

'Atonement' in the Gospels

through the Lens of Ancient Rhetorical Structures:

This paper was prepared, first of all, for the Conference of the British New Testament Society, Manchester, 4th - 6th September 2014. It began life under the title, 'Atonement in the Synoptic Gospels through the Lens of Ancient Rhetoric'. I sent my proposal in, which included much of what is in my opening paragraph below. Today, the 16th May 2014, I received notice that there will not be enough space in the Synoptic Gospels' Seminar programme for me to present it. I'm posting this work, therefore, on my website, www.davidgpalmer.co.uk (to be found under 'Samples', see the top bar) and on www.academia.edu also. The actual paper will appear on both, but the essential appendices will be available only on my website. I'd be pleased to receive feedback from anyone.

David G. Palmer, May, 2014

The Fall of Jerusalem and the Destruction of its Temple in 70 CE, coupled with the catastrophic annihilation of most of the population, shocked the growing international Christian community. Mother Church was gone. As a Jewish Sect, the church had been holding to the Law and its Temple, though not all had agreed with this. The Apostle Paul was one. (Read his Letter to the Galatians!) His ministry was 'to the Gentiles', but it was *his* teachings that were being written down, read and collected. Furthermore, his letters were being written in Greek to the ordering rules of Homeric ancient rhetoric (see Appendix A for two samples), but his understanding of Christ's atoning work was very much that of a Jew: it was based on the 'scriptures'ⁱ. According to tradition, in the late 60s the Apostles Peter and Paul were executed in Rome. What was needed immediately, post 70 CE, was a narrative, a clear message that made some sense of all that had been happening. Jesus had said something about the temple's destruction, hadn't he?

With this outline of the context for the gospel-writing period, I describe what I think were the pertinent issues that set the parameters. In the mix were the rules of ancient rhetoric: they focused on Idea, Structure, Style, Memory and Deliveryⁱⁱ. The gospel writers wrote to these rules, creatively and distinctively in imitation of tested ancient rhetoric. In this way, they answered their call with *myths*, stories that were constructed to inform their listeners in matters of the greatest spiritual, moral and eternal importance. They were not '*mere* mythi', as D.F. Strauss once wroteⁱⁱⁱ. Before the Christian Era, Greco-Roman and Jewish communities presented story-borne truths when it suited, as earlier-founded world faiths had done. To the establishers of Christianity in the late first century, myth had a pedigree that was respected: they judged rightly that it would communicate long into the future.

Immediately, I signal my doubts in regard to Richard Bauckham's recent work on the gospels as eye-witness reports, as eyewitness' testimony. For me, the telling argument is that Bauckham, by his rather elaborate reading of Papias and his under-developed reading of Mark, judges Mark's Gospel to be the unadulterated and untreated historical jottings of one who has received his information from the apostle Peter. Throughout his book he pleads for this view on the grounds that Mark did not create a 'history' as he might have done if he himself were an eye-witness, a writer and a

historian, because he gives no 'order' to the material he received^{iv}. That it is not in note form is very clear to me: my PhD thesis of 1998 shows considerable evidence for a clearly structured matrix, where the author appears in every way to have been in control of his material and to have learned his trade from Homer and, for good reason, mimicked his compositional approach to the *Iliad*^v.

My joy, therefore, has been to discover another who in parallel with me (but quite separately) had imagined himself to be the first one to put the Gospel of Mark under the most helpful lens of ancient rhetoric. He introduces his thesis in the same way as I do, with the belief that readers of the Gospel of Mark had seen nothing of what they should have been seeing. In my case, it was not just Mark's Gospel. I had focused first of all, in 1982-83, on the structure of the Central Section of Luke's Gospel for an undergraduate thesis at Cambridge University, after which I completed researching the whole of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles and, in turn, discovered similar structural order in all the gospels in 1983, before I left Cambridge. My first publication in 1988 included the four Gospels, Acts and the Revelation to John^{vi}. In 2003, prompted by my first attendance at a BNTS Conference, I began looking into the structures of the Letters, having thought previously that there would be no similar structuring there! But I digress. Here, at this juncture, I refer to the work of Dennis R. MacDonald. His thesis is that Mark's Gospel is much influenced for its content by both Homer's *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*^{vii}: in fact, he says Mark imitated the whole of the *Odyssey* for the Gospel and two books of the *Iliad*, Books 22 and 24, for the death of Jesus. Yet like Bauckham, he too demonstrates no knowledge of the Gospel's structure. Neither does he appear to show interest in the structures of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Indeed, he shows no inkling that Mark's Gospel, for structure, imitates Homer's for the *Iliad* - four times over. I explain. Together, Mark's four series form the chiasm ABB'A' and, for each of the Series, the rhetor presents Seven Days in the fashion of ABB'XABB': firstly, three days (in ABB' succession, where A is introductory, B is the first development and B' is the completing second development), then a turning point day that we can call X, and to complete the whole construction, a further balancing three days (also ABB'). In his Prologue and Epilogue, it could be said also that Mark imitates Homer's balancing multiples of days. (See Appendix B: the *Iliad*'s structure.)

For both Bauckham and MacDonald, their publishing of their extensive research has gained them much *street cred.* among biblical scholars. Both have advanced their causes and rightly enjoyed recognition for their work. A third, Richard A Burridge, joins them. As a classics graduate, transferred to theological studies, he builds a solid argument: the gospels in general are no longer to be viewed today as *sui generis*; they are Graeco-Roman Bioi (Lives, Biographies)^{viii}. First published in 1992, his doctoral work attracted much interest from those who did not have his advantage of having studied classics. In 2004 he reproduced his earlier text (with some revisions) and added an additional chapter. The latter gave him the opportunity to deal with the earliest objections to his work and the chance to gather up the supportive comments of others. At the same time, he was able to record the new developments of others that were based on his work. It is disappointing, therefore, to find that he makes no reference to MacDonald's work (published in 2000). Likewise, reference to Mack is missing, for his publication in 1990 on Rhetoric and the New Testament (see my note ii). As Burridge joins Bauckham and MacDonald in my survey, the picture I intended painting is completed: for all their 'success', neither do they focus on the literary structures that are common to both Homer and Mark, nor do they discuss them as appropriate for such major rhetorical purpose.

As I come to the end of my introduction, I want you to know that I applaud every challenge to accepted currents and consensuses in biblical scholarship. Of these, 'Structuralist Exegesis' was one

recently that was waved 'goodbye' to^{ix}. But my hope is that *this* particular baby of mine doesn't end up being thrown out along with structuralism's bathwater, for the 'baby' from ancient rhetoric shows some resemblance. It certainly shares some of the same structuralist DNA. What none of us can escape is the influence of Homer's requirement of structure on first century writing, either BCE or CE. My own PhD work on Mark's Gospel focused on it in the 1990s. Published in 1999, it was eventually reviewed in JTS, vol.52, April 2001^x. The reviewer astonished me with his conclusion: 'Much as one respects the scholarship and conviction which has gone into this book, *sadly it runs counter to too many currents and consensuses* in Markan scholarship...' (my italics).

My first publication in 1988 had covered the literary structures of six New Testament books. My publication of 2005, *New Testament: New Testimony to the Skills of the Writers and First Readers*, uncovered the Graeco-Roman rhetorical structures of *all* twenty-seven New Testament books^{xi}. My background, training and research experience is in 'structures'^{xii}. I *am convinced* that without this lens to look through we can expect no scholarly agreement, either as to the purpose of any NT author, or as to the proper description of any NT book. Others seem to be agreeing with me: as they Google 'Structure' and a NT Book on the world-wide web, they find my work and, as a result, it hits the top spots on the first pages and continues there for months at a time.

We explore Mark's Gospel. (My proposal is set out in Appendix C.) Firstly, we examine the Gospel for its overall composition. In 1.1 we have the likely Title. In 1.2-20 is the Prologue, a three-part presentation, setting the scene and declaring the task of the drama. The Narrative itself, 1.21-16.8, is presented in *Four Series of Seven Days* and meaning likely attaches to this use of numbers. Jesus' life and mission is told in 'four' stages. A 'universal' interpretation may be considered. People spoke then of the 'four winds' as we do today of the 'four points of the compass'. (I know that few biblical scholars would want to see any significance at all in numbers, but that would be to close our eyes to the NT writers use of them.) The fact that seven days complete each of the four series is in no way indicative of the actual length of time that would (could?) have been taken by each stage: 'seven' is likely used metaphorically to represent 'completeness' or 'fulfilment'. Numerologically, the book, therefore, is 'The Complete Universal Gospel'! We note further that two middle series sit within two outer series, in the chiasm, ABB'A', which denotes correspondences, between A and A', and between B and B'. The first day's telling, 1.21-38, sets immediately the parameters to the Civil Day the rhetor has chosen to use, as covering 24 hours from dawn till just prior to dawn the following day. An Epilogue, in contrast to 'currents and consensuses', completes the work of composition. Ancient rhetoric required one. Audiences expected them! And my own view is that the original one for Mark's Gospel has been long preserved in what has been its extended version.

What is clearly evident in the narrative is that the rhetor balances Jesus' completing of the Old Covenant, in the first three days of each series, with Jesus' establishing of the New Covenant, in the second three days of each series, beyond the middle day. Fascinatingly, the rhetor, on the first day of the narrative, has the sun setting on the Old Covenant and, on the last day of the narrative has the sun rising on the New. ABB'XABB', as stated in my introduction, represents the arrangements of the Days of Each Series: in this the structure of the *Iliad* is imitated four times over. In the *Iliad*, three days are described each side of a central turning point which tells of the waking of Achillês. Mark's Gospel has three days each side of a central day, a turning point day which displays the Old and New Covenants in conflict. The two middle series begin with questions raised as to Jesus' identity. There is a duality here that is nearly always overlooked for its structural significance by commentators: twice over people think Jesus is John the Baptist (raised from the dead), or Elijah, or another prophet

(see 6.14,15 and 8.28). Further, both middle series end in the same way, with in-sight/physical-sight interplay (for this, see 8.22-26 and 10.46-52). These are the only two healings of blind people in the gospel. Central to the Gospel's message is Christ's atoning sacrifice. It is just past the middle of the book that we have the acknowledgement by Peter that Jesus is 'the Christ' and it is then that we start learning of what will be Jesus' complete victory over sin, Satan, sickness, evil and death which will clear the way for believers (his followers) to enter the coming Kingdom of God (and avoid hell). Up till this point in the presentation, these things have been indicated in what Jesus has been doing from the first day and even, indeed, during his 40-day sojourn in the desert where he first took on Satan.

In terms of balances, my Chart, my Artwork, indicates that the gospel's plan is that of a matrix which works vertically and horizontally, and diagonally also, in both directions.

The centres of the two middle series are in balance. At the beginnings of each middle day we encounter common Greek words in the same sequence. There is no repetition of this elsewhere in the gospel: 'And thence, rising up *he went away/he comes* into the district of...' In the first (7.24-30), the focus is on the gulf between Jew and Gentile, the people of the Law and the people not of the Law. But Gentiles are *not* to think that 'scraps' are for them. The rhetor is at pains to say that God is generous to all: the two feedings show that! In the two stories of the Feedings there are loaves and fishes aplenty *in God's hands* and the amounts of the scraps that are taken up demonstrate that God has more than enough for everyone's needs. The age old interpretation of the '5,000' representing the Jews and the '4,000' the Gentiles is supported by this reading, from the balances in the presentation. Also, we can interpret Jesus' ministry as firstly to the Jews and only secondly to the Gentiles. The middle day (10.1-16) of the second middle series focuses on Jesus being tested on the Law. He replies that the Law was given for a purpose, for when their 'hearts were hardened'. Clearly, Jesus expects better in the future, when there will be no need of such a law to protect mothers and their children. To conclude the scene, Jesus goes out of his way to welcome representative mothers and children. The first century Gentile-Jewish tension in the church over Law is being addressed in these two middle days. It is a theme that Matthew will develop^{xiii}.

Similarly, the middle days of the first and last series correspond: both focus on plottings to kill Jesus (see 2.23-3.6 and 14.1-11). The climactic note is struck in the ending of both days' tellings.

It is to the fourth series we now turn, for post 70 CE teachings on the atonement that the rhetor of Mark's Gospel himself supplies to the church. The focus is on the destruction of the Old Temple and the building of the New Temple. It is a new concept, not found elsewhere before this. The balance that is struck between the first three days and the last three days of this series is what is most instructive. Firstly, we see how both Days A, Days 1 and 5, begin with 'two disciples' being sent off to make preparation. Jesus can 'see' things as they will be, firstly in regard to the ass he needs and secondly in regard to the room he needs. Zechariah has its influence in both too, see Zech. 9.9 and 9.11. (As regards the 'twos' MacDonald sees a link with their usage in the *Odyssey*. I see the rhetor's focus on 'twos' throughout his work: in the Prologue, the Narrative and also in the likely original Epilogue. I have an idea that there's a reference here to the Noahic covenant and to salvation then as it was expressed when the animals went out of the ark, 'two by two'.)

With Day 1, day A, 11.1-11, Jesus fulfils ancient prophecy by entering Jerusalem on an ass and he is greeted with, 'Save we pray!' As it is late he just enters the temple to look around before leaving with the twelve for Bethany for the night. Thus is the series begun without the clearing of the temple

on the same day as Jesus' arrival, as in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels. It is enough for this rhetor. He has Day 2, day B, and Day 3, day B', to tell of Jesus' clearing of the temple for a first development (it is the place of sacrifice where a person could be made right with God, but it has come to the end of its usefulness to God), and to tell of the destruction of the temple for a second and completing development (the temple would be destroyed in the last days). The rhetor well links Days 5, 6 and 7 with what has gone before in Days 1, 2 and 3. In 14.58, towards the end of Day 5, at the trial before the Sanhedrin, the connection between Jesus and the temple is made, and also in 15.29 towards the end of Day 6, as Jesus is mocked on the cross. Day 7 in the telling of this Final Series completes the presentation: through dying, through visiting death, rather than saving himself by coming down from the cross, Jesus creates the new temple. His risen body is his broken body (of 14.22-25). His is the 'blood of the (new) covenant which is poured out *for many*.' See, therefore, 10.45 which clearly tells that he 'came not to be served, but *to serve* and to give his life as *a ransom for many*.' For the parallel to this, in the opposite day to Day 6 in the second middle series, see Day 2, 9.2-32: it speaks of what will be able to be announced after Jesus' resurrection.

For the arrest, trials, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, our rhetor invents his own time frame which begins with the *Evening of Passover* and ends with *the dawn of the first day of the new week*. Until Mark's Gospel is written there is no evidence of an Easter as we know it. And I ask, if anyone of us had been required to present the significance of such a series of events, would we not have written similarly, with symbolic and powerful effect, not because our details, or our datings are particularly (historically) true, but because the eternal truth that 'one died *for all*' mattered so much more? It ushered in a new age on the earth! *Inventio* and *dispositio* play a huge part in ancient rhetoric. This rhetor knows it and he is responsible, more than any other, for the story that we continue to tell. His picture of Calvary resonates with much that is found in Psalm 22, Isaiah's Servant Passages (42.1-9; 49.1-7; 50.1-11; 52.13-53.12) and other ancient prophetic writings. Of the three pictures painted in our four gospels, his is by far the bleakest. Jesus is deserted by his friends and also by God. The two who are crucified with Jesus add their mocking to those of others. Darkness extends over the earth from 12.00 noon till 3.00 in the afternoon when Jesus, the 'King of the Jews', dies. His body is taken down and laid in a tomb. God's disappearance is expressed at Jesus' arrest. He demonstrates reluctance to go. He is personified in the fleeing 'young man' (of 14.51-52), who then re-appears in the tomb (when it is all over), wrapped in a white robe and with an announcement to make (in 16.5-7), in the telling of the last day of the narrative.

For a structural parallel to Day 6 of the last series, look at Day 6 of the first series which tells of a man 'out of the tombs'. Days 7 of both these series are created as deliberate parallels - for their resurrection happenings. In Days 6, therefore, we read that it is in this rhetor's mind that on the cross, Jesus does battle with Satan and the 'legions' of evil spirits. Alone in the darkness (of sin-bearing?) and in suffering the pain and the mocking, Jesus sacrificially does battle with all that oppresses humankind and prevents people's access to God and their communion with him.

The next thing we notice is that at the point of Jesus' death, the rhetor chooses to have a 'centurion' comment, 'Truly this man was a son of God.' Says MacDonald, these words interpret as further mocking. He is looking for another one of Mark's Homeric parallels as he knows that immediately after the death of Hector in the *Iliad* dear Hector is mocked. Yet can this be the interpretation here? Matthew's Gospel repeats the scene and the saying and it is a moment of dramatic disclosure in both gospels, isn't it? The fact that it is a Gentile speaking, I think, is significant. The gospel is written for both Jews and Gentiles, but at the moment of Jesus' death all Gentiles are given a spokesperson

in the centurion. It is for all Gentiles, along with the centurion, to acknowledge Jesus thus. Further, I think MacDonald overlooks the part the darkness plays in the painting of this picture.

That the temple curtain is said to have been torn from top to bottom at the moment of Jesus' dying tells the reader that the link made between Jesus and the temple is assured. His risen body will be the new temple. And in the Epilogue, in 16.16, we read that Jesus' atoning work is to be believed in: 'Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.' It is the requirement of any ancient rhetor to handover, at the last, the responsibility for decision to his audience. With startling simplicity, our rhetor does this! It is a principle purpose of his Epilogue.

But there is another matter. In the larger picture that the rhetor paints, at the turning point of this last series, the rhetor introduces a woman who would be remembered 'wherever the gospel is preached' (14.10) who broke open a flask of very expensive perfume and poured its contents liberally over Jesus (Jesus says, for his burial). Are we meant to think on the significance of this still further, that Jesus was aware of the aroma and was comforted by it, therefore, as he suffered and died some 48 hours later? Or is it to do with Paul's choice of words, 'a *fragrant* offering, an acceptable *sacrifice*, pleasing to God', in Phil 4.18? (See also Eph. 5.2.) It is highly expressive language and it is exactly the kind of correspondence that leads scholars to think this Gospel owes more to Paul's theology and writings, than it does to Peter's experiences and recollections^{xiv}.

Finally, on Mark's Gospel, MacDonald makes much of Jesus' vineyard parable (12.1-12) to demonstrate that it was in Mark's mind that those who were putting Jesus to death were bringing destruction on themselves and on Jerusalem. As I see it, this is this rhetor's only reference to the link. It is left undeveloped. As a result, I do not think we should make more of it. The verses 13.14-20 appear to be an attempt at placing some historical happenings of 70 CE into prophecy. But it is with Luke, I see the greater interest in this.

For now, however, we turn to Matthaean developments of Mark's Gospel which could be said to clarify Mark's Gospel's presentation on Christ's atoning work. For this we need the two charts of Appendix D. The second adds explanation to the first. Looking at the first of the two charts you might think it demonstrates a form-critical approach. A long time ago now, I regularly buried myself in Bultmann's work on the Synoptic Gospels^{xv}. The form-critical approach paid dividends in the end when I was analysing Matthew's Gospel. The units of the Gospel had to be defined. The chart clearly shows this rhetor's refinement of approach over that discovered in Mark's Gospel. Consider a fourteen and a five beaded single string as your aid to 'rehearsing' Matthew's Gospel. You may hold the five, if you are right-handed, in your left hand and the fourteen in your right hand which you'll be able to shuffle through with finger and thumb. Or you may like to just use your hands, your left hand of fourteen thumb and finger pieces (2 plus 4x3) to count off the 'fourteens', as you retain your place in the fivefold presentations with the appropriate finger of your right hand.

This Gospel is written to be memorised. I've no doubt about that! And as it is so structured it lends itself to being understood through its balancing of pieces, much as Mark's Gospel does. It will be seen that here as with Mark's Gospel we have something near to a matrix too, only that here the rhetor includes material on the birth of Jesus and balances it with much of the material he gets from Mark's Gospel on Jesus' death. In the chiasmic arrangements of the five teaching blocks with their repetitions of ending, 'And it came to pass when Jesus finished...' (7.28-29; 11.1; 13.53; 19.1a; 26.1-2), we identify a major feature of the book's structure. But in the details, we find correspondences

too: see for example the balancing, as in Mark's Gospel before him, of the feasts for the 5,000 and the 4,000 in Section 5'.

On our theme of atonement, we need only to start by looking at the second piece of the first section and comparing it with the second piece of its opposite section, the last section, for Matthaean paralleling. In the first of these, 1.18-25, we are given the meaning of Jesus' name: he is to be called Jesus, 'because he will save his people from their sins.' In the second, 26.17-29, the rhetor adds to Mark's account of the last supper: we now read, 'This is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' The underlined is a refinement, a paralleling in his book structure, and a 'spelling it out' (as with his interpretation of the name 'Jesus'). Time and again this rhetor does this. He particularly exchanges direct quotation from the Old Testament for Markan allusion to it, with the comment that 'it is fulfilled'. See 21.4-5 for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem which fulfils the prophecy of Zechariah. To those he adapts from Mark's Gospel, he adds many more of his own: see 1.22-23; 2.5-6; 2.15; 2.17-18, *et al*.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as in Mark's Gospel's presentation, Jesus is 'betrayed into the hands of sinners' (Mt. 26.45; Mk. 14.41). Matthew's Gospel adopts most of Mark's Gospel's bleakness for presenting the Calvary scene and Jesus' dereliction. There are omissions in the telling, there is no young man running away naked at Jesus' arrest, but there are new things, such as earthquakes and dead persons seen rising from their graves. Overall, however, I discern little development of the earlier gospel's teaching on the atoning work of Jesus. As we explored Mark's Gospel, I referred to Matthew's Gospel's greater development, nevertheless, on matters to do with 'law' and 'new Law'. One of the over-riding teachings is that Jesus is the New Covenant Maker and the New Law giver as Moses was of the Old. Moses died before he could enter the Promised Land, but Jesus died that people, the Jews first, and then the Gentiles, could enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

A look at Lukan developments of Mark's and Matthew's Gospels completes our overview of the synoptic gospels' presentations of Jesus' atoning work. For this we turn to Appendix E which describes the parallel structures of Luke's two-book work.

The charts display correspondence for their eleven sections which comprise 1-5,C,5'-1' chiasms. Matthew's Gospel is similarly composed. Here, therefore, is one characteristic of the constructions of two synoptic gospels that has not been recognised before, other than by me, since 1983. I sit easily with those who say that 'Q' never existed. Luke's work is a remythologising of the two, earlier gospels, though it need not have been decades that separated their writings as has been traditionally thought: once one had been written for everyone, another could have been seen as needed for Jews and another for Gentiles. The work of the writers was not to establish historical details, rather, it was to establish meaning, the meaning of Christ for peoples who were very different from each other.

Clearly, the rhetor here balances Jesus' birth and its meaning with Jesus' death and its meaning, in Sections 2 and 2'. Sections 1 and 1' focus powerfully on promises, major Angelic announcements and on belief and disbelief. It looks like a development by separation of Jesus' birth from its first announcement and Jesus' death from the announcement and the experiences of his resurrection, a development by Luke of what he found in Matthew's first and last sections. Luke clearly fashions his 'Sermon on the Plane' for content on Matthew's 'Sermon on the Mount', yet much of the 'new' teaching in Luke's Gospel appears more to come from his own hand than from elsewhere as it particularly fills in gaps in his book structure that otherwise would have remained unfilled.

On our theme of atonement, we notice in particular Luke's different picture of Calvary. His disciples might not be there, but God is and Jesus can pray to him, 'Father, forgive...' and 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' What is more, he has the company of a criminal who, during his conversation with Jesus, hears Jesus promise him paradise that day! It is so stunningly different as a picture from the one found in Mark's and Matthew's Gospels, and it is wonderfully communicative of 'salvation for all' through the cross of this 'King of the Jews'. What is missing is the note of dereliction. Also, there is no balancing here of 'temple' with Jesus' body in anything like the same way as before. The temple curtain is torn in two, but that is the only mention. As the centurion speaks, so we hear different words, 'Surely this was a righteous man.' Are these words to be judged more fitting for a Gentile audience? It certainly works as a commentary on Jesus' death. Jesus was a 'righteous man' dying, as for the criminals, 'for the unrighteous'. Compare Isaiah 53.11, '...my righteous servant will justify many...'. And see what one of the criminals says in 23.41: 'We are punished justly..., but this man has done nothing wrong.'

It is the Fall of Jerusalem that attracts a greater attention by Luke than we have seen before. His interest in it is because he writes for the nations. In his balancing pieces which introduce and close his massive central section of Teaching on Discipleship, Luke balances the fate of cities and Jesus. In 9.51-56, he repudiates the notion of a Samaritan city being destroyed because it was not ready to accept him. But for those cities that had had every opportunity to welcome him, there is woe. See 10.13-15: even his own town of Capernaum is listed! At the heart, the very centre of the gospel, Jesus' lament is not for himself, but for Jerusalem. The whole piece, 13.31-35, is the fulcrum on which the great central section, and indeed the whole gospel, turns. Jesus' lament for Jerusalem is because he had 'longed to gather' her 'children together' as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.' But they were not willing. This Mathaeian piece is emphatically well placed here by Luke. Jesus' atoning death was for Jew and Gentile alike, for every city and town, and here 'atonement' is spelt out in the simplest picture of a mother bird protecting and caring for her nesting fledglings. In the earlier part of 13.31-35, it is clearly established that Jesus is not to be deflected from his task.

Luke is telling Gentiles also that their salvation came at another cost. The cost was Jerusalem's and that too of the cities and villages of Judea. The rhetor expresses Jesus' sorrow about this. Consider: the lament of Jesus at his entry into Jerusalem, 'If you... had only known...' (19.41-44) and also his lament on the day of his crucifixion, which was for the women and their children (23.28-31). How powerfully also this rhetor places at the centres of his two books *the failure* of Jesus' atoning work to reach his own people, the Jews. The evangelistic appeal is put to the Gentiles: the Jews rejected Jesus, but you won't, will you?!

'Salvation', we need to note, is descriptive of atonement for Luke only: it expresses 'safety' and 'soundness' (see 1.69, 71, 77; 2.30; 3.6 and 19.9). It is a noun that we do not find in Mark's and Matthew's Gospels though we do find the verb, to 'save', to 'make/keep sound/safe', in use in more or less equal proportions in each gospel. But only also is the word 'Saviour' used by Luke (in 1.47 and 2.11). Further, atonement, to Luke, is to be spelt out more strongly as the receiving of both 'forgiveness' and 'the spirit'. And what the first disciples receive is what all disciples/followers of Jesus will receive. In Mark's Gospel, for example, if we include the Epilogue, in 16.16 we have a 'baptism' link with the Prologue, between Jesus' own baptism and his future work of baptising in Holy Spirit, on the one hand, and believers' baptisms, on the other). Luke's opening and closing Sections likewise link for the promises which are to be fulfilled and the working of salvation through

the Holy Spirit. So, as Luke ends his gospel as he begins it, *in the temple in Jerusalem*, he signals his completion of his delivery, before the actual fulfilling of the new promise.

Just as Mary was told by the Angel Gabriel, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and *the power of the Most High* will overshadow you...', so now the disciples have been told by Jesus, just before his ascension, '... I am going to send you what my Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with *power from on high*.' The fulfilment of this is presented in Luke's second book. He will adjust Jesus' days of resurrection appearances to 'forty' to accommodate a new development in his thinking. He will say that it was at Pentecost that the Spirit was poured out. He will show that the Church is the Harvest of Jesus' Life and Mission, Death and Resurrection. The Spirit's outpouring will be a further proof of Jesus' resurrection. And he will show that in the Life of the Church the Life of Jesus is lived again!' The Barley Harvest, the Feast of Weeks, which coincided for its beginning with the day of Jesus' resurrection, will end with the Birth of the Church's Mission on the 'Fiftieth' Day. In such a way, Luke continued his valuable myth-making work.

We turn, lastly and very briefly, to the fourth Gospel. (For this, you will need Appendix F.) Here we notice a link between the Gospels of Luke and John that has not been seen before. We normally discuss dependency of John on Mark alone, for certain aspects of Jesus' life and mission-happenings, such as the clearing of the temple, the feeding of the five thousand and many of the details of Jesus' passion. But immediately, when we see the structure of John's Gospel, we see how its rhetor's work links with that of Luke. He focuses on *the failure* of Jesus' atoning work to reach his own people, the Jews. We noted above how powerfully Luke places *this* failure at the centres of his two books. On this theme the writer of John's Gospel would appear to have pounced for his writing purpose. Furthermore, he centres his gospel on the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem's fall. In prime position, near to the conclusion of the central section, is the Jews' fear for the 'temple' and 'the nation', in 11.48. See also 2.19-22 for the identification that is made between the destruction of the temple and Jesus' replacement of it, and 4.21-24 for an indication of Jerusalem's demise. Yet to establish his *new* point, this rhetor changes the description supremely: Jesus is to be viewed as 'the lamb of God', 1.29,35; 19.33-37; 18.28; 19.14. The rhetor changes the date of the crucifixion to accommodate this powerful point and to complete his presentation on the earthly life of Jesus, by the balancing of Jesus' entry on stage with his departure from it. The mythologizing of the gospel continues with this rhetor and it is for a good purpose. To this writer, it is essential that when the reading of this gospel is completed, its readers and listeners *believe* (20.30-31; 21.24-25).

In conclusion to this paper, after the good practice of ancient rhetoric, I present my Epilogue and hand over to you. You can continue to search the synoptic gospels through the lens of the currents and consensuses of biblical scholarship. Or you can choose to look through the lens of ancient rhetoric's structures to see what there is to see in the gospels about Jesus' atoning work.

NOTES:

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- i See the twofold reference to 'scriptures' in 1 Cor. 15.3, 4
- ii Mack, Burton L., *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1990, pp.32-34
Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica* (e.g. *Aristotle on Rhetoric: a Theory of Civic Discourse*, tr. George A. Kennedy, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, 1991; there are plenty more!)
Cicero, *De Oratore*, 55 BCE.
[All energy and ability of the orator must apply to five steps: find the arguments (*inventio*); dispose them in logical order, by importance and opportunity (*dispositio*); ornate the speech with devices of the rhetoric style (*elocutio*); retain them in memory (*memoria*); expose the speech with art of grace, dignity, gesture, modulation of voice and face (*actio*). Before pronouncing the speech, it is necessary to gain the goodwill of the audience; then expose the argument; after, establish the dispute...]
Theon, Aelius, *Progymnasmata*,
[Writing mid to late 1st century CE, he is the author of a collection of preliminary exercises for the training of orators. 'The work (extant, though incomplete), which probably formed an appendix to a manual of rhetoric, shows learning and taste, and contains valuable notices on the style and speeches of the masters of Attic oratory.' *Wikipedia*]
- iii Strauss, David Friedrich, *Das Leben Jesus: kritisch bearbeitet*, 2 vols., 1st ed. Tübingen, 1835-36, 4th ed. Tübingen 1840; tr. George Eliot, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, SCM Press, London, 1973, p.782
- iv Bauckham, Richard, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, 2006, pp. 203, 207, 217-221, 227-228, 410, 423-424, *et al*
- v Palmer, David G., *The Markan Matrix: A Literary-Structural Analysis of the Gospel of Mark*, Ceridwen Press, Paisley, 1999
- vi Palmer, David G., *Sliced Bread: The Four Gospels, Acts and Revelation: Their Literary Structures*, Ceridwen Press, Cardiff, 1988
- vii MacDonald, Dennis R., *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000
- viii Burridge, Richard A., *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, Second Edition, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, 2004
- ix Hurtado, Larry, in a paper, *Fashions, Fallacies and Futures in NT Studies*, presented to the Conference of the British New Testament Society in 2013 at the University of St Andrews
- x Palmer, *The Markan Matrix...*
- xi Palmer, David G., *New Testament: New Testimony to the Skills of the Writers and First Readers*, Fourth Edition, Ceridwen Press, Church Gresley, 2013
- xii Before training for the Methodist Ministry I was practising as an Architect
- xiii For example, see Mt. 5.21-48
- xiv Until Mark's Gospel appeared, the church possessed no document on the Life of Jesus. It only had Paul's writings and in it some scattered details about Jesus' descent from David, his being declared 'Son of God' at his resurrection, the last supper, a betrayal, a cross, his death ('for our sins, according to the scriptures'), his resurrection three days later ('according to the scriptures'), witnesses to the resurrection and a reference to a possible ascension (according to the scripture, Ps. 68.18).
- xv Bultmann, Rudolf, *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*, Göttingen, 1931, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, tr. John Marsh, Blackwell, Oxford, 1972