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## The Written And The Spoken Word

*Dr. George K. Barr*

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Professor William Barclay's broadcast talks given in 1966 are used to examine the differences between the draft written text and the final spoken text in cases where the speaker departs from his notes and recasts the material spontaneously as he speaks. The findings are related to the structures found in certain Pauline epistles.

There are two stages in the preparation of a 'spontaneous' broadcast talk. The first is the preparation of written material to which are added technical instructions regarding captions, cues for music and camera shots. The second is the delivery of the spoken word in front of camera and microphone. In the second stage the original text may be largely ignored but it provides a peg upon which to hang the talk, which may be completely recast as it is delivered.

I recently rediscovered a set of four broadcast talks that were given by the late Professor William Barclay in 1966. These dramatic talks made a great impression on both Christian and non-Christian people at that time. What interests me at the moment is the relationship between the prepared written material and the spoken delivery. There are considerable differences between the two. It is easy to sit at a desk and produce fine monumental sentences at any stage in the work. It is a quite different proposition to do this under spotlights and before a microphone.

This has a bearing on the production of the Pauline epistles, because in the case of these epistles what we have in the New Testament record is not the preliminary written draft, but the spontaneous spoken production. It may well be that in the case of some of his more considered works, Paul did indeed have preparatory notes written on *membranae* which he used as a peg on which to hang his epistles. But largely, the material was held in his memory, and was poured out verbally and recorded by a secretary who had the

tachygraphic skills that were available in New Testament times. This resulted in a verbatim record rather like the Voicewriter copies produced by the BBC.

Some of Paul's epistles are more spontaneous than others. The more considered epistles have remarkable structural characteristics. A vigorous sense of rhythm that produces cycles of groups of longer and shorter sentences combines with a strong contrast between an opening high-scale section and a following low-scale section to produce a complex pattern that may be unique. This pattern is remarkably consistent and may be mimicked on a computer<sup>1</sup> to provide a model with different levels of complexity. Graphs<sup>2</sup> of the texts may then be matched with one or other level of the model. A wide survey of works both ancient and modern has failed to discover comparable patterns in any other author. This pattern occurs at the beginning of each epistle and appears to represent the first session of dictation. To this 'prime' material afterthoughts may have been added in subsequent sessions. I have named these patterns 'prime patterns'. The epistle to Galatians shown in Figure 1 demonstrates the classical Pauline prime pattern with a small afterthought. The stepped feature at the beginning of the graph reflects the cyclic pattern of longer and shorter sentences that runs right through the epistle; the opening rising section and the following falling section reflect the division into high-scale and low-scale sections that are often (but not always) doctrinal and ethical respectively. It is the interaction between these two features that produces the typical 'notch' at the central axis. This interaction results in an unexpected thrust of longer sentences at the beginning of the low-scale section that on the whole contains much shorter sentences.

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<sup>1</sup> See Barr, G.K. "A Computer Model for the Pauline Epistles". *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 16.3. (2001).

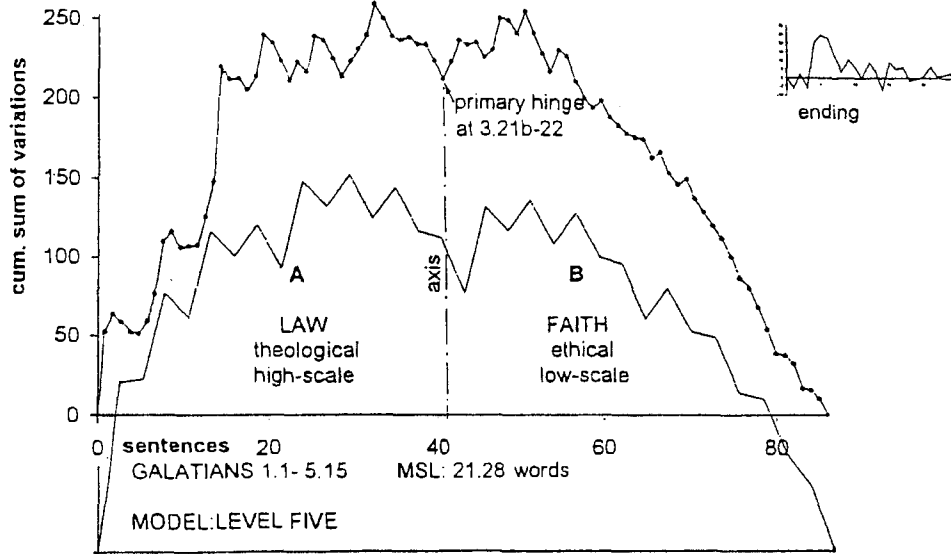
<sup>2</sup> See Barr, G.K. "The Use of Cumulative Sum Graphs in Literary Scalometry", *LLC*, 12.2. (1997).

Other epistles, notably 1 Thessalonians, have been produced under pressure and do not show such clear rhythmic features. In 1 Thessalonians, shown in Figure 2, the stepped pattern is imperfectly formed, but the contrast between the high-scale and low-scale sections is maintained. Paul was writing spontaneously in a crisis situation, answering an immediate need, and apparently did not put in the preparation necessary to produce a mature rhythmic pattern.

Turning to Professor Barclay's talks it should be noted that there are differences in length between the written draft and the corresponding Voicewriter copy of the delivered talk. The lengths are as follows:

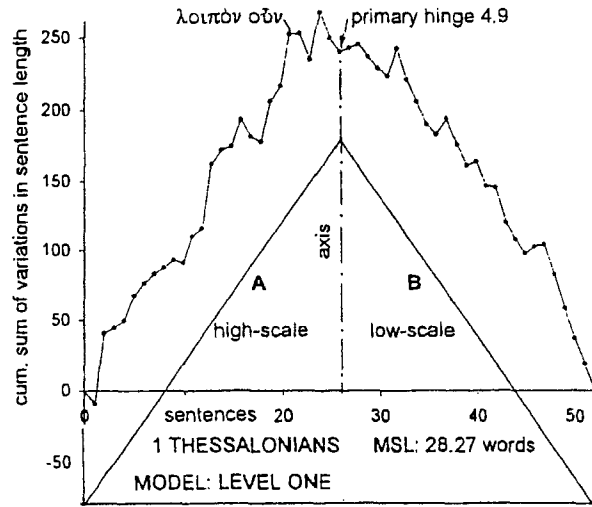
	WRITTEN DRAFT		VOICEWRIter COPY	
Talk 1	3346 words	<	3761 words	(12% longer)
Talk 2	3786	>	3669	(3% shorter)
Talk 3	3385	<	3727	(10% longer)
Talk 4	3010	<	3309	(10% longer)

The material in each case has been entirely recast as it was delivered in the broadcast, and in the spoken form the text has usually a much lower mean sentence length.



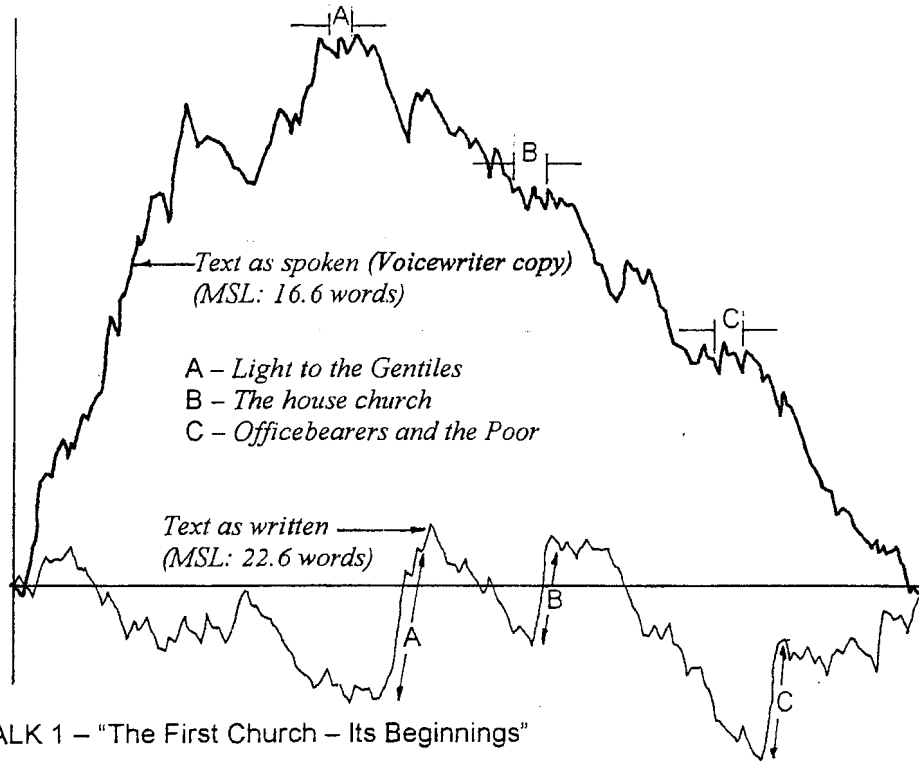
COMPARISON OF CS GRAPH OF GALATIANS AND COMPUTER MODEL

**Fig. 1** In Galatians the high-scale (theological) and low-scale (ethical) sections concern Law and Faith respectively. From 5.16 to the end is afterthought material dictated in a further session.

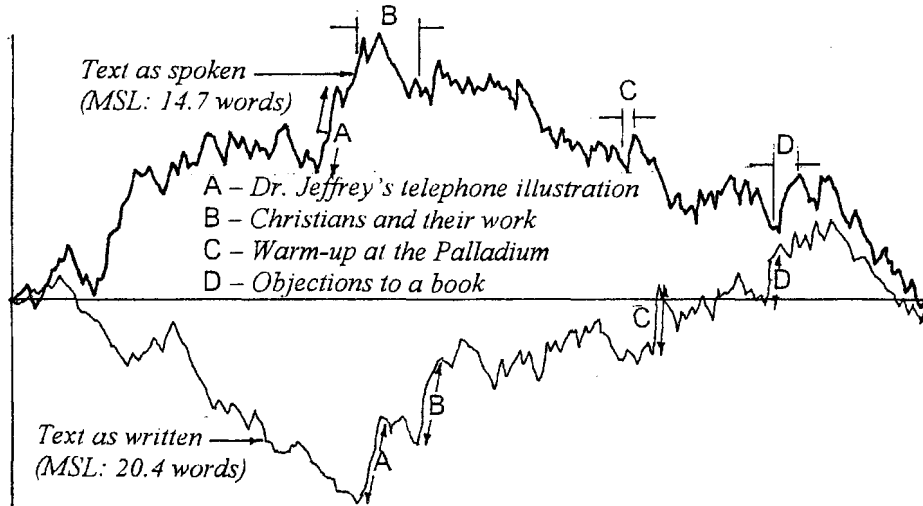


COMPARISON OF CS GRAPHS OF 1 THESSALONIANS AND COMPUTER MODEL

**Fig. 2** The text of 1 Thessalonians is more spontaneous and less rhythmic than other major Pauline epistles but shows the typical division into high-scale and low-scale sections.



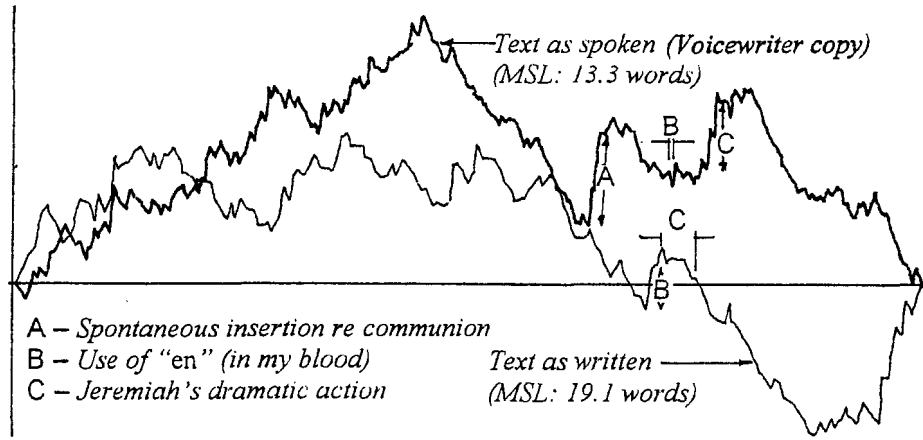
**Fig. 3** A rising trace indicates longer sentences, a falling trace shorter sentences. Illustrations that use long sentences in the draft do not do so in the spoken delivery.



TALK 2 – “The First Church – Its Characteristics”

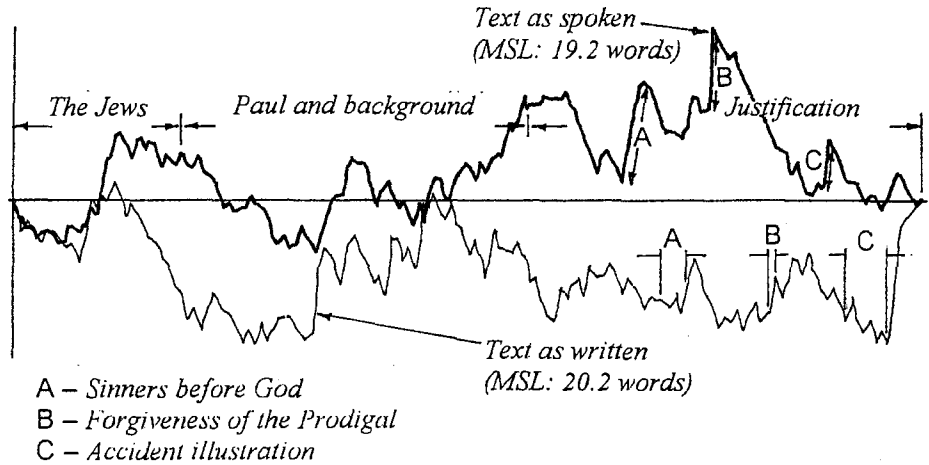
**Fig. 4** The graph of the Voicewriter copy is almost a mirror image of the original draft. The longer sentences of sections A, C and D (but not B) are reflected in the talk.





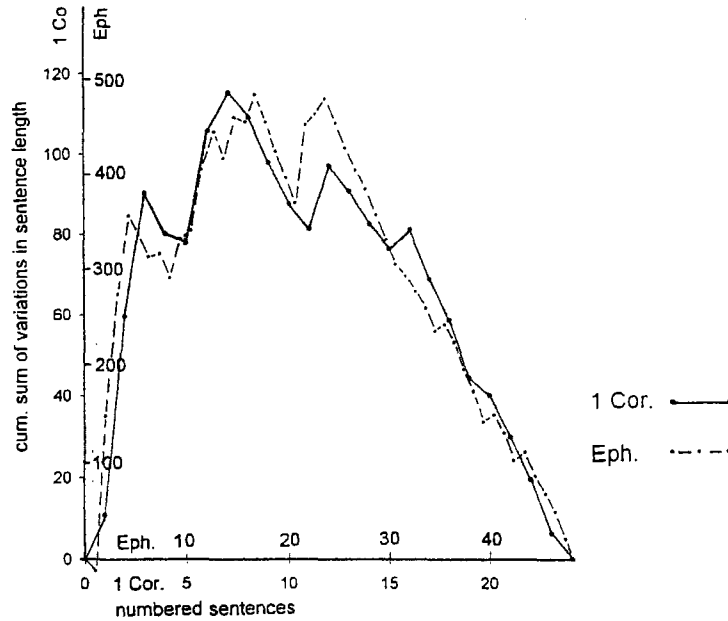
TALK 3 - "The First Church - Its Worship"

Fig. 5 This graph shows an unexpected strong feature at A. This is a small spontaneous tirade concerning communion that does not appear anywhere in the original draft. The sentence patterns at B and C do not correspond in the two versions. As in Figs. 3 and 4 there is a considerable scale difference between the written and spoken versions, resulting in differences in mean sentence length (MSL).



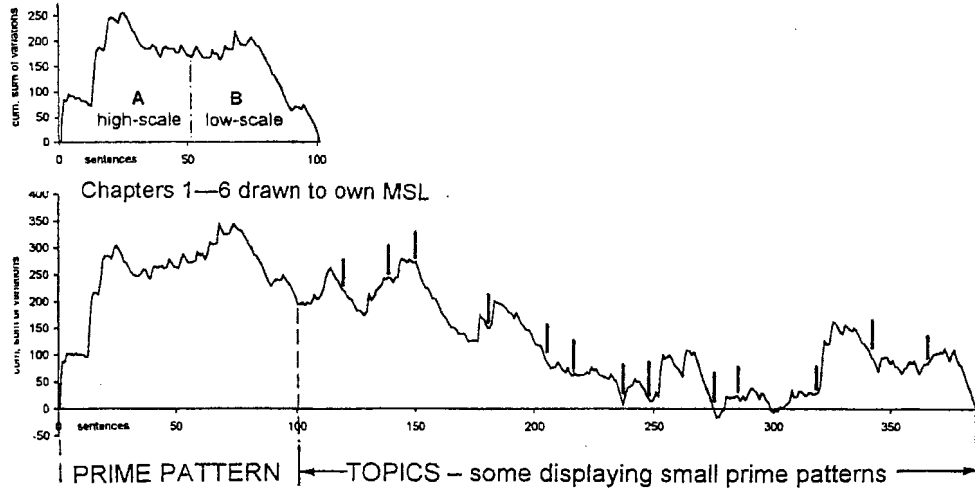
TALK 4 – “The First Church – Its Apostles”

**Fig. 6** This talk differs from the other three in that there is little difference in scale between the written and spoken versions. Talks 1 and 2 showed a high-scale opening section followed by a low-scale section. The same pattern is seen less clearly in Talk 3 but is lost altogether in Talk 4 where the spoken version is as mixed as the written. The prominent features at A, B and C in the spoken version are scarcely represented in the written version.



COMPARISON OF PRIME PATTERNS OF 1 COR. 15.1-34  
AND EPHESIANS 1—6 ON A COMMON BASE

**Fig. 7** Despite the great differences in scale and mean sentence length, these two texts provide corresponding scale-related patterns.



### 1 CORINTHIANS

**Fig 8** The prime pattern comprises the first six chapters. Thereafter each small topical pattern must be drawn out separately to its own mean sentence length to see the Pauline forms.

The first talk, shown in Figure 3, produces a Voicewriter copy the graph of which is not unlike that of 1 Thessalonians. The trace rises steeply showing that the mean sentence length of the first part is above the average for the epistle; then it falls indicating shorter sentences. However, it lacks the rhythmic structure that is generally found in the Pauline epistles. In Figures 3 to 6 the trace of the Voicewriter copy (the upper trace in heavy line) may be compared with the trace representing the preliminary text (the lower trace in a light line). The characteristics are quite different. Material that was covered using long monumental sentences in the draft is often dealt with summarily in short sentences in the spoken delivery.

In Talks 1 and 2 the graphs of the spoken delivery show a clear division into an opening section with longer sentences and a closing section with shorter sentences. This would also be seen in Talk 3 if Professor Barclay had not felt moved to introduce a mini-tirade concerning the misuse of communion (see A, Fig. 5) that was not included in the original draft.

Talk 4 (Figure 6) shows much less difference between the draft and the Voicewriter copy. Why should there be such differences in the height of the Voicewriter trace in these four graphs? The answer is that where the work is divided into a high-scale section with longer sentences and a low-scale section with shorter sentences, then the height is affected by the contrast between the sentence lengths in these sections. A precise figure can be put on this 'contrast factor' by dividing the mean sentence length of the longer over-average sentences by the mean sentence length of the shorter under-average sentences. The contrast factors of these pieces are as follows:

WRITTEN DRAFT			VOICEWRITER COPY
Talk 1	2.71	<	3.27
Talk 2	2.67	<	3.04
Talk 3	2.69	<	2.97
Talk 4	3.07	>	2.72

Talk 1 shows the highest contrast and the greatest difference in height between the two graphs relating to the written and the spoken word. Talks 2 and 3 are similar to each other but show less difference in height than Talk 1. Talk 4 is unlike the other three in that the written draft has a higher contrast factor than the spoken version. Contrast in sentence length is largely a matter of 'mood' and 'attack' and wide variations may be found in the work of any author. On one occasion a speaker may be in good form and may use a great variety of sentence lengths, contrasting short exclamations with longer thoughtful sentences. On another occasion he may be deadly dull and produce monotonous sentences with little variation. The first of Barclay's talks may reflect the fact that he was keyed up on this first occasion and attacked his subject with exceptional vigour. Talks 2 and 3 show less contrast (the graph of Talk 3 being disturbed by his spontaneous insertion), and Talk 4 provides a graph that is similar to that of his prepared written notes. This last talk is not one unified production; rather it is an assemblage of three sections. The first concerns the Jews and is unremarkable except that it contains a new illustration that was not in the draft. The second section is also unremarkable structurally and is a description of Paul and his background. The rest of the talk is concerned with justification and this is treated in a much more lively way. The talk therefore provides three low graphs strung together, rather than one high graph. This may be compared with 1 Corinthians 7—16 (see Figure 8) and 2 Corinthians 1—9 which consist of several small topical patterns strung together and never achieve the form of the prime patterns found in 1 Corinthians 1—6 or 2 Corinthians 10—13.

Two things may account for the difference between Talk 4 and the other three. First, having departed radically from his written notes at the beginning of the talk, and knowing that his time for the whole talk was strictly limited to twenty minutes, Professor Barclay had to calculate as he went along how far the remaining material had to be summarised to save the necessary time. These conditions are inhibiting and may have affected his attack. Secondly, the first of these talks was recorded on 16 February, the second and third on the evening of 17 February and the last on 8<sup>th</sup> March. The first three represent a very demanding load on top of Professor Barclay's

punishing daily schedule. When the last talk was given three weeks later, circumstances were quite different and the excitement caused by the pressure of producing the first three talks in a very brief time had passed.

The graphs of the preliminary written drafts do not show consistent form and it may be that these were prepared piecemeal. It was Professor Barclay's habit, when his students retired for a coffee break, to go to his study and write a chapter of a book. Even these brief periods were apt to be interrupted by visitors to his study. The graphs of the written work may therefore represent a series of small sessions rather than a continuous production. Under these circumstances it is difficult to achieve an overall structure and the resulting graph consists of a series of small graphs strung together.

There are similarities between Professor Barclay's written notes and the small topics of the Corinthian correspondence. Some of these small topics provide miniature Pauline patterns while others are less clear. It would appear that Paul had a reservoir of material some of which may have been preserved in *membranae* notes. On some questions his mind was clear; and these produce miniature but characteristic Pauline patterns. On others he was responding spontaneously and perhaps thinking his way through new problems; there the patterns are less clear. The passages on marriage (1 Cor. 7.1-24), on spiritual gifts (12.1-31) and notably the passage on Resurrection (15.1-34), have strong Pauline characteristics. Indeed the pattern of the resurrection passage is directly scale-related to the prime pattern of the epistle to Ephesians. Figure 7 shows the graphs drawn on a common base. Both reflect the unusual if not unique rhythms of an author that cannot be imitated by reproducing the observable features that are normally associated with style. The differences between these two works are in 'scale' and 'contrast', and these are features that may vary very widely in the works of any author.

The Pauline prime patterns show a complexity that is not found in Professor Barclay's patterns, and they are much more consistent. Nevertheless, the relationship between Professor Barclay's

**Barr, The Written and Spoken Word** *IBS* 23 October 2001

preliminary notes and his final verbal delivery of the texts, throws some light on the Pauline forms.

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