presentations by word of mouth so that everyone everywhere might 'hear' them in the very same way. The church has preserved these documents that were prepared for memorising. It now means we have more help than we ever thought we had - to both read and understand these texts. Now we read them in a slipshod fashion, ignorant of our heritage, to chapter and verse and lectionary tables which hardly ever begin and end a reading where their writers would have wanted. It is some heritage, but one that is currently unappreciated, and one from which we currently gain nothing. Things have to change. They do indeed! They can and they will.

The promise is that we do have the evidence now that will help us answer the questions that have been stacking up over the centuries. Scholars have wrestled with many issues and often in the past with each other over what should be taught and how the texts might be interpreted. Our first question then is: What are we reading when we read these texts? We are reading the works of men who wrote to the rules of writing which had been established by men over seven-hundred years from the time of Homer and his *Iliad*. And now the second question: Are they inspired? Divinely inspired? The answer is in the affirmative and it is supplied by the church. Its second century leaders collected and included these texts in the canon because they judged them to be of God's doing. The church believed then and says it believes today that these texts are inspired, even divinely inspired. We move on in appreciation of the variety of this literature.

We now question: What are the gospels? Are they histories, or something else? They come first in the age-old ordering of the books of the New Testament, and that in itself misleads all readers. There is a good case to be put for re-ordering the New Testament for serious study purposes. The gospels were written after Paul's letters and they came, as the evidence clearly suggests, after AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. Mark's Gospel, the first to be written, answers the question people were asking, What was the God of the Jews and Christians doing when he let the Roman armies destroy the headquarters of both the Old and New Covenants, kill millions and wipe out and pillage the Empire's second largest and most wealthy city? It is in his structuring of Mark's Gospel, in its Four Series of Seven Days, that the writer suitably reveals his explanation. Of the four gospels, Mark's is a Drama with a Challenge for audiences around the Roman Empire; Matthew's is a Teaching Manual, helpful to first century Jewish Christians in particular; Luke's offers Certainty in regard to 'the Word' and

‘the Words’ (see the Prologue in the Greek), it is written for the Gentile world of that era; and John’s is an Evangelistic composition which, beginning with a focus on ‘the Word’, displays two endeavours, the first to show the Signs which Jesus gave of himself in life, as to who he was and what he was present to do, and the second to present Jesus’ own teaching (the Church’s teaching in fact) about his death, his Passion and Resurrection, and at the last present his challenge to the ‘listener’ to believe the two presentations.

It is of course a sketchy answer to the question, What are the Gospels? But here I am seeking simply to show how the discussion will go. Now we have to ask: Are they histories? The short answer is: they are not. The writers themselves never expected that their texts would be read as histories. They are eternal truth, creed, the belief of the church set to stories and presented in series of stories, or connected stories. The justifications for this are many. Here, I introduce only a few. Paul and Peter were dead. They were executed in Rome, legend says in the late 60s, after Christians had been blamed for Rome’s burning in 64. The seat of Mother Church was in Jerusalem and if they had not died earlier, in AD 70 the last of the witnesses to Jesus’ life, including the apostles, will have perished in the pogrom. The facts in the gospels about Jesus’ life, his mission and his death and resurrection came from Paul’s earlier writings (of the 50s and 60s). Ideas about Jesus and his life came from the scriptures of the Old Covenant as also from the horrific events of the Jewish War, 67-73, which required interpretation by the church. Factual differences between the gospel accounts are many: as one was written for a set purpose and followed by another for a different set purpose, details of the text were changed easily by the writers (because they were not facts), so too the order, their purpose and their meaning. Very clear points of difference between the gospels exist and they are very many. As such these differences really do undermine any historical reading of the texts. Each gospel needs to be read separately, each one for what it means, each without reference to the other, to establish the writer’s purpose for each, to establish his meaning and not the histories of events, or their historical order.

It does seem to me that the church should take greater care today than it does with its Sunday lectionary readings of the Gospels, its homilies and its sermons. The writers did not intend their presentations to be used in exercises to establish historical truth. Rather, they were interested in presenting what was soteriological truth which is the truth about our salvation and our eternal life, told through stories and connected stories. To be avoided is the kind of confusion which preachers cause when they raise questions like, ‘How did Jesus feel when he entered Jerusalem?’ It is not the historicity but the meaning which the writers want us to take from their texts.

That all the books of the New Testament have recognisably Hellenist purposes and literary structures is to be acknowledged. For example, contrary to the *five* chapters of presentation that we have in our Bibles for the letters of James, 1 Peter and 1 John the writers presented *four* sections in the form ABB’A’, two outer paralleling sections enclosing two inner

paralleling sections. It is the classic chiasm of Bengel's focus, though for these letters of the New Testament he did in fact fail to recognise its use. Further, he did not see that the Four Series of Seven Days of Mark's Gospel were similarly arranged in ABB'A' sequence, or that each of these Series of Days were arranged to the same scheme as Homer's *Iliad* of ABB'XABB', where the first three days, beginning with an introductory day, A, followed by two paralleling days, B and B' (which is dactylic in literary terms), has its parallel as a whole after the turning point/middle day, where in the first three days, Jesus is fulfilling and completing the Old Covenant and in the second three days, after the turning point, he is establishing the New Covenant. The whole story narrative in Mark's Gospel lies within the telling of the opening day, day one, of the sun going down on the Sabbath of the Old Covenant and the telling of the closing day, day twenty-eight, when the sun rises on the Sabbath of the New Covenant. This framework, though artificial, serves the primary purpose of the writer which is to present his drama, the 'Beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ', and tell what God was doing.

On 1 John (of the three letters I have mentioned above) many scholars have attempted descriptions of its composition. Writing with the help of a predecessor's attempt at a solution they adopt some of their language and description for their own presentation. The next commentator does the same and maybe draws also from another, and so on. But not one of them, forty or so by my count, in print, has been able to present the text as the writer intended. It is to the shame of New Testament Studies, both ancient and modern! To an extent, I am enjoying this, given the cost to me of my research in time and effort and finance, and the brickbats I have suffered from University and College scholars over forty years, but it is no boast of mine that I am writing this way because I am the one who has found these things. The texts and the writers of these texts are to have their day, even their era, and it is their skill and their dedication to their tasks long ago and their calling which they fulfilled in their service of the church that will be our focus. In that we all will boast.

Questions abound and there are answers to them all. Did the writer of Mark's Gospel write an Epilogue? Yes he did, he wrote an Aristotelian Epilogue, one to the rule of Aristotle, that when you get to your Epilogue, you must not use *Kai* ('And') to begin your sentences. (Because they are not found in the longer ending, 16.9-20, scholars say Mark did not write it. My reading is that 16.9-16,19-20a is the original Epilogue.) What is more, scholars who advise that the Epilogue is not to be found in the longer ending say that the Prologue is to be found in Mk. 1.1-13 (or 1.1-15 in some cases). In this, they are all misguided. They read only the contents of this text. They do not read it for its opening and repeating phrases and its grammatical style of ABB' (abb'), where A is the introductory piece, B is the first development and B' is the second and paralleling/completing development of each three-part whole. This is *dactylic*. In Homer's *Iliad*, the style is *dactylic hexameter*. The Prologue of Mark's Gospel is aping Homer's style and is 1.2-20. 1.1 is the title, originally, 'Beginning / of the Gospel / of Jesus Christ' (abb').

Another question: What about the number '153' towards the end of John's Gospel? Is there anything to be made of it? Yes, a sure answer really does exist, and it is one that the writer wanted everyone to get right because it would mean that everyone was reading his gospel as he intended. For the reader, there is a revelation in the story of the catch of fish, but also in the reading of it there is confirmation, confirmation (because of similar number usage earlier in the gospel) that the reader has been reading the gospel as they should have done, given its seven sections each with their twelve parts per section. What then of the Revelation and 1 John, seeing that we are focused here on the Johannine section of the New Testament? The structure of the Revelation reveals itself as a seven times seven presentation. In both the Gospel and the Apocalypse, the Jewish menorah has its reference for its symbolical meaning and chiastic form, 1,2,3,C,3',2',1'. And in 1 John, given the textual question of 1 Jn 5.7-8 as to whether it is original to the text or not: the structure and the style of the letter together say that it is.

So this presentation could continue in this way and with more of the same. But here I choose to stop. My presentations elsewhere, especially my charts, my layouts of the Greek texts and much literal English translation are available elsewhere. See below for where to find them.

To Conclude:

As the fortieth anniversary of my literary analysis of the Gospels and Acts will come with the summer of 2023, I am preparing this paper for 'posting' now to see if it will kick-start fresh interest, and if possible across both Academia and the Church. To celebrate the first twenty-five years of my venture, I settled on a very pricy two-page centre-fold spread in the *Methodist Recorder*, 7th August 2008. It was supposed to attract lots of attention to what I had been discovering. I have to report, however, that I received no written or verbal response. It was that anniversary that got me running a trial Travelling Exhibition that summer in Leicester and it was this, in turn, that prompted my later nation-wide travelling exhibition of 2015-17. Now, as I approach the fortieth anniversary of this work and of my ordination, I am intending making this paper widely available. It is this thought that has spurred me to write it.

Now as I re-read what I have written I think of the things with which I wrestled as I sought to understand Writing and Publication in the first centuries of the Christian Era. It is helpful, I judge, that I include efforts of mine on these subjects here, as Addenda. The first, Addendum A, 'On Writers, Readers and Reciters', is taken from my Book, *New Testament: New Testimony....* (the Fifth Edition). The second, Addendum B, 'A Reconstruction of the Writing World in which the New Testament Texts were written', is written in appreciation of the work of Burton L Mack who died on the 9th March this year.

At the last, here, I pay my respects to scholars who have been a help to me in my endeavours:

John Drury, for his supervising of my Cambridge Undergraduate Dissertation;
John Riches, the supervisor of my PhD research at Glasgow University;
Augustine for his specialism in Latin rhetoric, that there is no understanding of a text without first understanding its structure;
JA Bengel, for his pioneering work on the texts long ago and his understanding of the scholar's task - to present the text to the reader as the writer would have wished that its meaning be revealed to its reader;
WG Kümmel, for pointing out that we can say what the purpose of a text is if it comes only from the text itself;
Heiki Räisänen, who noted we should suspend all judgement on a writer's theological and literary abilities until we have carried out a 'purely literary analysis' of the writer's texts;
Burton L Mack, for his presentations on the rules of classical writing, exposing: Idea, Framework, Style, Memory and Performance;
Michael D Goulder, for hosting me in Birmingham so we could talk about Luke and years later when I was able to return the favour so we could talk about Mark;
I Howard Marshall, for his review of my work on 1 John and for the opportunities we had to converse as fellow Methodists at the BNTS Conferences;
CK Barratt, who opened his home to me to visit him (in his final year of life, as it turned out to be) to talk about John, as well as reflect on 'the charge' he preached at my ordination in Durham in 1983; and
Paul Ellingworth, who, forever after he was a judge of my PhD thesis on Mark, showed an interest in my progress with the same analysis of all the texts, and emailed me 'congratulations' when my 2016 publication fell on his mat through the post from the *Methodist Recorder*;
Dennis R MacDonald, for his encouragement by email; and
Vernon K Robbins, likewise, for his help and encouragement by email.

Currently on the world-wide-web and Social Media, see:

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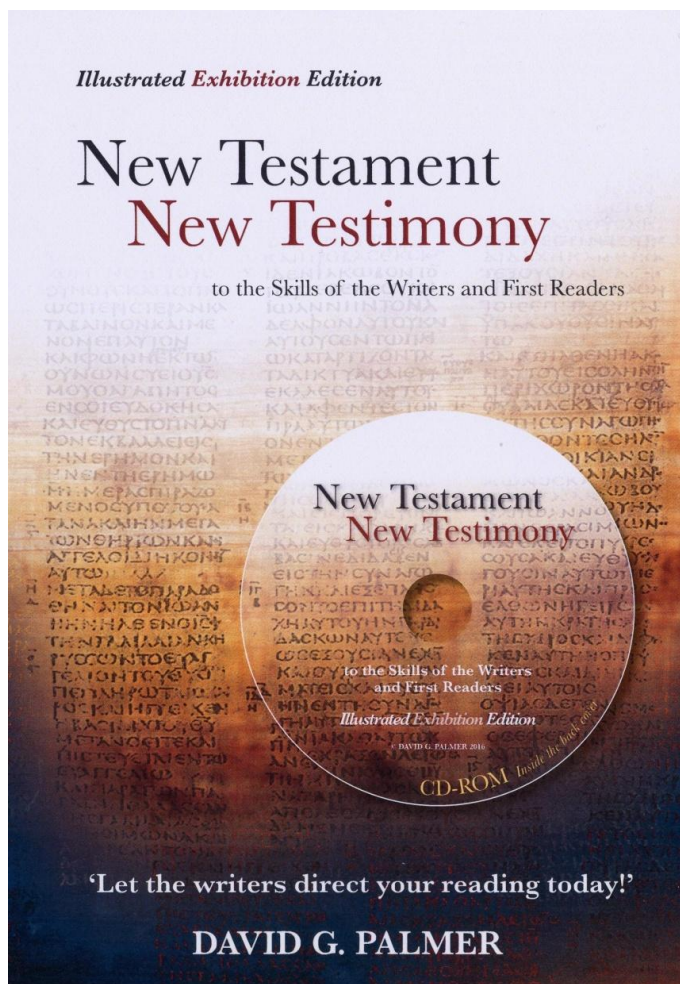
YouTube: David G Palmer, Challenging Scholarship

My latest books include:

The Gospel of Mark: Chapter and Verse, Church Gresley, 2020 (B5 pb, 380 pp;
ISBN: 978-0-9513661-1-0)

A Theory of Everything - New Testament, Church Gresley, July 2020 (A4 pb, 59pp;
ISBN: 978-0-9513661-5-8)

My earlier work, ***New Testament: New Testimony to the Skills of the Writers and First Readers*** (Fifth, Illustrated Exhibition Edition), Ceridwen Press, Church Gresley, 2016 (first published in Sri Lanka in 2004), is the one book which will get anyone started. If they have been reading the texts of the New Testament all through their life in expensive leather-bound Study-Bibles, and have followed a number of scholarly reading schemes, as well as ‘trusted’ commentaries, to get them through the texts, they probably will have believed that they have had the best helps and presentations that they could ever have had for the purpose of understanding ‘God’s Word’. In short, they have been let down abysmally. But the *kairos* moment is now! The texts are releasing their aroma and fragrance and everything else and more. My final advice is: Follow the directive on the front cover of my book reproduced below:



David G Palmer, Church Gresley, 02.10.2022

Addendum A: On Writers, Readers and Reciters:

taken from my Book, *New Testament: New Testimony...*

We may speak of writers, readers and reciters, but before we do we need to define what we mean by all three.

Firstly, we consider the 'writers'. Most of the books and letters of the New Testament have the name of someone attached to them. We have names associated with each of the four Gospels, but they were later ascriptions (according to mid second century traditions) and are unverifiable. We have the name of Paul attached to the majority of the Letters, but more times than we think it should. The names of companions of Paul attach too, sometimes a single name, sometimes two, but we don't know if they really contributed. Names are ascribed to other letters, such as Peter, James and John. But the First Epistle of Peter cannot possibly have come from the hand of an uneducated, illiterate fisherman. This letter is one of the finest writings of the New Testament. Also, it looks much more like the work of a Gentile.

Interestingly, we do have the name of another writer. One called Tertius. He declares himself to be '*the one writing*' the Letter of Paul to the Romans (Ro. 16.22). He gives his own greetings 'in the Lord'. Elsewhere too, it seems, others (possibly unnamed) are writing for Paul. When Paul does write in his own hand, towards the end of a letter, and also about the large (alphabetical) letters he is using, we are left to our own devices to interpret what this means, besides that he himself (?) is validating his letters (1 Cor. 16.21; Gal. 6.11; Col. 4.18; 2 Thess. 3.17): has he an eyesight problem, or is he just unused to writing?

Discussion centred in the past on how long it would take a man to write a letter. J. Jeremias (*Das NT Deutsch: Die Pastoralbriefe*, 1953, p.5) said, 'The composition of a letter the length of 2 Timothy demanded of the ancient art of writing not hours but days of laborious work.' Before him, O. Roller (*Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe*, 1933) characterized writing materials as rough, especially the papyrus; the reed pens were inadequate, as were the inks: all these contributed to the difficulty. Further, it was understood that when it came to the longer document, the common proceeding was for the scribe to take down the gist of the message from its originator on wax tablets and then compose fair copy at his own leisure. The sender would only have to check that it represented his thoughts and add a few words of greeting. F.F. Bruce ('The Epistles of Paul', *Peake's Bible Commentary*, Mt. Black & H.H. Rowley, Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1962) represented many when he bristled up at this being in any way how it was with Paul: 'Here is a man with something to say, and what he has to say is so much part of the man himself that there can be nothing *artificial* or *merely conventional* about the way he says it.' The fear of many academics was always of the artificialities and conventions that would have been followed if these letters had been truly Graeco-Roman! (See also in Peake's Bible Commentary the article titled 'The Literature and Canon of the New Testament' by J.N. Sanders: I refer to this elsewhere at length, but here now only to the way it begins: 'The NT can hardly be considered as literature at all...')!

So, we may rightly deduce that Paul always had another, or others writing with him. We may be correct in thinking that all the writers named as responsible for the New Testament Books, had a writing

practitioner working with (or is it 'for'?) them too. The kind of picture that comes into focus is of (a minimum of) two, who collaborate in the same writing venture. One would be the one with the thoughts, ideas, or teachings to share (and the authority of the church to share them). The other would be the one facilitating his sharing of such things. He would be the rhetor: the one trained in 'writing', proven in his 'professional' skills in compositional method and in the fine art of writing. He is not an amanuensis (as scholars have long posited). He does not simply write down what is dictated to him. Rather, we may liken this rhetor to the modern day *ghost writer*, one who is employed by a busy celebrity figure unused to writing for the popular market. (The great and the good, and young footballers alike use them today.) Tertius, we may deduce, was Paul's ghost writer, in the writing of his Letter to the Church in Rome.

H.C. Lawson-Tancred (p.5, *Aristotle: The Art of Rhetoric*, Penguin Books, 1991) refers in his introduction to the period 400-320 BC during which rhetorical theory made significant forward steps: in that era a new post was born, that of the *logographos*. 'For the first time there was a class of men whose primary occupation and means of livelihood was the production of effective speeches, often on topics in which they were not directly involved themselves.'

For the sake of moving on, in *the general case* we may name the New Testament 'writers' as the ones *for whom* works were written in cooperation with the rhetor (or the logographos). It raises interesting questions, of course. We have some letters written for Paul, but after his death, and one, at least, for Peter, written after his death (II Peter). We have Gospels with ascriptions that were later added. We have one purporting to be by John (understood to be 'the beloved disciple' of the Gospel), but completed after his death.

In *specific cases* there may have been churchmen who possessed *both* the thoughts to share *and* the skills to share them. Was the Letter to the Hebrews the product of such a person? Or was this the work of a rhetor employed by a *group* of leading churchmen? (Were *all the Gospels* produced in *this way*?) Or was the First Letter of John the product of one person? Questions abound! But we must move on and turn now to a consideration of other first century practitioners.

In regard to 'readers' and 'reciters', we first ask what differentiated the reader from the reciter? They were both readers of course, but the reader, simply, was a reader only. Handed a Letter a short time before it was to be read in public, he would have read it quietly to himself to establish for himself its contents, structure, style and purpose. The reciter, however, would have required possession of a text, like a Gospel, a long time before he would have been expected to present it from memory, dramatically and convincingly. He would have needed time to read and to study the contents thoroughly and memorize them carefully. And he would have had to practise his delivery, before he recited it in a public place. Or the reciter was one who could not read, but who could learn from one who could, who having memorized a work and having practised presenting it could recite it anywhere.

We may judge that the majority of the New Testament's Letters were written to be *read out* aloud (some *are* private), but with the Gospels and Acts in particular we may easily judge how their texts had been written for *recital*.

The results of my rhetorical analysis and full parsing of the books of the New Testament do provide new evidence for assessing just what kind of literature it is that we are handling. It is clear to me that there is much more to the study of the Gospels and Acts than just their historiographical, evangelistic, Christological, soteriological and theological purposes. The manner of their literary

composition, their structures, sub-structures and writing style (which evidence technical, even professional proficiency), would seem to suggest that these books were written to function in ways beyond those previously known.

When we see what we now can see, we need ask why the rhetor took so much trouble to exercise such great precision and care in the structuring and constructing of his work? It was not, surely, to satisfy the demands of ancient rhetoric for no real purpose? No, it was because the rhetor was writing for a reader or a reciter who would present his work. Conventions had to be followed, not for their own sake, but to enable the reader, the reciter and the non-reading reciter to do their work.

It is all down to the text that the rhetor was to produce. I refer you to *Codex Sinaiticus* for an example of a fourth century text of columns of rows of (generally 12 to 14) letters, with no spaces between words. It compares with earlier texts like that of the *Bodmer Papyrus* (P75, 175-225? AD), a single column presentation of rows of (approximately 25) letters, with no spaces between words. The very first texts likely had formats of this kind. Thus, they all required interpretation. That the literature itself is styled and structured is to me indication that the rhetors wrote in the ways that they did to assist their readers with this interpretation.

There are four useful aids that the rhetor, under the rules of ancient rhetoric, provided his reader/reciter. He provided others, and they are all fascinating, but I judge that these four were the most useful. We look at them here:

i) In every one of the twenty-seven New Testament books, **the ABB' style of writing** is used, where A is the introductory piece; B is the first development and B' is the second and completing, balancing development. Indeed, in many instances Parts B and B' can be read as 'dualities'.

In all the books, these A, B and B' parts each break down into three parts, abb'. And each of these, in most New Testament texts, breaks down further into three parts, say .a.b.b'. In many texts each of these breaks down still further into three parts, represented, say, by (.a)(.b)(.b'). To the scholar or reader today of the New Testament who has never known this before, it will be considered an impossibility. But it isn't! It is certainly impressive, but the method can be learned and applied. (I have personally prepared some sermons in this style. With practice, it *can be* mastered.)

The reader/reciter, once he had discerned the writing style of the rhetor, would have been able to break down any text of unseparated letters into words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and so on. He would have been able to define the beginnings, endings and extent, therefore, of all the writers' passages, just as the rhetor intended. The rhetor's writing style would also have assisted the reciter in setting the contents of a text to memory.

What is apparent in each New Testament book is that the rhetor, in his opening piece of his text, displays his style to his reader. Deliberately, it seems, the writer provided for the reader the simplest version of what will follow in his text. One of the best examples is in the opening of John's Gospel:

'In the beginning was the word	(a)
and the word was with God	(b)
and the word was God.'	(b')

This is the opening, three-part ‘piece’ of the Integral Prologue, 1.1-18, which is, itself, made up of three whole parts (A: vv.1-5; B: vv.6-13; B’: vv.14-18). Part A, vv.1-5, could not have been written more simply. The middle and final parts, parts B and B’ (see pages 54, 55), however, display a complexity of the kind which the reader/reciter will encounter throughout the Gospel. This rhetor, then, made it his business to ease the reader/reciter into recognition of his book writing style.

If, therefore, the Integral Prologue to John’s Gospel is an ABB’ structure, for comparison, the Prologue to Luke’s Gospel (1.1-4) is an abb’/abb’ structure, a threefold *protasis*, followed by a threefold *apodosis*. Luke so begins his text, for the reader/reciter’s sake, with a simple version of what will follow in 1.5-38 (1.5-25/26-38) and 1.39-80 (1.39-56/57-80). As with the rhetor of John’s Gospel, he is helpfully introducing *his* style. In the Acts of the Apostles, his second book, Luke presents a more complex abb’, three-part, Prologue (1.1-5). Here, he appears to expect his reader/reciter to understand what he is doing. (Because he has read his first work already?) Mark, in his Gospel, also has an ABB’ structured Prologue. It well displays *his* book writing style, as also the limits of the Prologue itself (1.2-20, not 1.1-13, nor 1.1-15). The first readers/reciters will have understood these things: subsequent readers, clearly, have not.

It may be observed that Paul lists ‘nine’ fruits of the Spirit in Gal. 5 and ‘nine’ gifts, or manifestations, of the Spirit in I Cor. 12. Why not ‘ten’, or ‘eight’? The answer is that he was writing in ‘threes’ and ‘multiples of threes’, just like the writer of John’s Gospel and, indeed, just as all of the New Testament writers. In the Gospels and in the Letters we find similar listings which display conformity with this writing style. To each line, in the listings, are three component pieces, either of single words, or of single phrases. The rhetors appear to have delighted in such presentations. Listings appear so frequently! To the first readers/ reciters they will have been easily recognized.

This Writing Style can be summarised here. To anyone who has not seen it before, there are more than a few things to observe.

It is characterised by ABB’. It is a three-part writing style that is sub-structural in fact to the different frameworks that the writers (rhetors) chose for their works.

A is the introductory part;
B is the first development; and
B’ is the second and balancing development
(to B) which completes the whole.

It works at many different levels in the text. Any unit of the framework is defined by ABB’. For example, all the Days of Mark’s Gospel are constructed this way. In a Letter, as with James, I John or I Peter, a single section of a chiastic framework of ABB’A’, i.e. A, is defined by ABB’.

The text at the highest levels is completed by the rhetor by his constant adherence to ABB’. Consistency at every level means that this ABB’ writing style sets the punctuation to the text. (In the first centuries BC and AD there was no common use of punctuation.) The sub-structural units to the writing whole are defined this way.

The following examples are intended to help further:

A B B’

The above is complete, but its flexibility can be shown below: any 'depth' of configuration per piece is allowed, provided that there is a completion of a three-part presentation at each level of use:

A	a	(a)	.a	..a ..b ..b'
			.b .b'	
		(b) (b')		
	b	(a) (b) (b')		
	b'	(a) (b) (b')		
B	a b	(a) (b) (b')		
	b'			
B'	a b b'	(a) (b) (b')		
3	9	27	81	243

The letters are annotations for the 'levels' of text, major to minor, progressively, left to right. The numbers represent the least to the most parts per 'level' of construction. A text of columns of lines of letters as in the earliest manuscripts that we possess could be 'parsed' (that is, parted into its parts with the help of the grammar) by any first century reader.

Finally, as we find the use of *dactylic hexameter* in Homer's Iliad, we ought maybe to identify similarity with this writing style. With the dactyl the emphasis is on the first syllable with no accent on the following two. We might represent it by: Da Di Di. Or ABB'? Is this writing style, then, the nearest the New Testament writers could get to using the dactyl of Homer? To a Homeric line of composition there were six feet, a multiple use of dactyls and some spondees. In Homer, the fifth foot was a dactyl 95% of the time and the sixth a spondee, a Da Da (if you like). An English poetic example is begging: 'Down in a | deep dark | hole sat an | old pig | munching a | bean stalk.' But with the ABB' style, there are not six feet, but the equivalent of nine parts.

There is, of course, more to say about the writers' styles than just their three-part presentations. The New Testament writers demonstrate variety in the use of it. Though all the rhetors were trained in classical Greek and the art of rhetoric and had manuals available to help them (the

products of instructors like Anaximenes, Aristotle and Cicero), some were either *able to write* better Greek than others, or they deliberately *chose not to write* in their best Greek. In this respect, and for an example, we might give a little consideration to Mark's style and method and his use of an unpolished, *koine* Greek. Did he lack skill? Or was it because he first wrote his Gospel in Aramaic? Others have judged, I also, that it was neither of these, but that he chose to write in a style that was appropriate to popular drama and for popular consumption (ref. Mary Ann Tolbert, in Acknowledgements in *NT:NT*(5)). Mark 'dumbed down' his presentation, therefore, in order to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Lastly, on this matter of style, we ask: Where did this writing style originate? It is a fact that such a style is to be found in use in the writings of the *Old* Covenant literature. We find its use, for example, in Genesis and I and II Kings (for details of this, see my book, *The Markan Matrix...*, pp.24-25). It would appear, therefore, that Paul's writing practitioners were influenced in their choice by their Old Covenant predecessors. Subsequently, all rhetors were influenced.

ii) ***Anaphoras, anastrophes and inclusios*** are found in all of the twenty-seven New Testament books. They will have assisted the reader/reciter in his (her?) search for the sub-structures and structures of the texts.

Anaphoras are word or phrase repetitions which help define the openings of new sections or pieces in the texts. Once the readers begin to identify the rhetors' choices, the work of 'parsing' is made easier. Examples in the Letters include: 'Beloved' (see I John) and 'Brothers' (see I and II Thessalonians). The Gospel writers have their favourites: for Matthew, it is 'Then'; for John, 'These things..'.

Anastrophes ('hook words') are word repetitions that the rhetor includes, firstly, at the ending of a completed ABB' construction, and secondly, in the opening of the ensuing ABB' construction. They had a mnemonic function, acting as 'prompts' to the reciter, in two ways. As he completed one section, he was helped to remember the opening words of the section that followed. He was also helped to see that the two sections were significantly linked in the rhetor's thinking.

Inclusios are word repetitions which work at different scales/literary levels. By employing repetitions of a word at the beginning and the ending of a passage, the rhetor can establish, for the reader's/reciter's understanding, the full extent of one of his constructions. If the rhetor is defining a simple ABB' piece, then the key word or phrase will be found by the reader/reciter both in the Aa position and the B'b' position. Or if the rhetor is defining an ABB'/ABB' composite, or an ABB'/ABB'/ABB' composite (see Paul for much evidence of these), the same word or phrase will be found only in the first, Aa, piece and the last, B'b', piece, as underlined.

New Testament rhetors also begin and end whole works with similar details or themes. *Inclusios* can work at the grandest scale possible. Consider Luke's opening and closing pieces of his Gospel. His story begins in the Temple in Jerusalem (contrary to the stories of the other Gospel writers). It also ends in the Temple in Jerusalem (also contrary to the stories of the other Gospel writers). Similarly, the First Day's telling by Mark, of Jesus' night-time rising and temporary disappearance, has its parallel in his final Day's telling (the Twenty-eighth Day's telling) of Jesus' resurrection. Mark's Narrative begins and ends, therefore, on similar themes. (Note also: the *setting* sun in the first day's telling and the *rising* sun in the last day's telling. Something is meant!) Additionally, Mark's Prologue and (original) Epilogue, which cradle his Narrative, exhibit some balances of themes and details. These act like *inclusios*.

iii) **A skeletal outline** is found in each of the twenty-seven New Testament books. The rhetor was expected to have a book plan. The reader/reciter would be on the look out for it and would be content when he had found it. The writing rules required that it be a 'hidden' structure: if it was too obvious the work would be dull to listen to.

In Mark's Gospel, the narrative scheme (excluding for now the Prologue and Epilogue) is one of four times seven, Four Series of Seven Days, where there are two outer series and two inner series in the pattern: A,B,B',A'. Each Series of Seven Days is formed by an initial 'three-day' Sub-series, a turning point of a 'day' and a concluding 'three-day' Sub-series.

In Matthew's Gospel, the scheme is a chiasm of eleven sections, Sections 1-5,C,5'-1'. Each of these Sections comprises 14 parts, with the exceptions only of the balancing Sections 2 and 2' which both contain 14 parts, 14 parts and 14 parts (in an ICI', or ABA' arrangement). Matthew gives clear indication in his opening piece, Jesus' genealogy, that he is repeatedly using 'threes' and 'fourteens' in his presentation.

Luke's two works, his Gospel and the Acts, like Matthew's Gospel, are eleven section chiasms, Sections 1-5,C,5'-1'. In the Gospel, the same is used for the Genealogy, as also for the central teaching section. Luke's two books exhibit usage of sectional forms: ABB', AA' (or II') and ABA' (or ICI'). The latter breaks down, for example, as I(ABB'),C(ABB'),I'(ABB'). Luke never uses one form for one book-section, without using the same form for its parallel.

The Gospel of John can be described in one way as a seven times twelve chiasm, with Sections 1-3,C,3'-1' and with sections made up of twelve parts (abb';abb':abb';abb'). (He displays an interest in 'sevens' throughout his work: seven feasts, seven 'longer I am sayings' and seven signs.)

The Revelation to John is a seven times seven chiasm, with Sections 1-3,C,3'-1' where all the sections comprise an introduction and seven parts.

Meanings clearly attach to book structures. The prime candidates for interpretation are Mark's 4x7 scheme, John's 7x12 scheme and the Revelation's 7x7 scheme. Numbers meant much to the early writers and audiences. '4' had its 'universal' significance; '7' was a sacred number in earlier religions, but to early Christians it signified 'completion', 'perfection' and 'fulfilment'; and '12' was related to 'God's elective purposes'. How do we interpret Mark, John and the Revelation? Mark: 'Jesus' fulfils God's universal purposes'? John: 'Jesus completes God's elective purposes'? The Revelation: 'All will come to its perfect completion'?

Another candidate for interpretation may be considered, but for different reasons. The structure of Paul's Letter to the Romans is a 1,2,C,2',1' section chiasm. The Old Covenant's five books of the Law are arranged in the same way (I got this from a 1980's Jerusalem computer aided reading of the Hebrew and checked it out for myself). Did Paul and Tertius know its structure? If they did, then did they intend their audiences to make the connection? My analysis of the Letter affirms that 'the Law' is a significant issue in all the sections of Paul's and Tertius' composition. Aren't they saying 'Romans' is 'the New Law'? And isn't there something very similar to this in Matthew's writing? For he presents Jesus as 'the new Moses' and arranges *five* teaching blocks in chiasm, sections 2,4,C,4' and 2', interspersing them with other material.

Chiasms may have symbolic meaning. What we can say with certainty, nevertheless, is that they offered every advantage to the reciter. If he could remember his way into the centre, he could most

certainly remember his way out from there. Essentially, chiasms *halve* the amount of structural information the reciter had to remember.

In the first and second centuries, both the reader and the reciter would have been looking in the text for the rhetors' book structures. As each took a manuscript into his hands for the first time, his first task would have been to separate columns of lines of letters into words and words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into sections and so on. He would have been satisfied when he was able to discern the skeletal outline. He would have been totally content when he too was able to read the writer's own confirmations of his structure! Yes, it would appear that rhetors placed confirmatory numbers in their narratives. In Mark's Gospel we have one example: in the last piece of the Prologue are 'two' and 'two' and in the first piece of the likely Epilogue 'seven' is mentioned. Between these two elements sits the Narrative in 'two' outer series and 'two' inner series of 'sevens'. With Matthew's Gospel there is something similar: the number 'eleven' appears only in the gospel at the beginning of the final piece; the sections of the gospel number 'eleven'. And in Luke's Gospel there is something slightly different: Sections 3 and 3' are made up of 'threes' and Section 4 of 'fours' and 'eights'.

iv) **Edentations** are found in all our second to fourth century manuscripts of New Testament Books. In the rhetors' *original documents (exemplars)*, they will have added clarity to the presentations and been valuable visual aids for the readers' right readings of the texts.

Edentations vary a little in their presentation, but in all of them is a protrusion of a single letter or a half letter in the left hand margin of a presentation. Edentations behaved like the 'indentations' or 'indents' that we commonly employed to signal new paragraphs in our writings in the last century. For the reader, then, who had the rhetor's original document, these edentations were the clearest visual signifiers of his sectional and sub-sectional divisions.

In the laying down of the Greek letters in close juxtaposition, fourth century 'copyists' provided the relief of a *space* in the line above where the edentation appeared, towards the right hand margin of the column of letters. This space gave emphasis to the feature and the protruding letter was always the first letter of a new sentence and new paragraph (or section). Earlier copyists, of the second and third centuries, however, left no space before the edentation, but rather kept the rhythm of letters going in tight formation. The protruding letter in this case was simply the next letter to be written. The new paragraph, therefore, was begun in the line above it.

This earlier presentation of the edentation was flawed: it did not always show up clearly enough for it to be seen by the copyist. As a result, these signifiers of the rhetors' structures got corrupted, by loss as also by addition. We would have liked sight of even just one of the *exemplars* today, yes? But the next best thing, of course, is that we can now recreate them all, by examination of each text for evidence of the rhetor's writing style and structure.

It was the rhetor's job to facilitate the reader's work of preparation and presentation and the reciter's work of preparation, memorizing and delivery. These four aids helped each one in his (her?) own distinctive task. And information about these things, of course, is information that we can use today. Indeed, it is vital for our reading of the New Testament Books. It is New Testament information that helps us define whole texts in terms of their parts and their wholes. It gives insight into the

processes of their production. It also opens up to our gaze the purposes of the church's early succession of message bearers.

Burton Mack (*Rhetoric and the New Testament*) shares interesting observations about the historical probability of New Testament writers and even bearers of Palestinian traditions being influenced by Graeco-Roman rhetorical theory and practice. These fuel the argument that the New Testament writers deliberately but understandably employed literary conventions available to them from the cultural milieu of their age. In referring to the classical handbooks (principally: Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica*, Cicero's *De inventione*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the *Progymnasmata* of Theon and Hermogenes) Mack summarises the five aspects of the practice of rhetoric that were, in general, addressed. I add a few notes of my own.

- a) Invention (*heuresis, inventio*): this was the conceptual process of deciding on the subject to be elaborated, the position that would be taken on an issue of debate, or regarding the thesis to be proposed. Research would be carried out for supportive material. It was not a matter of creating a brand-new idea.
- b) Arrangement (*taxis, dispositio*): this was the work of ordering material into an outline, into sequence, or on how best to develop the sub-themes. Skeletal outlines were standard and in crafting a speech in particular, rhetors were expected to "hide the standard outline". Arrangement was as important and creative a process as invention.
- c) Style (*lexis, elocutio*): this was to do with how one handled your material in the process of composition. Grammar, syntax, rhythm and the selection and repetition of words were matters of importance. Style was a matter of aesthetic effect and an important factor in persuasion and that it also had a mnemonic function. But we have seen already how style (ABB') also actually punctuates a text and defines the units that make up the wholes of any text. The Prologue informs the reader immediately how the text is to be parsed.
- d) Memory (*mneme, memoria*): the writer, in an oral/aural communicating era, needed to give assistance to memorising a text. Techniques in writing were devised: the most interesting is the imaginative creating of a scene in which vivid and striking images of persons, objects and events would be set by association with the points, words and figures of speech one wished remembered (*Ad Herennium* III.xvi.28 to xxiv.40). It is in Luke's Gospel that I find examples of this in particular. In his Section 4, the writer has four pairs of stories, a Sermon on the Plain structured 4-8-4-8-4, followed by four pairs of stories. His Sections 3 and 3' are built on threesomes of report. He is assisting the memorising of his work.
- e) Delivery (*hypocrisis, pronunciatio*): this referred to voice, pauses, and gestures appropriate to presenting the text in a persuasive and captivating way.

In moving to a conclusion of this study, we may attempt further clarity on the churches' use of writers (rhetors), readers and reciters. It appears very likely that the church and its principal message bearers turned for help in the first place to those who had a practised and professional expertise. Rhetors were needed to do the writing and readers and reciters were needed to read and recite. But is it the case that only those who were educated in reading and writing were always used?

Literature played an important part in the establishment and growth of the Early Church. The need for communicators will have required that others became involved. Those educated in reading, writing and rhetoric, therefore, may well have been sent out to train others. Those so chosen, to be trained, would not have had to have had a formal education. They would only have had to be able to learn the contents of a manuscript, orally and accurately off by heart. Because oral education was effective and widespread throughout the Mediterranean world at that time, there would have been many likely candidates in the churches.

A final and most important issue has to do with how the church came to lose sight of the internal characteristics of its New Testament texts and how it let slip through its fingers the expertise that was needed to do the texts justice. We have to entertain the possibility that this loss occurred early in the life of the church.

One possible cause for the loss is that the church's writing scholars were wiped out in the persecutions. Under Nero, according to tradition, leading, named apostles were put to death (such as of Peter and Paul). Trials, executions and banishments took place under the ensuing emperors. Zero tolerance was shown to all those who were persistent in their profession of Christian faith. Known scholars, therefore, would have been very vulnerable.

A second possibility is that it was the *influence* of the church's writing scholars that was wiped out. Not the scholars themselves. The evidence of the New Testament Books themselves is that the later writers disagreed with earlier ones (the writers of the Pastoral Epistles and of II Peter with the writers of the Gospels). They wanted, it seems, to commend texts for their historical factuality; they wanted to set aside debate and argument; and they wanted to affirm that the authorship and the authority of the texts were of God and not of man. Is the finger of blame, then, to be pointed at these later writers and not at emperors? Did this later group of writers gain the upper hand? Did they lead others to ignore any consideration of the rules of rhetoric, to which the books were written?

Tensions may well have existed between the writers, but what we observe is that they all did share the same writing discipline. It would appear that we cannot easily blame this later group of writers for the loss.

But the third and most likely possibility has to do with 'language'. The missionary church needed translations of the Greek in the mother tongues of new converts (a manuscript exists from as early as the second century, in Syriac). The western church wanted Latin versions. And Augustine wrote, '...in the early days of the faith, no sooner did anyone gain possession of a Greek manuscript, and imagine himself to have any facility in both languages (however slight that may be), than he made bold to translate it' (*De Doctr. Christ.*, ii, 11). The quality of the Latin varied. Different versions mushroomed. The fourth century project of the Latin Vulgate was born of this.

Is it simply the case that expertise in Greek was not widespread in the western church and that Latin translations did not replicate the internal characteristics of the Greek texts? (Because they could not? Or because no one tried? Or because no one realised there was anything to replicate?)

The lesson for today at least is clear, whatever the answers to all these questions. We need to be studying the Greek texts to regain both information and expertise that was lost centuries ago. Because we lack the necessary discipline in our approach to these first century texts, all around the world today the church struggles to find a common path to their *truths*. We are intolerably divided in the ways we commend the living of 'the new life'. The supreme requirement has always been that of a

purely literary analysis of the New Testament Books. It is my pleasure, therefore, though much still to my astonishment, to be presenting the results of my own rhetorical analysis and full parsing of all twenty-seven books, as well as my own, first explorations into the meanings of the findings. The work is incomplete. This fifth edition still only marks a beginning. Yes, I have done much more than ever I thought I would, mainly because no one would join me in this task over the years. But there is much for many to do and I am more than ready to hand it all over.

Since 2016, when the above was completed, I have continued with the work and published further books and papers.

For the latest, up-to-date version of The Rhetorical Table of the New Testament, I advise you to visit my website and blog.

Addendum B:
A Reconstruction of the Writing World
in which the New Testament Texts were written

This paper is offered in tribute to the work and life of Burton L Mack who died on the 9th March 2022.

For seven centuries, from Homer (maybe?) to the first century CE, writing became highly developed and rigorously practised. It was a costly pursuit, given the difficulties encountered in preparing for use the necessary writing materials of papyrus, parchment or vellum and the inks. Writers needed writing desks too at which they could stand to write, and tables too on which they could lay down the pieces of text they finished, one piece after the other, for gathering up at the last in the order they had planned for their finished works.

Yet, for whom were the writers writing? For what reason were the writings written? Writings were needed by the judiciary and the courts, in the markets, in trading and the economy, the running of nations, cities and regions. Writings were also needed by the public in the forum and the amphitheatre. But for the public, they were read out aloud, or recited from memory. In general, people who were working every day for their survival did neither read nor write. For the seven centuries, therefore, it was accepted that few people would ever read, that is, that the majority would never read.

The writers' responsibilities, therefore, were to the authors who engaged them, their readers, reciters and their audiences, especially if their works were plays, epics, letters, or recitals for performing not only in their own cities, but in distant places. Works that were created for general circulation had to be composed so that they could be copied and put into the hands of readers and reciters who would teach others who could not read, but who could set them, nevertheless, to memory, and, in turn, pass them on to others beyond their home city.

Copyists, like the writers, needed writing desks at which they could stand to write down capital letter after capital letter, from the alphabet, as they were dictated to do by one at the front of the room at another lectern facing theirs. Picture a room, if you will, with up to fifty copyists within it. These 'scribes' needed the same materials as the initial writers. Besides the papers, inks and pens (feathers and cutters) they needed straight-edges (rulers) and pencils with which they could first set-up their 'papers' before they could begin laying down the script, one letter at a time, each in juxtaposition with no gaps between words. According to historical cases, they *could be* asked to produce copy in three or four columns. If it was three, the columns of rows (equally-spaced) would be wider than those in a four column presentation. The lines were applied by pencil. Note now that these copyists needed to know only the letters that were to be laid down at the command of the man at the front. They themselves did not need to be able to read. They only needed to be able to present clearly the letters they were asked to. Their skills for which payment had to be made were no more, therefore, than those of a simple (graphic?) artist. In the early copying process, they were not employed as able readers; that would have entailed greater costs.

The writer, therefore, of a work (text, or manuscript) that was to be copied would know that his readers would be confronted with rows of capital letters in columns with no gaps between words and no punctuation. He would know that his reader would have to be able to interpret these alphabetical

letters into their words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs and chapters (sections). Edentations would be provided in the left hand margin that would consist of a protruding (half-size to full-size) letter often with a blank space in the line above it; these would identify paragraphs and chapters. But if the reader was to interpret the writer's intentions, and, in turn, all readers and reciters in any city or age, in exactly the same way as each other, then the writer clearly had to provide a text that was disciplined in its layout.

It is this that translators, in the general case, have known little or nothing about through seventeen centuries. Their translations demonstrate this. They have seen the words only, and not the works! Yet, the discipline of these New Testament Greek writings has always been open to being tested against the rules of Hellenist writing. The five rules are Invention, Structure, Style, Memory and Performance.

We take Style first. There were, after seven centuries of writing development, an accumulation of styles for any writer to choose from: for example, ABB', AA' and ABB'A'. Style ABB' is the style employed by all the writers of the New Testament's texts, where A is the introductory piece, B is the first development and B' is the second, paralleling and completing development of this three-part presentation. The nearest and earliest we get to this is in Homer's use of dactylic hexameter in his *Iliad*. A dactyl is made up of three parts, one long syllable followed by two short syllables (observe the topside of one of your forefingers, *daktulos* being the Greek for it). AA' is two-part parallelism and ABB'A' stands out as a chiasm (chiasmus) in its simplest and most ancient form. In the New Testament texts, ABB' is discovered at up to seven literary levels of text simultaneously, from three words to a phrase to a clause to a sentence to a paragraph to a section to a composite section. It is an impressive writing technique that can be developed by anyone today, but who would want to, or even need to, given that we have printed copy and that the majority can read? The writer's responsibility was to introduce his choice of style to the reader in his opening piece and then to continue its use throughout the whole work to its end. This was the writer's best help to the reader for interpreting the columns and rows of capital letters. (I have had people reading the story of THELITTLEREDHEN completely without spaces between words and without punctuation. This text reveals its structure through regular and significant repetitions.)

Structure to the reader is the next best help that the writer has left him. The writer could choose from a great selection that included: ABB', ABB'A', AA' and ABB'XABB' (as followed by Homer in the *Iliad*), also 1,2,C,2',1' and extended variations like 1,2,3,C,3',2',1' which replicates the shaping of the menorah, also 4x7 and 7x4 arrangements, and 7x7, 7x12 and so on. (The New Testament's structural use of sevens does indeed conjour up images of the menorah: see John's Gospel's Prologue for extensions to the rabbis' interpretation of what the lampstand stood for; and the Revelation to John for a menorahic 7x7 structure.) It was Augustine who said there is no understanding a text without first understanding its structure. All the known large texts of Greek writing are symmetrical in their arrangement (just like the pediments of Greek temples). It is true of those of the New Testament too, where only the shortest texts are found utilising the structure, ABB'. It is clear to me too that the actual 'numbers' of the parts and pieces of the texts of the New Testament, for the writers, carry meaning in themselves. For example, Mark's Gospel comprises Four Series of Seven Days, where the Series follow the scheme ABB'A'. Two outer series enclose two inner series. Four as a number represents universality (think of the four winds, the four points of the compass). Seven as a number represents perfection,

completion, fulfilment. There is meaning to the structure of Mark's Gospel. For those who would wish to interpret it, they need to know that the Days in the Series are arranged as ABB'XABB', where around a central Day X (the turning point) are sub-series of Days ABB' where, in the first three, Jesus completes and fulfils the Old Covenant and, in the second three, establishes the New.

Clearly, structure aids memorising, when it is defined by numbers, or revealed in three-part (ABB') series, or in chiasm like 1,2,C,2',1', as with the five books (it is in the Hebrew) of the Pentateuch, the five sections of the Letter to the Romans and the five alternating sections of Jesus' teaching in Matthew's Gospel. Structure aids performance too, very especially where dualities disclose order. In Mark's Gospel, for example, dualities work horizontally between Days within the Series; they work vertically also between Days of the two middle Series and between Days of the two outer Series; and they even also work diagonally between Days in the outer Series. Of the latter, the most important diagonal duality is between the first and last Days of the Narrative: in the first, the sun sets on the Sabbath of the Old Covenant and in the last, the sun rises on the Sabbath of the New Covenant. Such a keenly placed duality tells us clearly, sharply and convincingly what purpose the writer, along with the author, chose to write about. Their title tells us their work is the *Beginning of the 'Bravo News' of Jesus Christ* - as Jesus completes the Old Covenant and establishes the New. The writer and the author together are responsible for this Invention; it is the purpose for which they write.

We can see now that the writer was a particularly skilled person, who was a trained and experienced professional. The writer was no amanuensis, writing down what he was told. See how the NIV translates the work of Tertius at the end of the Letter to the Romans as if he were 'writing down' this letter. The Greek reads 'writing', not 'writing down' (see 16.22). Likewise, the writer was no secretary, taking down in shorthand (or in notes) what a would-be author wanted. The work demanded that the author and the writer (rhetor) worked together. In the ending to the Letter to the Galatians, we see how Paul refers to his childish writing. He is inexperienced in writing, as also in presenting text. Regularly, we read opening greetings to his Letters which he shares with another or others. The named persons are likely his rhetors. Professional rhetors were employed for their know-how in constructing texts to the rules and practices of the day; they were people who could present choices of style and structure to their client to help him communicate what he wanted to say in writing, while keeping him to the conventions, but open nevertheless to opportunities to express different moods as well as changes of pace in the presentation - to help the author keep the attention of his listeners.

For seventeen-hundred years, mainstream scholarship has been almost totally unaware of these things that lie behind the texts of the New Testament. No one has noticed the discipline of the writings, nor understood what were the responsibilities and roles of the actual writers and the reasons why the writings had to be disciplined. Translators themselves have seen only the words, and not the works that also needed translating, or transmitting. The eyes of most scholars have been on the contents of the texts and not on the bearers of the contents, that is the grammar and the layout and the punctuation that is suggested by a proper 'parsing' of the texts. For this most of us have never been prepared. Most students of literature in the UK, whether they have been students of English Literature, Latin or Greek, have been asked at some time or another to 'parse a sentence', to give each word and phrase within it its proper grammatical term in an examination of syntax. But parsing was never so dull to the first readers of the New Testament writers' texts! Readers, then, had to bring *their skills* in syntax and grammar to a whole text *in order to establish* its sentences, paragraphs and sections, its words, phrases

and clauses, its writing style and structure, and because of its structure its meaning and its purpose as a work of writing.

Nothing less than a revolution in the reading of New Testament texts is promised today. It is true also of our understanding of the texts. Opportunities have been missed in the past. In the early centuries, when priests received copies of the New Testament in Greek, they translated them, whether they were capable or not, into Latin. The tragic result was that the disciplined works of the New Testament writers became obscured. In the middle-ages, the addition of chapter and verse further obscured things, and as lectionary systems for reading were developed, the intentions of the authors and writers for the reading of their texts were set back even more. Inaccurate Latin texts were the focus of church courts from the third century up until the Reformation. At that time, the attention of reformers turned, with a jolt, back to the Greek texts, but chaos prevailed once more as the best Greek New Testament was sought. A new level of mayhem was reached as the thoughts of some turned to considerations of new translations - in European languages! Since then, of course, there has been the burgeoning of different developments of the texts, with printed copies emerging in translations of every kind as churches and scholars attempt to present these texts 'meaningfully', taking account of cultural changes, being in sympathy with gender issues and doing all things in the light of political correctness. Bible editors, too, have seized the right to bring their own ideas to the sectionalising of the texts, and, besides that, their own uninformed thoughts about suitable headings. And given that it must be clearly stated somewhere in this paper, the centuries-old layout of the New Testament continues to do nothing to ensure a reading of the texts as the authors and writers together intended. The earliest writings led to other writings and, in turn, to other writings, as each author reflected on what had been presented before them. The current ordering does nothing to disclose the progressions of thought, the development of differences and the holding together of contrasting understandings.

In the 1740s, it was John Albert Bengel who first identified all the texts of the New Testament to be works of chiasmus (chiasm), but sadly it was not his time. That came eventually, only in the early part of the twentieth century! Since then, in the modern era, others like Burton L Mack and Vernon K Robbins (in the 1990s) identified and laid down, for the understanding of New Testament scholars, the rules of Hellenist writing. Together, Mack and Robbins got very close to revealing the science of the texts and to an objective approach to them, but they themselves fell short, distracted by chreia, as others since have been distracted. They missed seeing the connections between the rules of Hellenist classical writing, which they themselves revealed, and the Greek texts of the New Testament. I am a Methodist like Mack and Robbins, a Minister and Architect too. As such, the burden for revealing the appropriate ways of reading these texts has fallen to me, and for forty years it has been a real burden knowing things that all readers of the New Testament should know. The texts deserve to be read and understood for what they are. I am keen to label the writers themselves as 'Christendom's First Methodists', for their ordering of what to the authors was 'eternal truth' and for the literary assistance they gave the authors, of what were to become New Testament texts, to achieve what they were called to produce for the church in the earliest centuries of its development. We cannot and must not let this opportunity pass us by in this generation. Academia and the Church both badly need this reconstruction of the first-century writing world of the New Testament to free us all for the adventure of discerning Christian Faith for Today.

At the last, we now consider descriptions that have been given to the books of the New Testament, firstly from the beginning, that they are inspired, 'God-breathed', and latterly, that is, much more recently, that they are also inerrant and infallible. I sit comfortably with the first, but not at all with the second and third terms: for me, it is never appropriate to apply these descriptions to biblical texts which reveal difference in developments of thought, of purpose and of understanding. We add too that the texts are known by many around the world today as the 'Word of God'. Clearly, my focus on the writing world that pertained at the time of the birth of Christianity shows the texts to be very much the 'works of men'. Men collaborated in the writing of these texts: we define those who were the skilled and professional rhetors and those who took up what was orally developing and felt compelled, because they believed it was of God, to set it down in writing for a growing and spreading church. We may say rightly that Paul needed to write letters as he was prevented from delivering his spoken words to the churches he founded, because of his numerous imprisonments. But it was the geographically extending church that needed writings that could hold the church to the same beliefs and understandings wherever it travelled. So, as each of these texts was authorised for distribution, it was given canonical status, that is, before the texts of the New Testament were ever brought together.

That God chose to act in favour of all the peoples of the world by sending his Son at the time of the Pax Romana, for many biblical scholars shows his pragmatism in seizing his opportunity to establish something new in the earth. To this, I now want to add that he chose to use, to his advantage, men's skills in servicing a (pre-printing) world of producing Greek texts that had undergone seven-hundred years of development and reached a standard of practice useful to him. Together, therefore, both the Pax Romana and the publishing practices of the world of the first century benefitted the spreading of Christianity. In the past, the Church has wanted to believe that for every book of the New Testament there was only one inspired writer. It now has to acknowledge that for each work there were at least two persons, an inspired author and a gifted rhetor. Through the two, now the Church can explain that God's will was accomplished. Through the two, 'God's (written) Word' was produced. The good result in our own generation is that we, the Church and Academia included, can get to know these texts in the ways that they were always meant to be known.

This reconstruction (dated: 11th July 2022) is based on readings across a number of subjects and much research undertaken over forty years. For evidence of Hellenist writing throughout the New Testament, for the Greek texts fully-parsed and rhetorically analysed, and for a literal translation of the majority of these texts, visit: www.new-testament-new-testimony.com (i.e. ***New Testament: New Testimony to the Skills of the Writers and First Readers***, first published in 2003 and revised and extended through two decades, to 2022).

And for some of the significant papers and books that have influenced this reconstruction of the writing world of the New Testament, visit the 'Introduction' on the above NT:NT website and go to the Bibliography at its end. For another basic and most helpful Bibliography, visit ***Rhetoric and the New Testament***, Burton L Mack, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1990.