Rhetoric of Acts: A Critical Analysis

Megan Roche
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

RHETORIC OF ACTS:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

By

MEGAN A. ROCHE

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defended on April 11, 2013.

_____________________________
Dr. Jennifer Proffitt
Thesis Director

_____________________________
Dr. Davis Houck
Committee Member

_____________________________
Dr. John Marincola
Outside Committee Member
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 5  
   I. Rhetoric ......................................................................................................................... 5  
      i. Mimesis ....................................................................................................................... 9  
   II. Social Movements ...................................................................................................... 11  
   III. Introduction Concluded ............................................................................................ 13  
2. Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 14  
   Overview .......................................................................................................................... 14  
   I. Rhetorical Criticism & The New Testament ................................................................. 15  
      i. On Rhetoric ............................................................................................................... 15  
      ii. Philosophical Rhetoric .............................................................................................. 17  
      iii. Rhetoric and Christianity ......................................................................................... 21  
   II. Rhetoric of Acts .......................................................................................................... 22  
      i. Overview ................................................................................................................... 22  
      ii. Trial and Adventure ............................................................................................... 23  
      iii. Repetition ............................................................................................................... 25  
      iv. Holy Spirit ............................................................................................................... 26  
   IV. Acts Compared ......................................................................................................... 27  
      i. Acts Dated .................................................................................................................. 27  
      ii. Acts and The Aeneid ............................................................................................... 28  
      iii. Acts and The Iliad ................................................................................................. 29  
3. Method .......................................................................................................................... 31  
   Overview .......................................................................................................................... 31  
   I. Narrative Analysis ....................................................................................................... 31  
   II. Engaging in Narrative Analysis .................................................................................. 33  
   III. Narrative Analysis as an Operational Research Method ........................................... 34  
   IV. The Sociological Perspective ..................................................................................... 36  
      i. The Social Movements Approach ............................................................................. 36  
      ii. Concluding Thoughts ............................................................................................. 39  
4. Analysis ......................................................................................................................... 39  
   I. Rhetoric Review .......................................................................................................... 39  
   II. Acts Outlined .............................................................................................................. 41  
   II. Rhetoric of Acts ......................................................................................................... 42  
      i. Mimesis ..................................................................................................................... 42  
      ii. Trial and Adventure ............................................................................................... 44  
      iii. Repetition ............................................................................................................... 47  
      iv. The Holy Spirit ....................................................................................................... 50  
   III. Rhetoric of The Aeneid and The Iliad ...................................................................... 52  
      i. Acts and The Aeneid: Destiny and a Shipwreck ...................................................... 53  
      ii. Acts and The Iliad: Repetition, Repetition, Repetition ......................................... 54  
      iii. A Skillful Leading of the Soul ................................................................................ 57  
   IV. Narrative Analysis Undone ....................................................................................... 58  
   V. Christianity as a Social Movement ............................................................................. 59  
      i. Social Movements Theory Applied ......................................................................... 59  
5. Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 61
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Concluding Thoughts</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Limitations and Horizons</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Finally</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rhetoric of Acts: A Critical Analysis

1. Introduction.

1. Rhetoric.

“The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul…each age, must write its own books or rather, each generation, for the books of an older period will not fit his. Man hopes, genius creates.” Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke these words in his Phi Beta Kappa address to Harvard in 1837. This premise is the very inspiration for my project. Why approach material that was lived 2000 years ago, material that has been examined by endless inquiry? New thought. As Emerson said, what we have to value is our active soul and our active mind, and the ability to create new thought: “Life is our dictionary.” He later says in the address that by living in it and creating new and active theory, we create intellect.

The book I am looking into for this project is a part of a larger whole- the New Testament. The specific book--The Acts of the Apostles (herein called ‘Acts’)--is often dated between 60-140 C.E, but the scope of study for which I am using in this thesis began much earlier. Five hundred years prior to the dating of this book was the birth of Rhetoric. The term is first said to appear in the Platonic dialogue Gorgias. In medieval manuscripts, the Gorgias carries the subtitle ἡ περί ρητορικῆς, translating literally as ‘or on rhetoric.’ In the dialogue, Gorgias is giving a speech in his home when Socrates arrives and the two begin to partake in

\[2\] Emerson 51
dialectic. Just before the dialogue, Polus, an acquaintance of Socrates, refers to Gorgias’ ‘area of expertise’ as “the finest there is.”

In the Oxford World’s Classics translation of Plato’s The Gorgias, the following definition is given: “Rhetoric is an agent of the kind of persuasion which is designed to produce conviction, but not to educate people, about matters of right and wrong.” This is the definition first given of the art of Rhetoric, and therefore I would consider it to be the most authentic one to be considered. The study of rhetoric in the Western world began in Greece in the 5th century B.C.E. Since that time, higher educational institutions have adapted and opened doors to means of thought for which scholars may read and analyze texts. Other working definitions for this thesis are given in such works as The Essential Guide to Rhetoric written by William M. Keith and Christian O. Lundberg; defining Rhetoric, they claim it has to do with “the relationship between language and persuasion.” Rhetoric is essentially about style, Keith and Lundberg later discuss, and really it is “the ability to present yourself and your ideas persuasively.” Overall, it can be understood that the term is complex and of multiple depths of meaning as are many Greek words. To utilize it properly in our terms today, it is important to form an expansive definition prior to further discussion of the term to insure its full use in this thesis. Later in the Gorgias, the claim is made that if an election arose between a skilled workman of any sort and a rhetorician, the rhetorician would always win. Words are an art, a skill, and a craft in this dialogue, and Rhetoric is the ability to convince listeners of any of one’s arguments. This is the power of rhetoric.

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6 Keith and Lundberg p.3
7 Keith and Lundberg p.3
Contemporary rhetoric has uses within the means of understanding communicative technique. Keith and Lundberg argue in their *Essential Guide to Rhetoric* that “gaining an understanding of rhetorical theory and its practical application is a critical component to effective and competent communication.”

Therefore, to understand communication effectively, it should be viewed through the scope of rhetoric. For Cicero (106-43 BCE), “no matter how complex the rhetorical landscape, rhetoric has traditionally focused on certain situations and uses for communication.” In this system, speeches of all kinds are “classified by their purpose: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain.”

Persuasion is power; harnessing the ability to persuade a person, a crowd, or a reader is the ability to control and influence change. In textual analysis, reading through the visor of rhetoric means discovering the ideologies and meanings of the text and how the author pursued that meaning through his/her use of rhetorical devices with intent to inform, persuade or entertain (or a combination of the three).

The next important step in Rhetorical understanding is to shift the scope of focus onto the audience. There are ultimately four elements to Rhetoric as its place in communication. There is a message, the sender, a receiver and a medium. For the Rhetorical analysis of the book of Acts, the message is the primary focus of this research, but it is also important to establish the other elements of Rhetoric: the sender, receiver and medium.

For New Testament texts, the senders are in fact the authors producing particular works consisting of Gospels, Epistle, and Revelation; using these descriptors, one sees that Acts falls somewhat amiss. It is not a gospel portraying the life of Jesus, it is not an epistolic letter, and it is not a work of prophecy or divine revelation. It falls into a category of its own, often called history, epic or narrative. For further inquiry into this book, I will approach it not only as a

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10 Keith, William M. Lundberg, Christian O. Part 1, Chapter 3 pp. 27 *The Essential Guide to Rhetoric*
historical archive or a narrative but also as a rhetorical work for the purpose of “producing conviction” in the body of the εκκλησία\textsuperscript{11} for future growth and movement.

“Every movement…has form. It is a progress from a ‘suffering, misfortune, passive condition, state of mind’ through ‘a deed, doing, action, act.’ To an ‘adequate idea; the thing learned.’…To study a movement is to study drama, an act of transformation, an act that ends in transcendence, the achievement of salvation…and hence to study a movement is to study its form.”\textsuperscript{12} This statement is the opening of Robert S. Cathcart’s addition to Methods of Rhetorical Criticism third edition revised. Movements are rhetorical acts, and to understand a movement as such, it is important to also understand the forces that motivate and shape the movement. If Christianity is a movement, then Acts serves as a force of motivation to and for the shaping of that movement.

In this context, the sender, therefore, of Acts is the author of the book; who presumably is Luke, also the author of the third gospel. It is important to note Luke’s role in the message as author/sender in that he has the ability to affect the furtherment of this movement of Christianity by means of his book. Acts describes the actions of the apostles after Jesus’ death and how they go about continuing this new religion; therefore, it is setting the stage for how new converts and believers are to act. The book also depicts Paul’s missionary journey, multiple speeches, and overall story telling about the beginnings of the church. Luke as the sender plays an integral part in the overall rhetorical analysis of Acts.

Subsequently, of the four elements of communication, what is next to consider the receiver and the medium itself. This aspect spans the widest of the four considerably. First, the

\textsuperscript{11} Word first used to describe what is today referred to as ‘the church’. More broadly means the entire new movement of Christians and their assembly as a body of believers.

\textsuperscript{12} Leland M. Griffin, A Dramatistic Theory of the Rhetoric of Movements: Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969). p.461-62
book was written to be received by contemporary Greek speaking literate members of society. Second, the book was written in light of Luke’s universalism to span all “of Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”\textsuperscript{13} as in Acts 1:8. Finally, receivers of the book are all future Christians from after Paul’s death to the current church of today. The medium is the actual means of transferring information from sender to receiver, which in this case is the written book of Acts itself.

\textbf{i. Mimesis}

With the four elements established, an author creates literature with a combination of truth or fact, self-prospective and mimesis of the other works of the time. A particularly prominent theme in ancient Greece was the mimicry of more well known and prominent authors of or before a writer’s own time. In Volume 30 of \textit{Rhetoric Society Quarterly}, Ekaterina V. Haskins claims that the term mimesis as “difficult to describe as the word \( \lambda \omega \gamma \delta \zeta \).”\textsuperscript{14} For Plato, its use in \textit{The Republic} is as “a method of dramatic impersonation…and later moves to mimesis as learning by imitation of behavior.”\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, this practice can be understood as the appropriation of another’s successful style with intention of learning and producing educated literature. Luke, as an author, likely developed his writing around the styles of other popular and well-read literature as a template.

In Richard Pervo’s research, he broadly surveys the claims made for dating Acts by other scholars; he quotes F. Blass as claiming the earliest date for Acts as 60 C.E. and J. Townsend as claiming the latest date of 140 C.E.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, utilizing the current widest bracket of authorship

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] Acts 1:8 ESV
\item[15] Haskins 8
\end{footnotes}
being 60-140, I will further research in this project this time spectrum. As noted in Bernard Knox’s Introduction of Virgil’s *The Aeneid*, the epic poem about the origins of Rome is dated between 29 and 19 B.C.E.,¹⁷ which would place it as a well-circulated work during Luke’s life and time of authorship. The *Aeneid*, as earlier mentioned, is an epic poem concerning the history of Rome, placing it as an ideal style template for Luke’s aim of crafting a history of Christianity. The *Aeneid* is written “through his hero, Aeneas, and the Trojan invaders of Italy who are to build up the city from which Rome will eventually be founded.”¹⁸ It is placed inside a category of *ecologues*, which have a Greek model in that they are poems using the Homeric hexameter for rather un-Homeric purposes.¹⁹ The poem utilizes elements of history along with influences of the popularly circulated Homeric epics, in which Aeneas is often rescued from death at the hands of Greek warriors by means of divine intervention. There are dramatic scenes of uprising and slaves of passion to hear the man among them,

*One whose devotion and public service lend him weight,*

*They stand there, stock-still with their ears alert as*

*He rules their furor with his words and claims their passion*²⁰

[1.174-81]

Passages such as this play particular prominence in further inquiry into the formation of Acts which, like the *Aeneid*, makes consistent reference to speeches and their effects on the crowds who listen. The speeches in Acts, as in other Greek histories, often occur at significant points or in interesting situations in the story.²¹ For example, in chapter 4 of Acts, the Pentecost had just

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¹⁸ Virgil 3
¹⁹ Virgil 4
²⁰ Virgil 52
occurred, followed by the healing of a lame beggar. After this, Peter and John stand before the council:

As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrest them and put them into custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.\(^{22}\)

[4:1-4]

As in both of these passages, the power of speech is illustrated. For *The Aeneid*, the speaker calmed the listeners’ passions with his words, and for Acts, Steven and John spoke so fervently before they were arrested that many of those who heard their speech became believers, and the number of believers rose to about five thousand. All this suggests that through narrative elements of historical epic,\(^{23}\) historical information can be communicated rhetorically to further social movement.

**II. Social Movements**

“Movements are carried forward through language, both verbal and non-verbal, in strategic ways.”\(^{24}\) For the history in *The Aeneid*, speeches produced conviction for war and allegiance of the people to eventually build the city of Rome. For the history of Christianity in Acts, speeches produced believers and motivation to further what eventually would be a global religion. Robert Cathcart argues that in order for an event to be labeled a ‘movement,’ it “would

\(^{22}\) Acts 4:1-4 ESV  
have an activity that seeks corrective change.”\textsuperscript{25} For Acts, the apostles are venturing out to change a world of Jews and Gentiles into a community of believers under the prescription of the resurrected Christ. For the Jews, the change is an acknowledgement of the furtherment of the covenant with God made by their ancestors that has been reformed and renewed through Jesus. For the Gentiles, it is about conversion into the chosen through Christ who has made it possible for them to enter into the Kingdom of God. For a movement to be perceived as something more than just a simple evolution of community, Cathcart argues, “there must be created a drama or agonistic ritual which forces a response from the establishment commensurate with the moral evil perceived by movement members.”\textsuperscript{26} For the Christian movement in Acts, drama as agonistic drama is certainly abundant. Violent deaths, arrests and eventually a shipwreck mark the progression of the mission journey for the apostles. The response is the conversion of the masses to God’s new covenant; to not convert is to deny God and to live in sin, which is ultimately death.

In section III of \textit{Social Movements and Organization Theory}, John D. McCarthy asks, “How are some successful social movements able to generate involvement…while other movements burn out?”\textsuperscript{27} McCarthy argues for the importance of local membership of the individual. The member must feel part of the local community and also part of the larger body of the movement. For Christianity as a movement, the individual receives the Holy Spirit, as in Acts 2- the Pentecost. The individual becomes part of the larger body of Christianity, as a unit of the Kingdom of God. Whether slave or free, Jew or Gentile, each receives the individual gift of the Spirit and also a global unity, with all other believers and members of the movement. Acts

\textsuperscript{25} Brock 364
\textsuperscript{26} Brock 367
\textsuperscript{27} Davis, Gerald F., McAdam, Doug, Scott, Richard W., Zald, Mayer N., \textit{Social Movements and Organization Theory}. (2005). p. 189
presents both of these elements in unity, and the reader of the book is able to see that joining this movement will provide him/her with individual power and wide-spread connection, as the members will receive the power of the Holy Spirit and become witnesses in all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.  

Overall, for Acts, I argue that Rhetoric is the center of the work. It is formed with respect to rhetorical elements such as the goal of producing conviction and regarding all four components of sender, receiver, message and medium. The author is likely to have practiced mimesis of other historical narratives of the time, such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and the book contains features of a motivational piece inside of a social movement. Although this premise largely in itself is fresh, many scholars including Kenneth Burke, George Kennedy, and William M. Keith-to be further discussed in next chapter- have approached similar arguments and topics, and it is important to place any new approach in context of what has been previously studied and accepted.

**III. Introduction Concluded**

Finally, the analysis of Acts for the purpose of this Thesis will be in light of rhetoric by comparing it to other contemporary works, specifically Marianne Palmer-Bonz’s relation of Acts to Virgil’s *Aeneid*, followed by my argument of comparison of Acts to Homer’s *Iliad*. This thesis uses Cicero’s idea of Rhetoric, with the ancient works above mentioned as a template, and Cathcart’s Social Movement Theory to analyze Acts. Chapter two will analyze additional academic works on topics such as New Testament Rhetorical Criticism and specifically criticism of Acts. It will utilize works of George Kennedy and Henry Cadbury to specifically set this thesis amidst other contemporary research. Chapter three will discuss rhetoric as my method of

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28 Acts 1:8 ESV
analysis, including its definition, its place in its time period, and its use. In this chapter, I will also define the Social Movements Approach and how it will be used as a means of reading and analyzing Acts. In Chapter 4, I will apply the approach to Acts, analyzing the rhetorical devices in comparison to *The Aeneid* and *The Iliad* and strategies used to motivate readers to join, contribute to and grow the social movement of early Christianity. In Chapter 5, I will conclude this project by returning to my original statement of rhetoric as an agent of persuasion designed to produce conviction and examine my argument that we should see Acts as not as a historical archive or purely a narrative but as a romantic epic with intent to spark and grow a movement.

**2. Literature Review**

*Overview*

For the current point in this Thesis, it is pertinent to assess what has been previously researched and inferred regarding Rhetoric and the book of Acts. In these next three sections, I will first assess contemporary thought and research on classical rhetoric and its place in Christian literary criticism via George Kennedy and Craig R. Smith. Secondly, I will further explore specific rhetorical devises used in criticism of Acts; and finally, I will present comparative research placing Acts within a spectrum of other ancient epics in terms of these rhetorical devices- specifically Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Homer’s *Iliad* that I will use to set a context for rhetorical comparison in chapter 4.
I. Rhetorical Criticism & The New Testament

1. On Rhetoric.

Rhetoric proper is the basic starting point at which this entire argument begins. William M. Keith and Christian O. Lundberg claim in the preface to The Essential Guide to Rhetoric that “gaining an understanding of rhetorical theory and its practical applications is a critical component to effective and competent communication.” Therefore, in order to first, accurately understand my use of the term and secondly, effectively communicate the ideas of rhetoric, I must first define it as it is to be utilized. Keith and Lundberg quote The American Heritage Dictionary insofar as it defines rhetoric as follows: “N.: 1a. The art or study of using language effectively and persuasively;” therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, phrasing such as using language effectively and persuasively will be preserved. Utilizing this definition, the central idea regarding Rhetoric is that it involves the relationship between language and persuasion. Persuasion is the key to effective rhetoric because “nobody teaches clearly a thing of which he has not been persuaded.” Therefore, it is necessary to further examine this relationship between language and persuasion, and to do so, it is essential to return specifically to the origins of Rhetoric itself- as earlier mentioned, 5th century ancient Greece. In Chapter 2 of Aristotle’s Περί Ρήτηρα (On Rhetoric), Rhetoric is defined as a means of persuasion. Of the sorts of persuasion in the speech, there are three types, Aristotle claims. “For some are in the character of the speaker, and some in disposing the listener in some way, and some in the speech itself.” Of these three elements, both the πάθος, which is the persuasion, arrived at by the hearers when they

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29 Keith and Lundberg v
30 Keith and Lundberg 3
33 Aristotle 38
are led to feel emotion and the λογός, that is the persuasion occurring through the arguments itself are relevant.\textsuperscript{34} (The third element the ε|Δ|, or character of the speaker, will be later addressed in this chapter). In the preface to his translation of Aristotle’s \textit{On Rhetoric}, George Kennedy asserts, “modern rhetoricians use terms derived from Aristotle to refer to these three means of persuasion.”\textsuperscript{35} Therefore, understanding rhetorical language and its relationship to persuasion are innate to Rhetoric at its birth.

The movement of Rhetoric from academic life into the rise of Christianity was fluid. Writers and scribes present in the years in which the canon was crafted would have been immersed in Greek Rhetorical culture. Persuasion in Greek literature arose when Aristotle associated attempts to describe a method in public speaking regarding democracy and thought of which held the intention to persuade.\textsuperscript{36} The Greek term “λογός” transferred from a metaphysical Platonic principle appearing in early Greek philosophy on to early Christians, just as the opening verse to the Gospel according to John, which reads, “In the beginning was the \textit{Word}” ie. the λογός. The term λογός faced a much friendlier reputation in Greek culture. Craig R. Smith discusses the rise of Rhetoric in Christianity in terms of the fall of the Roman Empire in \textit{Rhetoric and Human Consciousness}. As the empire began its decline, Smith asserts, “rhetoric found a new outlet in preaching.”\textsuperscript{37} As a growing movement, historians and authors of Jesus’ teaching were able to wield the sword of Rhetoric in an environment suited to receive it. Writers assumed rhetorical terms such as λογός for use as “the word of God serving as the mediator between God and humans,”\textsuperscript{38} further securing the tie between Rhetoric and Christian authorship. Significant Christian theologians including Augustine utilized rhetoric as a tool in crafting such influential

\textsuperscript{34} Aristotle 39
\textsuperscript{36} George Kennedy, \textit{A New History of Classical Rhetoric} (Princeton University Press, 1994). p. 11
\textsuperscript{37} Craig R. Smith, \textit{Rhetoric and Human Consciousness} (Illinois, 2009). p. 137
\textsuperscript{38} Smith 138
works as *Confessions* as well as in oral discourse. “Augustine turned his immeasurable talents to advancing the Church and argued that since it was a Christian’s duty to advance the word of Jesus, it was also a Christian’s duty to speak well.”\(^{39}\) Henceforth, the relationship established between furtherment of an idea or movement is entangled with the manner in which and through which that idea is delivered, that is, in its Rhetoric.

Not unlike his predecessors, Augustine drew heavily on the ideas of Plato when regarding communication of a message. “Augustine argued that the truth is otherworldly, comes only through divine revelation,”\(^{40}\) which Augustine claimed he learned from the neoplatonists. This incorporation and transformation of neoplatonic teachings also transformed the history of Rhetoric insofar as “Rhetoric was to be used to dispel the illusions of this world and clarify the meaning of God.”\(^{41}\) Therefore, post-Augustinian Christian Rhetoricians were now able to be freed from the negative view of Rhetoric claimed by theologians such as Cyprian (c. 200-258) and Jerome (c. 347-420) who reflected the Rhetorical claims made in *Gorgias* calling rhetoric flattery and ascribed to the idea of Rhetoric as “a heathen tool incapable of finding truth.”\(^{42}\)

Having established this idea, Greeks now were able to utilize Rhetoric as an instrument not of distorting truth but for finding it.

### ii. Philosophical Rhetoric.

George Kennedy approaches the idea of Rhetoric and Biblical criticism in his revised edition of *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition From Ancient to Modern Times*. He first addresses traditional rhetoric and its place in areas such as the Homeric poems. Secondly, he addresses technical rhetoric followed by sophistic rhetoric and finally

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\(^{39}\) Smith 146  
\(^{40}\) Smith 149  
\(^{41}\) Smith 149  
\(^{42}\) Smith 139
philosophical rhetoric, which is the component I will further define and discuss for the purpose of this argument.

In Chapter 4, Kennedy addresses Platonic rhetoric in light of *The Apology*, *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. Socrates, Kennedy claims, “had little interest in physics or astronomy as studied by the earlier philosophers and was deeply concerned with human life and human judgment…He taught orally, with interest in words and showed fondness for paradox.”43 The difficulty with the study of Socrates comes with the understanding that we only know him from the reports of his followers or critics. One of the most influential of these followers is Plato, who appropriated much of Socrates’ teaching and ideals and developed them over a period of fifty years in a series of dialogues.44 None of these Platonic dialogues exist apart from Rhetoric. *The Apology* provides an example of Socrates himself as an orator in defense of his accusations and ultimate death sentence, while *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* more innately discuss the nature of Rhetoric.

*Gorgias* is one of the earlier Platonic dialogues, presumably written soon after Plato’s visit to Sicily in 387 B.C.45 A known gifted orator, Gorgias would often entertain crowds with his beautifully crafted speeches. The dialogue is a dramatic discourse in which Socrates visits the home of Gorgias where he is currently speaking to a crowd of guests and friends. Socrates and Gorgias then engage in a dialectic concerning the nature of Rhetoric. In this dialectic, Socrates asks Gorgias what art he is skilled in and what it should be called. Gorgias replies, “ρητορική,” a term not found in any earlier dialogues. Socrates follows the argument accordingly by inquiring as to what class of objects is included in this knowledge of ‘Rhetoric’. Gorgias then replies that it is the knowledge about λογός: words, speech. Gorgias has forsooth displayed Rhetoric as an art of faculty that can take any subject matter and present it persuasively. Platonic Socrates has no

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43 Kennedy *Classical Rhetoric* 53
44 Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 54
45 Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 58
interest in assisting Gorgias regarding his arguments about Rhetoric because for Socrates, knowledge is something grounded in truth and in nature, and only those arts built on knowledge possess validity.\footnote{Kennedy, \textit{Classical Rhetoric} 60}

After much discussion and lengthy dialectic, Gorgias subsequently concedes that ‘ρητορική’ deals with justice and injustice and that it is the kind of persuasion that produces belief, but not knowledge.\footnote{Kennedy \textit{Classical Rhetoric} 60} Therefore, if the speaker utilizing Rhetoric is producing belief in his listeners, then he is consequently responsible morally for what he says. For Socrates, at this point, Rhetoric has no need for facts or truth and is simply a tool of persuasion that makes the inferior somehow seem superior with respect to knowledge. At the height of the dialogue, Socrates insults Rhetoric as not being a true art, skill or craft but merely a matter of experience gained from trial and error, or a ‘knack’. He calls it ‘mere cookery’ or flattery (Gorgias 520e).

The conclusion of \textit{Gorgias} is that one must study and become learned to be good or ‘better’ and the bad or ‘lesser’ must be punished. These terms are understood widely in the context of the dialogue; the words are translated as both good and bad, greater and lesser, and also stronger and weaker depending on the translator. In the terms of Rhetoric, therefore, the one who uses it must in fact be good as to only use it for the purpose of producing good. This dialogue is the first case in which Rhetoric is identified as flattery and deceit and that it can be used for the purposes of false persuasion. “The most common interpretation of Gorgias by teachers of Rhetoric was that Plato was attacking Rhetoric as practiced in the time of the radical democracy of the late fifth century and the oligarchic revolution in provoked.”\footnote{Kennedy \textit{Classical Rhetoric} 66} The dialogue presented Socrates against those men who used Rhetoric for unjust purposes insofar as to further selfish wrong by means of flattery.
In a later Platonic dialogue, *Phaedrus*, Rhetoric is also addressed but in a relatively different fashion. The first half of *Phaedrus* is “a drama of the rhetorical encounter between good and evil.”\(^{49}\) The situation is then dramatically turned around by intervention of the divine voice that leads Socrates into his second speech concerning the “victory of true rhetoric.”\(^{50}\) This sudden introduction of divinity is interesting historically, because outside Platonic ideology, the other great field for philosophical rhetoric is religion in the sense that “rhetoric is often represented as dependent on an act of God in warming the heart so that truth can be revealed.”\(^{51}\)

Herein, Socrates’ δι (his divine voice) appears throughout his lifetime as an influence toward the right way of acting. In Plato’s *Apology* of Socrates, The δι also appears when Socrates is giving his address to the court when he describes the intervention of his supernatural sign.\(^{52}\) He tells the court that it began at his early childhood: “a sort of voice which comes to me” (*Apology* 31d2). This voice acts as an internal force present in Greek literature similar to the Holy Spirit that exists in Acts. In the opening chapter of Acts, the author tells Theophilus (the dedicatee of this work) of how Jesus walked again on this earth “until he was taken up to heaven after giving his apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:2) Socrates gives a preliminary definition of this Rhetoric in Phaedrus as “a kind of leading the soul by means of words, not only in law-courts and public assemblies but in individual encounters.”\(^{53}\) This leading of the soul, I am arguing, therefore can be aligned with the internal voice of Socrates paralleling the Holy Spirit with Socrates’ δι and his subsequently with his own knack for Rhetoric. Rhetorical ability, therefore, is consequently a combination of a spiritual gift of nature, as in natural ability, with knowledge and practice.

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\(^{49}\) Kennedy Classical Rhetoric 69  
\(^{50}\) Kennedy Classical Rhetoric 69  
\(^{51}\) Kennedy Classical Rhetoric 69  
\(^{53}\) Phaedrus 261a7-9
iii. Rhetoric and Christianity.

In Chapter 7 of *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition From Ancient to Modern Times*, Kennedy shifts the focus onto a more specific scope of Rhetoric and how it places itself inside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. These Religions, like many others, are based on sacred writings. For Christianity, The New Testament serves as a primary source of belief and conviction for followers. The books that make up the New Testament were “written in Greek by and for speakers of Greek, many of whom were familiar with public address in Greek or had been educated in Greek Schools.” Specifically concerning New Testament Rhetoric, Kennedy comments that “features of classical rhetoric combined with Jewish traditions and are modified by beliefs and values of Christianity.”

Kennedy discusses how Jewish tradition involved a reading of the lessons of scripture followed by interpretation of the passages read. This form of preaching involves a persuasive quality of preaching primarily projected by the authority of the speaker.

Inside of the gospels, this type of persuasion similarly exists in the form of Jesus’ preaching in such instances as Matthew 5-7, The Sermon on The Mount, in which Jesus teaches aspects of the Kingdom of God and who is and will be blessed to see it. Concerning rhetorical teaching, interestingly, the word utilized for “preach” commonly used in the New Testament is “κηρύσσω”, which literally means, “proclaim.” Κήρυξ is what a herald (κηρυξ) does with a message, law or commandment. Therein elements of laws or commands are presented to the listeners in these sorts of persuasive preaching in that they are being commanded by the preacher or Κήρυξ. My purpose of this alignment is to draw attention to the way in which rhetoric is

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54 Kennedy *Classical Rhetoric* 143
55 Kennedy *Classical Rhetoric* 143
56 Kennedy *Classical Rhetoric* 144-145 Paraphrase
present in the New Testament as a form of command or law, thereby heightening its persuasive power to the listeners. However, in Christian Rhetoric, there is an element of acceptance that must be done by the reader/listener. “Scriptural truth must be apprehended by the listener”\textsuperscript{57} with regard to the presence of faith. Concerning the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew concludes Jesus’ teaching in chapter 7 verse 28 saying, “and when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority.” An important goal of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism, Kennedy claims, is “to try to hear the biblical texts as an ancient audience would hear them, and that means an audience familiar with classical rhetorical practice.”\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{II. Rhetoric of Acts}

\textbf{i. Overview}

The book of Acts directly follows the Gospels in the New Testament canon. It contains the adventures of the Apostles after Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is a dramatic historical narrative in the sense that it utilizes specific details of timing and travel such as mapping out Paul’s missionary journey, it presents many examples of preaching in the early church as the presence of numerous speeches in Acts, and finally it presents exciting trials and thrilling deaths as to paint the story in common Greek and Latin narrative structure. François Bovon discusses in his article published in \textit{The Harvard Theological Review} that “Luke is a good storyteller, pleasant to read and easy to understand. It is more difficult to grasp what he believes and why he writes. As a theologian, he is an enigmatic figure. This explains the great variety of keys used to understand

\textsuperscript{57} Kennedy \textit{Classical Rhetoric} 146
\textsuperscript{58} Kennedy \textit{Classical Rhetoric} 147
his theology."\(^{59}\)

**ii. Trial and Adventure.**

Rhetorical criticism of Acts also involves the assessment of the literary structure of the book itself. Richard Pervo assesses that “the dramatic structure of Luke’s work would make good sense to the readers of ancient novels.”\(^{60}\) In this, Pervo refers to the trials present in the book. There are nine separate occasions when Acts includes a juridical conflict in which the Apostles were called before judges of the community where they travelled and preached and were accused and charged for their actions.

1. Acts 4:5-22. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin
2. 5:28-42. The Twelve before the Sanhedrin
3. 6:12-7:54. Stephen before the Sanhedrin
4. 17:18-33. Paul before the Areopagus
5. 18:12-17. Paul before Gallio
7. 24:1-23. Paul before Felix
8. 25:6-12. Paul before Festus
9. 25:23-26:32. Paul before Festus and Agrippa\(^{61}\)

Trials were an integral part of dramatic structure and were no less part of the traditional repertory of other contemporary novels, romantic and other sorts, as a means for producing suspense and setting a stage for revelations or denouements as well as a venue to showcase impressive


\(^{60}\) Pervo *Profit* 47

\(^{61}\) Pervo *Profit* 43
dialectic. They engage the reader with the excitement of missionary journey and induce emotional response from the reader to engage with a character in such a trial.

Also imperative to the dramatic structure is the concept of suffering. Within the context of sensational Hellenistic historians, Acts also includes a considerable amount of suffering. Luke paints an atmosphere of violence for his readers insofar as the apostles’ own suffering of trial, whips, stones and brutal deaths. Paul also suffers indefinitely, but, just like a hero of ancient epics, escapes at what seems to be the last second. An example is in Acts 22:24-25, 29:

\[24\] in which the tribune ordered Paul to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this. \[25\] But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned... \[29\] So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that they had bound him.”

In this a reader following Paul’s exciting conversion and journey exposed to the brutality of Jesus’ death is engaged with the physical manifestations of his trials and punishments in pursuit of furthering Jesus’ message according to his calling. For the believer, such a trial likely draws identity between Paul and Jesus himself, thus insuring validity to Paul’s mission and weight to his character.

Finally, for means of dramatic structure, the shipwreck is placed as the conclusion of Acts (27:39-44). Paul is on his final voyage to Rome, and after an evening run with a violent tempest, the crew runs the ship aground. Travel constitutes a primary backbone to the structure of Acts so as to illustrate the Apostolic journey. Therefore, to end the book in a shipwreck serves as a sufficient literary device to wrap up the book of Acts. As Pervo notes, “Storm and shipwreck stories were a staple of ancient adventure writings.”\[^{51}\] After enduring such an extreme adventure, Paul is on his final journey to his ultimate destination, and nothing heightens the experience

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\[^{51}\] Pervo Profit 51
more than a storm and a shipwreck. The rhetoric of this experience utilizes terms of drive and survival as Paul encourages all who can swim to dive overboard, increasing suspense substantially through fear (Acts 27:43). A reader already emotionally invested in the conversion and trials of Paul now must linger upon the threat of death upon his final breach to destination, ultimately crafting his safe arrival as only the favor of Jesus as “everyone escaped safely to shore” (Acts 27:44).

Henry J. Cadbury valued Luke as both a historian and an author. With respect to Luke’s skill as an author, Cadbury argued that the speeches in Acts were all Lukan and observed a unique style and vocabulary and implementation of themes with literary value. His approach was largely comparative in questions of style and genre. For Cadbury, the style and methods of Acts conform to that of traditional Greco-Roman historians; however, he eventually concludes that [Luke]-Acts is “nearer to history than to any other familiar classification.”

iii. Repetition

Edith M. Humphrey writes on studies in theological interpretation concerning rhetoric in *And I Turned to See The Voice: The Rhetoric of Vision in The New Testament*. Utilized heavily in the old testament, repetition marks a place in which the author desires to place heavy emphasis on the particular idea so that the reader may more reliably absorb its weight. Humphrey claims that Luke works “through drama in order to coax the ideal reader to a desired conclusion.” Claiming that the technique of repetition is less forceful, Humphrey continues to argue for the value of repetition for the purpose of emphasis. An example of repetition in Acts is the

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66 Humphrey *Voice* 58
accounts of Saul’s conversion: present in Acts 9:1-25, 22:1-22, and 26:1-24. In the multiple accounts, the story is repeated as a component of the writer and as a speech of Saul/Paul himself as part of the persuasive power of speech to make a stronger impact on the listener as well as the presumed future readers. To reference the Rhetorician Demosthenes when asked, “what was the chief rule of eloquence, he replied, ‘Delivery’; what was the second rule, ‘Delivery’; what was the third rule, ‘Delivery.’” Inasmuch, the repetition of three dramatically delivered accounts of Saul’s conversion to Paul seeks to insure that a listener or reader of the text would not be inclined to forget such a story and would be exceedingly impacted by its relevance.

**IV. Holy Spirit.**

If true rhetoric is a form of leading the soul as presented in *Phaedrus*, then it is most closely aligned with the Holy Spirit in Acts. After a period of speaking with Phaedrus in the dialogue, Socrates prepares to leave before he is led into doing anything more immoral. As he is about to cross the stream heading toward his home, Socrates’ “δικαίωσις,” or his own internal divine voice (also referenced in The Apology), speaks to Socrates inclining him not to leave (Phaedrus 242b8-242c1). Upon prompting, Socrates returns to Phaedrus. After returning, Socrates gives a second speech regarding love as a form of madness. This simple act of an internal voice speaking direction is an early example of the acts of the Holy Spirit. Later in the speech, Socrates gives a description of Rhetoric as “a kind of skillful leading of the soul.”

In the first chapter of Acts, Jesus speaks one final time to his disciples before his ascension. In the opening of the book, the author declares: “until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had

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66 Calvin *Institutes* 268  
67 Phaedrus 237b4  
68 Phaedrus 261a9
chosen.” With this statement, the reader sees that Jesus was giving commands “through the Holy Spirit,” such that it was a force that was leading Jesus’ speaking. Following this, Jesus tells the disciples that they too will also receive this “power of the Holy Spirit.” In Acts Chapter 2, the day of Pentecost arrives in which “suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Therefore, upon receiving the Holy Spirit, one is given a power and is filled with the ability to do miraculous things at the Spirit’s guidance, quite synonymously with Socrates’ divine voice, which led him in the Phaedrus as well as in The Apology. This spirit inspires and leads in a way separate from the earthly self. For example, in the Phaedrus, Socrates tells Phaedrus that he can’t remember exactly what he said previously “because of being inspired at the time.” Kennedy also addresses an idea similar to this when discussing New Testament preaching: “no special eloquence is required…God will provide the words.” Overall, rhetoric also appears in Acts in the form of the Holy Spirit tantamount to that described by Plato as Socrates’ divine voice.

IV. Acts Compared

I. Acts Dated

In Richard Pervo’s research, he broadly surveys the claims made for dating Acts by other scholars; as noted previously, he quotes F. Blass as claiming the earliest date for Acts as 60 C.E.

69 Acts 1:2 ESV  
70 Acts 1:8 ESV  
71 Acts 2:2-4 ESV  
72 Phaedrus 263d2  
73 Kennedy Classical Rhetoric 145
and J. Townsend as claiming the latest date of 140 C.E.\textsuperscript{74} As seen in Richard Pervo’s research on dating Acts, the window of time prescribed to the making of Acts falls amidst this height of epic narrative. Therefore, it will be further analyzed in chapter 4 through these established date brackets and narrative scopes that the both the Acts of the Apostles and the Greco-Roman epic narrative have correlating rhetorical features.

\textit{ii. Acts and The Aeneid.}

Marianne Palmer Bonz addresses these issues in rhetorical criticism of Acts and makes assessments of other first-century works of dramatic prophecy and history in relation to Acts. First, she defines the problems she believes exist currently in the interpretation of Luke-Acts in that there is disregard for contemporary historiographical epics of the time. Palmer Bonz continues by referencing Charles H. Talbert’s claim that Virgil’s Aeneid is “the clearest and most skillfully executed contemporary example of this stylistic approach.”\textsuperscript{75} In his comparative analysis, Palmer Bonz claims that Talbert is seeking to “offer a fresh interpretation of Luke-Acts embracing form, content, genre, and historical situation.”\textsuperscript{76} Following Talbert, Palmer Bonz references the theory of Richard Pervo arguing, “that even on stylistic grounds the composition of Acts is closer to narrative fiction than to historiography.”\textsuperscript{77} In agreement with Pervo, Mikeal Parsons “distinguishes two levels in which the narrative must be defined: as a discourse and as a story.”\textsuperscript{78}

Specifically focusing on Talbert’s assessments about Acts and The Aeneid, Palmer Bonz describes how “Virgil’s appropriation of the Greek past was achieved through the incorporation

\textsuperscript{74} Pervo Dating 361-363
\textsuperscript{76} Marianna Palmer Bonz, \textit{The Past as Legacy} (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000) p.8
\textsuperscript{77} Palmer Bonz 11
\textsuperscript{78} Palmer Bonz 12
of Aeneas as the protagonist of the story, thereby creating his own epic as a continuation of the story line of Homer’s *Iliad.*” For the continuation story of Luke-Acts, the book of Acts appropriates Peter and Paul as major characters who had previously been minor characters in the first volume Luke, just as Aeneas was a relatively minor character in the *Iliad.* Palmer Bonz discusses how ancient narratives such as the Hebrew Bible and Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* may be similarly classified in a broad sense just as within the Greek world, “a long rich literary history stretching from Homer…to the final flowering of Latin epic narrative in the late first century.” Therefore, narrative creation appears fluid throughout centuries and across the borders of culture.

**iii. Acts and The Iliad.**

The works of Homer are not only vital as literary masterpieces but are relevant for this study insofar as Homer’s literature, just as was Virgil’s was in popular circulation at the time of Luke’s writing of Acts. Todd S. Frobish writes in Volume 20 of Rhetoric Review (2003): “It is widely accepted that the Homeric epics were valued as guides for future writers, rhapsodies, and thinkers;” as with that understanding, the *Iliad* becomes a source for Rhetorical influence on the making of Acts. The idea of ‘character’ is presented such that it is a Rhetorical device used by Homer, then found centuries later as ethos in Aristotle. Frobish quotes George Kennedy’s claims that Homeric poems were the textbook from which the Greeks and later the Romans learned to read. Henceforth, “the attitude toward speech in the *Iliad* strongly influenced the

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79 Palmer Bonz 19
80 Pamler Bonz 20
82 Frobish 16
conception of the orator in Greco-Roman civilization.”\textsuperscript{83} The third element of persuasion (as above mentioned) is ethos (εθική), in which the speaker’s own character participates in the persuasiveness of the speech. For the story of the \textit{Iliad}, the narrative takes flight as the protagonist Agamemnon takes the female slave, Briseis, away from Achilles as his prize. “It was Agamemnon's speech declaring his right to do so that provides the primary motive for the Iliad (1.184). After this speech, Achilles' honour was openly shamed (136). What ensues, then, is a tale about honor and pride.”\textsuperscript{84}

For Acts, Paul is the protagonist searching to spread the gospel of Jesus to the ends of the earth. Elements of character are presented in Paul’s conversion, making his desire to preach a deeper conviction because of his own experience. This dichotomy of past sin and brokenness contrasted with faith and authority set the stage for a tale not plainly about preaching but about the life of a man chosen and changed and commissioned by God to do great things.

Speeches in the Greek epic are equally as prominent. There are three speeches addressed to Achilles in the \textit{Iliad} persuading him to return to battle. For example, Odysseus presents a speech in which first he gives a prooemium followed by a proposition, a brief narrative, a demand and four reasons why Achilles should return.\textsuperscript{85} In authorship of Acts, Luke is a “reasonably skilled writer of speeches.”\textsuperscript{86} For example, there are a great number of speeches present in Acts: numerous ones are given by Paul and also by Steven in Acts Chapter 7 and by James in Acts Chapter 21. These speeches allow for the writer to include a lengthy monologue and create space for an extensive argument or defense.

\textsuperscript{83} Frobish, (c. Kennedy 10) 17
\textsuperscript{84} Frobish 20
\textsuperscript{85} Kennedy \textit{New History} 13-14
\textsuperscript{86} Kennedy \textit{New Testament Interpretation} 115
In the next section of this thesis, I will begin to place Acts rhetorically inside of a social movement defined as Christianity by means of its structure, narrative, and rhetorical devices as well as how it impacted the spread of the Religion to which it stemmed.

3. Method

Overview

This section of my thesis will begin with what it is not. It is not within the scope of this argument to make theological claims or to question or decide truth within the stated documents. It is not a question of theistic or atheistic nature but rather the investigation exists inside logology insofar as it aligns with an attempt to analyze the point at which narrative form and the art of crafting words merge through textual analysis. Furthermore, I find it relevant to assess the way in which I will be looking at these texts in question. For the purpose of understanding Acts, *The Aeneid*, and *The Iliad* both contextually and rhetorically, I will examine the texts within the scope of narrative analysis. First, I will discuss narrative analysis, what it is and how I will use it. To conclude, I will discuss the communication theory that I will use to apply to this analysis.

1. Narrative Analysis

To begin, I will introduce Catherine Kohler Reissman’s paper on *Narrative Analysis*. In the preface of Reissman’s paper, she discusses, perhaps admits, that in every narrative, including her own paper, the author’s point of view and network of relationships influences the ideas presented. Therefore, to begin the vein of discussion of narrative analysis is to lay a foundation of understanding that every author has a story to tell, a point of view and a lifetime of experience behind every story.
Before pursuing a clearer perspective of what narrative analysis is and how to engage in it, it is pertinent to first discuss and define what a narrative actually is in and of itself for the purpose of this thesis. According to Riessman’s paper, “most scholars treat narratives as units with clear beginnings and endings…rather than as situated events.”\(^{87}\) Aristotle also claims in *Poetics* that what makes a narrative is that it contains a beginning, middle and an end.\(^{88}\) Therefore, it would appear that narrative analysis as it is understood to possess a necessary sequence has descended from Aristotle to contemporary scholarship. These narrative structures act in accordance in order that we may better read, study and understand texts.

Riessman introduces her paper with the claim: “narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself.”\(^{89}\) Consequently, I begin with the idea that the scope of analyzing a narrative centers specifically on the story in and of itself. This methodological approach, Riessman asserts, “examines the informant’s story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity.”\(^{90}\) This is the method I will utilize in the next chapter of this thesis. Moreover, Riessman further discusses, in terms of narrative analysis, the argument of interpretation and its inevitability in examination of a narrative insofar as individuals recount stories from their own representations of experiences in which the individual emphasizes and excludes what he or she chooses along the journey.\(^{91}\) A primary way in which individuals make sense of a particular experience, according to Riessman, is by casting it into narrative form. In this process of transcribing

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88 Riessman 13
89 Riessman 1
90 Riessman 2
91 Riessman 2
discourse, decisions are also made on rhetorical grounds by means of terminology and displaying a narrative in a particular structural way to provide grounds for specific persuasive arguments.\footnote{Riessman 13}

**II. Engaging in Narrative Analysis**

With an understanding of what narrative analysis is established, I will commence describing how this method is currently and will be practiced and utilized within this thesis. Catherine Riessman offers five steps to narrative analysis in her paper. First, however, I will describe the five steps as Riessman presented them as follows: (1) Attending (2) Telling (3) Transcribing (4) Analyzing (5) Reading.\footnote{Riessman 10} This representation of experience as it is established by Riessman begins with attending to experience; this step involves recalling certain features of the incident in question, reflecting and recollecting them into observation. In this process, the crafter of the narrative makes certain phenomena particularly more meaningful within the story as a whole. Following the attending step is the telling, which is the actual presentation of the narrative. In this step comes the description of what actually happened. Riessman claims in this section that “in telling, there is an inevitable gap between the experience as lived and any communication thereafter about it,”\footnote{Riessman 10} which provides space for the writer to interpret and recraft a telling of the experience that conforms to his or her goals.

More specifically relevant to this thesis are the latter three steps in the process. Step three in Riessman’s discussion is transcribing the experience; along this vein, Riessman asserts that transcribing discourse is a bit like a photograph. “It is an interpretive practice”\footnote{Riessman 13} in which decisions are made rhetorically by providing format for our narrative telling by means of guiding the reader’s mind to view the occasion through our own lens. This step is chiefly significant for
this thesis because in my narrative analysis of both biblical text and Greek and Latin epics, I will
be analyzing the way in which those narratives were transcribed in terms of their format.

The fourth level of representation in narrative analysis is the way in which the examiner
explicitly analyzes the text or texts. The challenge, according to Riessman, is to “identify
similarities across the moments into an aggregate, a summation.” 96 The investigator sits with a
compilation of texts and begins to draw lines across the transcripts and attempts to see form,
order and style of presentation creating a sense of dramatic tension. In this step, I will map out
structure of the texts in question sketching similarities in their style and technique of story
telling. Placement of characters, speeches and trials and adventure as well as utilization of
techniques such as repetition all play a part in the overall narrative experience.

The fifth and final stage in Riessman’s five-step process of narrative analysis is the
reading experience of the text itself. In this step, Riessman quotes Rabinow and Sullivan in their
claim that every text is “plurivocal, open to several readings and to several constructions.” 97 A
critical reader raises historical contingencies and inquires toward the contextual background
within which the formation of the narrative was crafted. With this understanding, the reading of
the text is just as important as the crafting of the text in the process of narrative formation and
analysis. For this thesis, the reading and understanding step plays a crucial role in the critical

III. Narrative Analysis as an Operational Research Method

Further regarding narrative analysis as research method, the process exists as a multiuse
means to further understanding of a text. In the Journal of the Operational Research Society

96 Riessman 13
97 Riessman 14
Volume 51, L. White and A. Taket write on the use of narrative analysis as an operational research method. For White and Taket, “evaluation begins and ends with objective knowledge, obtainable through the application of research methods based on a largely positivist framework, and that this knowledge can be used to make a judgment on particular systems or schemes.”

Therefore, by beginning without bias and pursuing a critical analysis of a text or texts further by means of the application of outlined and structured methods, I will seek first to understand and second to draw conclusions based on these systems of study.

To continue in this vein of operational research method, White and Taket proceed in describing the unique approach they take to narrative analysis in that it involves a surface analysis, a deep analysis and a reflection. In concordance with Riessman’s ideology regarding narrative analysis, White and Taket’s approach focuses on the way in which a text is more than just a consecutive formation of sentences arbitrarily crafted. Riessman, White and Taket all seek to understand the ways in which we must continue to study text insofar as there is undoubtedly more than lies on the surface. For these ancient narratives, there are infinite roads of interpretation to travel through analysis and reflection, and it is both essential to understanding as well as exciting for a post-modern researcher to travel.

For this thesis, I will employ a combination of Riessman’s five-step process married to White and Taket’s multi-layered understanding of the method of narrative analysis. I will collect information by closely observing the texts separately, then I will observe which points are painted in a particularly rhetorically emphatic light and transcribed for a specific purpose. Following this surface analysis, I will place the texts inside a deeper comparative rhetorical

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99 Taket and White 701
analysis in which I seek to draw lines across the transcripts for the purpose of understanding stylistic similarities.

**IV. The Sociological Perspective**

Following this close narrative analysis, I will further investigate this material through a method of rhetorical criticism outlined in Brock, Scott, and Cheesbro’s third edition of *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective*; therefore, narrative analysis as a Rhetorical method may be seen through the lens of this perspective. In section 5 entitled, “The Sociological Perspective,” the authors outline a type of rhetorical approach involving perspective. Four extensions, according to Brock, Scott, and Cheesbro, to this view are as follows: the “sociolinguistic,” “generic,” “social movements,” and “feminist” approaches to rhetorical criticism. For the fourth chapter of this thesis, I will focus on the social movements approach to the narrative analysis to examine and compare Acts, *The Aeneid*, and *The Iliad*.

**i. The Social Movements Approach**

This third approach described by Brock, Scott, and Cheesbro “accounts for the societal change and stability…in terms of their relationship to the larger established societal system.” For this thesis it is important to establish Christianity as a movement itself in order to analyze the book of Acts as a text influencing such a movement. “Movement is a form related to rationale and purpose,” Robert S. Cathcart claims as referenced in Brock, Scott, and Cheesbro’s research. Further definitions of a movement include: a tendency or trend; a series of organized

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101 Brock 291
102 Brock 362
activities working toward an objective; an organized effort to promote or attain an end.\textsuperscript{103}

According to these classifications, it is plausible to continue on the vein of understanding Christianity as a “movement.” There is a purpose behind its promoters: belief that they possess and must further spread this truth behind eternal salvation.\textsuperscript{104} It involves a series of organized activities as illustrated in the New Testament record Acts of The Apostles, simply defined as a record of the acts undertaken by the apostles post-dating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ- their God and teacher. Finally, they are collectively working towards an ultimate end: to make disciples of all nations (see footnote 103).

Consequently, I proceed in discussion of the Social Movements Approach and its relation to Rhetoric and Acts in this thesis. For a movement to be perceived as something more than a standard feat of evolutionary culture change, what must be present is “a drama or agonistic ritual which forces a response from the establishment commensurate with the moral evil perceived by movement members.”\textsuperscript{105} In the next section of this thesis, I will present excerpts from Acts in which such an experience exists within the narrative itself. Through confrontation, these seekers of change, Cathcart exclaims, “experience a conversion wherein they recognize their own guilt and…acquire a new perspective.”\textsuperscript{106} This is a representational rejection of the understood world order and a means of transformation for the member of the movement, converted into a new understanding paired with a renewed motivation.

Further regarding Social Movements Theory, Doug McAdam and W. Richard Scott discuss this framework existing among word and organizations and movements. McAdam and


\textsuperscript{104} Matthew 28:18-20 "18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

\textsuperscript{105} Brock 367

\textsuperscript{106} Brock 367
Scott begin their section with a claim that social movements analysis has been one of the most “active and creative arenas of scholarly activity in the social sciences during the past four decades.” Scott and colleagues discuss the components by which gathered data may be organized as a way of assessing change. The three concepts include: mobilizing structures, that is, structures encompassing groups, organizations and informal networks; political opportunities, that is, the structures influencing the movement; and framing process, that is, the interpretation, attribution, and social constrictions involved in mediating between structural parameters and action.

Following these assertions, McAdam and Scott apply their framework to a series of cases. In the second case discussed, the authors revisit McAdam’s previous work on the origins and development of the civil rights movement. Within this framework, there are four phases, the first three of which are familiar to social movement scholars according to McAdam. Phase 1 is the ‘Origins’ which discusses a case pertaining to the civil rights movement and its dating ranges from 1946-1955. Within this phase the movement in question originates by means of a destabilizing force causing an upset in the current order followed by reactive mobilization in which an embrace of reform features a mobilization effort by the participants. Phase 2 is the ‘Heyday’ of the movement itself (for the civil rights movement: 1956-1965). This period also marks the emergence of a field of conflict in which major actors exist within a strategic dynamic experience or pushing forward as well as incurring relash. Phase 3 is the ‘Mass Movement’ phase; (for the civil rights movement 1966-1970); this is a broad level in which difficult targets are confronted and an embrace of radical goals, tactics and rhetoric are characterized. Finally,

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108 McAdam 16
109 McAdam 30
110 McAdam 30
111 McAdam 33
Phase 4 is the ‘Institutionalization’ in which the creation and expansion settles into real initiative. For the case at hand for McAdam and Scott, this phase includes the 1970 Philadelphia Plan offered by the Nixon administration. This plan existed as an actual imposition upon the movement towards raising the percentages of minorities to be hired. In concluding thoughts, McAdam and Scott mandate that this framework significantly alters our understanding of social movements by instead of viewing a movement as the phenomenon of interest but as a “number of challengers contesting the legal and normative understanding.”

**ii. Concluding Thoughts**

In sum, I will bring focus back to Christianity as a Social Movement in the following Analysis chapter and how I will apply this analysis. Moreover, with this understanding of Christianity as a Social Movement, I will also proceed in the next chapter to engage in the previously described detailed narrative analysis as a rhetorical approach followed by the application of the subsequently outlined Social Movements Theory.

**4. Analysis**

**I. Rhetoric Review**

The backbone of this thesis is the art of Rhetoric; therefore, I can imagine no other way to begin the analysis chapter than to return to a review of Rhetoric, what it is, its purpose, power and product of its use.

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112 McAdam 36
113 McAdam 39
At its birth, Rhetoric was named first in the Platonic dialogue *Gorgias*. In this dialogue, Rhetoric is defined as “an agent of the kind of persuasion which is designed to produce conviction, but not to educate people, about matters of right and wrong.”\(^{114}\) This is the definition first given of the art of Rhetoric, in the dialogue itself (as mentioned in the Introduction section of this thesis). Just before the dialogue between Socrates and Gorgias commences, Polus, an acquaintance of Socrates, refers to Gorgias’ ‘area of expertise’—that is, Rhetoric as “the finest there is.”\(^{115}\) Therefore, it is quite a privilege to be working with such a craft, an art and a skill that is the finest one around.

Aristotle approaches the topic in his discourse, *On Rhetoric*. In the opening of this discourse, Aristotle writes the famous words: “Rhetoric is antistrophos to dialectic; for both are concerned with such things as are, to a certain extent, within the knowledge of all people and belong to no separately defined science.”\(^{116}\) This science, Aristotle continues arguing concerning contemporary technical writers as “those who have composed Arts of Speech”\(^{117}\) and that these writers say nothing without the body of persuasion. Words are power, and the one who utilizes such power must be held accountable for its outcome; it can be argued, according to Aristotle, great harm can be done by unjustly using such power of words.\(^{118}\) Therefore, what a power it is to harness Rhetoric. With this power comes the ability not only to produce benefit or harm upon the listeners but also to persuade. This persuasion occurs, according to Aristotle, “through the arguments when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case.”\(^{119}\) Moreover, inside this art or skill lies a necessary obligation to the truth because utilizing

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\(^{116}\) Aristotle 30

\(^{117}\) Aristotle 31

\(^{118}\) Aristotle 39

\(^{119}\) Aristotle 39
Rhetoric as a means of persuasion impresses upon the persuader the responsibility of generating truth.

Kenneth Burke takes the reins on Rhetoric and turns toward its pertinence to Religion in his 1961 book aptly titled, *The Rhetoric of Religion*. In the foreword, Burke claims, “Religion has often been looked upon as a center from which all other forms of human motivation gradually diverged.”

For Burke’s study, the subject and study of Religion “falls under the head of Rhetoric in the sense that Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, and religious cosmogonies are designed...thoroughgoing modes of persuasion.” Therefore, to study Religious text and movement is to study their Rhetorical natures insofar as Religious is a force of motivation for a person to act in a particular way. Theological doctrine stems from a particular set of texts: the Christian Old and New Testaments. It is a body of spoken and/or written words set forth to communicate a believed truth so that the hearers or readers also believe and henceforth act accordingly and therefore have been persuaded. Since words about God are a quite far reaching scope of discussion, Burke claims, the Rhetoric of Religion thus may be narrowed onto the theological use of language through the close study of theology and its forms providing us with insight into the nature of language itself as a motivating agent.

**II. Acts Outlined**

As presented in the opening of this thesis, Acts was written between 60-140 C.E. The book is a dramatic telling of the birth of the church, beginning with Jesus’ resurrection and ascension into heaven followed by the event of the Pentecost in which about three thousand were
added to the numbers of the church through the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Following this event, the apostles, including the eleven disciples as well as others, together with Matthias (the one chosen to replace Judas) and Paul. The body of the narrative includes thrilling trials and miraculous healings carried out by the hands of the apostles. Peter presents compelling speeches calling listeners to “repent and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out!” Three accounts are given in Acts of Saul’s conversion story (Acts 9, 22, and 26), and after years of travel and trial, the book concludes with a final shipwreck of Paul and his companions in Rome.

Overall, the book of Acts outlines the birth of the church. It is a telling of how a Christ-following community is to function. It is viewed in some respects as a history of the church insofar as it describes the events following Jesus’ death and how the movement we know today as “Christianity” originated.

II. Rhetoric of Acts

I have mentioned in previous chapters that examples of the rhetorical devices used in acts are as follows: Mimesis, Trial and Adventure, Repetition and the use of The Holy Spirit. These devices existing in Acts similarly are present in other contemporary ancient epics including The Aeneid and The Iliad. However, prior to textual comparison, first I will discuss where they are present in Acts.

I. Mimesis

A particularly prominent theme in ancient Greece was the mimicry of more well known and prominent authors of or before a writer’s own time. This technique is known as mimesis, and it is most relevant in the discussion of Acts for the purpose of this thesis insofar as I seek to place

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123 Acts 2:41 NIV
124 Acts 3:19 NIV
Acts inside a similar body of narrative works. For Plato, its use in *The Republic* is as “a method of dramatic impersonation…and later moves to mimesis as learning by imitation of behavior.”\textsuperscript{125} Therefore, this practice can be understood as the appropriation of another’s successful style with intention of learning and producing educated literature. For Luke, as an author, he would likely be forming his writing around the styles of other popular and well-read literature as a template. This practice exists throughout the Pauline New Testament texts insofar as many of the epistles originally attributed to Paul later were discovered to actually be a matter of debate regarding the authenticity of Paul’s own original crafting of the letter.\textsuperscript{126} Moreover, it is not unusual for an author to appropriate the style of another author with intention of producing a more educated piece of literature. Much as we broaden our vocabularies by reading and learning words in order that we may make use of them in speaking and writing, so do writers and rhetoricians appropriate the style of another author as a rhetorical device.

Mimesis can be understood in this way as a rhetorical device insofar as it is used to enhance the author’s credibility through use of a traditional educated stylistic approach. Aristotle discusses this credibility of the speaker in his discourse on Rhetoric as an element of the persuasiveness of speech relying partly on ‘εθός’, that is the character of the speaker.\textsuperscript{127} This credibility serves to provide the listener with a sense of trust for the speaker as it serves a means of establishing the authority of the speaker.

For Acts, the author is writing this book specifically to be read by Theophilus, which is both a common name as well as an honorary title meaning θεός: friend of God. It is understood

\textsuperscript{125} Haskins 8
\textsuperscript{127} Aristotle 38
that the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were written by the same person and to the same person with considerable attention paid to format. Therefore, an author seeking to transcribe a history for a particular purpose is further inclined to seek authority in his authorship and would henceforth be likely to desire the authority of a recognized author by means of establishing this credibility through imitation of educated rhetorical style.

## II. Trial and Adventure

The elements of trials and adventure present in Acts certainly add an exciting element for the reader. Richard Pervo assesses that “the dramatic structure of Luke’s work would make good sense to the readers of ancient novels.” Much of this dramatic structure is present in part by the incorporation of trial and adventure into the stories of the apostles and their journeys. There are nine separate occasions the author of Acts includes a juridical conflict in which the Apostles were called before judges of the community where they travelled and preached and were accused and charged for their actions. These aspects of the narrative serve to engage the reader with the excitement of missionary journey and induce emotional response from the reader to engage with a character in such a trial. These trials provided a means for God to persevere his chosen apostles in the early formation of the church. The dramatic judicial trials and jailing of the apostles often ended in a miraculous escape in which the followers would rejoice in God’s providence and faithfulness.

As an example, in Acts 4, Peter and John are called before the Saducees when they were speaking in Solomon’s Portico:

> And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Saducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them

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128 Pervo Profit 47
in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. 129

For this portion of the text, many saw the outcome of Peter and John’s faithfulness to preaching and witnessed their arrest. In seeing this, many were brought to believe (verse 4) because of the faith of the apostles. After their arrest, the author claims that Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, continued to speak the word of Jesus and that He was the only means to salvation. The onlookers observed Peter and John’s faithfulness and the council revered their truth. The council discussed what to do with them and finally called them forward to charge them:

18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. 130

In this, the council found no grounds for punishment of the apostles and accordingly released them; because of this, the onlookers saw the mercy of God on His chosen people and praised Him for what had happened. In this, the chapter concludes by telling of how all who witnessed this “had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” 131 And following this, verse 32 claims that because of these events, “full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul;” 132 therefore, this element of trial served to multiply and solidify the early Christians for one purpose, to continue to further the Kingdom of God and be motivated to spread the Word of Jesus.

129 Acts 4:1-4
130 Acts 4:18-21
131 Acts 4: 31
132 Acts 4:32
Overall, the use of trials in Acts served to persevere Christianity as a movement insofar as seeing the faithfulness of the apostles to continue to preach in the midst of arrest encouraged their faith as well as witnessing God’s hand in releasing them from punishment caused increased credence and added to the number of believers. Furthermore, adventure plays an integral part in the dramatic structure of Acts predominantly in the conclusion of Paul’s missionary journey to Rome. In Acts 27:37-44, the journey comes to a close with a violent shipwreck.

39 Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. 40 So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. 41 But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. 42 The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. 43 But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

In this chapter of the narrative, Paul is on his final voyage to Rome, and after an evening run with a violent tempest, the crew runs the ship aground. Travel constitutes a primary backbone to the structure of Acts so as to illustrate the apostolic journey. Therefore, to end the book in a shipwreck serves as a sufficient literary device to wrap up the book of Acts. “Storm and shipwreck stories were a staple of ancient adventure writings.” After enduring such an extreme adventure, Paul is on his final journey to his ultimate destination, and nothing heightens the experience more than a storm and a shipwreck. The rhetoric of this experience utilizes terms of drive and survival as Paul encourages all who can swim to dive overboard, increasing suspense substantially through fear (Acts 27:43). Overall it is a thrilling way to end the story; Paul’s final destination throughout Acts is meant to be Rome, and before reaching this haven where he will finally see a period of rest, he must face one final venture: survival of a shipwreck. The image

133 Acts 27:39-44
134 Pervo Profit 51
we are given as a reader of this text of the hero, brave and faithful, having endured a remarkable conversion continues on his way to spread the Gospel; he faces trials and beatings, jailing and mockery, yet still he prevails. This hero that a reader has followed for 16 chapters is now clinging to a plank of splintered wood as he presses on toward the goal- to reach Rome. Darkness reigns and our hero is soaking wet, pondering the survival of his crewmates as the waves beat him evermore; his empty stomach echoes because he and his crew had been without food for a long time.\textsuperscript{135} It came about that Paul and his companions were brought safely to land, as the angel of the Lord assured him on the thirteenth day.\textsuperscript{136} Once again, The Lord carried his people through trails and adventure safely to land, and they were greeted with “\textit{οὐ} \textit{τὴν} \textit{τυχοῦσαν} \textit{φιλανθρωπίαν}”\textsuperscript{137} (unusual kindness). As a Rhetorical device, this shipwreck provides a means for displaying God’s power in Acts because of His ability to preserve his faithful apostles. When finally in Rome, the hero finds rest, after his long and treacherous journey. For two years, Paul lived and continued to preach there in Rome.

\textbf{iii. Repetition}

Utilized heavily in the Old Testament, repetition marks a place in which the author desires to place added emphasis on the particular idea so that the reader may more heavily absorb its weight. Edith Humphrey claims that Luke works “through drama in order to coax the ideal reader to a desired conclusion.”\textsuperscript{138} This rhetorical device is used throughout the New Testament, but particularly in Acts it lies within the story of Saul’s conversion. Saul’s conversion from “still

\textsuperscript{135} Acts 27:21
\textsuperscript{136} Acts 27:24
\textsuperscript{137} Acts 28:2
\textsuperscript{138} Edith M. Humphrey, As I Turned to see The Voice: Rhetoric of Vision in the New Testament (Michigan, 2007) p.57
breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord\textsuperscript{139} to one who “received sight”\textsuperscript{140} is retold three times throughout the book of Acts: 9:1-25, 22:1-22, and 26:1-24. In the re-telling of the conversion through multiple accounts, the story is repeated as a component of the writer and as a speech of Saul/Paul himself. For the retellings from Paul’s own mouth, the persuasive power of speech is utilized to make a stronger impact on the listener and reader by experiencing the tale from the mouth of the hero himself. The focus of the particular retellings from Paul strongly utilizes the εθος of persuasion; the reader has seen Paul as a hero for many chapters and herein experienced his journey. Therefore, a retelling of his own conversion story from Paul heightens the level of credibility and credence in the speech and furthermore heightens the persuasiveness of the story overall. This is done through the development of Paul’s character endured by means of his extensive stamina throughout years of trial, entertained with his own credence as an apostle and a carefully crafted supplement of sermons and speeches.

In the first telling of Saul’s conversion, the author paints the setting of The Apostle on his way to Damascus.

\begin{quote}
Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.\textsuperscript{3} And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”\textsuperscript{4} And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

At this, those around Saul heard the voice but saw no one. Saul was blinded although his eyes were open, he saw nothing; because of this he was led by the hand by his companions into the city and for three days he still could not see. When in the city, Paul encountered a disciple of the Lord who was told in a dream about Saul. This disciple came to him so that he would regain his

\textsuperscript{3} Acts 9:1
\textsuperscript{4} Acts 22:13
\textsuperscript{5} Acts 9: 3-5
sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. After this, Saul proclaimed the word of the Lord and all who heard him were amazed (verse 21).

The second telling of Saul’s conversion occurs in Chapter 22 of Acts. In this re-telling, Paul is speaking to the tribune in his own defense and tells his conversion story accordingly. He speaks to the people saying, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus.” He admits to his own actions of persecuting Christians when on the road to Damascus, “I fell to the ground.” Paul recounts, “and heard a voice saying to me ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ …and I said what shall I do Lord?” In this re-telling, the author is able to craft Paul’s story in such a way that he is a willing servant of the Lord from the very moment he saw the light. In this, the hearers are convinced and Paul shared with them his mission to the Gentiles as given by The Lord.

The final retelling of the conversion story is in Acts Chapter 26. In this telling, Paul speaks in his own defense again, this time before King Agrippa. He again recounts his persecution of Christians:

9 “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities."

With this last report of the conversion Paul increasingly dramatized, the reader has now experienced the story three times throughout the journey of Acts, and each time its telling becomes more involved and has an increased impact on persuasion because of Paul’s credence as a story teller. In his telling of the light coming to him on the road to Damascus, Paul describes it
as “a light from heaven, brighter than the sun.”\textsuperscript{146} In regard to the Rhetoric of this final retelling, at the risk of repeating myself, I again recall the Rhetorician Demosthenes who, when asked, “what was the chief rule of eloquence, replied, ‘Delivery’; what was the second rule, ‘Delivery’; what was the third rule, ‘Delivery.’”\textsuperscript{147} Similarly, the repetition of three dramatically delivered accounts of Saul’s conversion to Paul seeks to insure that a listener of reader of the text would not be inclined to forget such a story and would be exceedingly impacted by its relevance. Therefore, this story being told multiple ways through different channels provide multiple perspectives and accounts, consequently adding to the depth of the conversion itself and insuring that the reader absorbs this event fully and is more likely to relate to and understand Paul’s character.

iv. The Holy Spirit

The final Rhetorical device I am analyzing in Acts is the use of the Holy Spirit. If true rhetoric is a form of leading the soul as presented in the Platonic \textit{Phaedrus} (as mentioned previously), then it is most closely aligned with the Holy Spirit in Acts. In Chapter 2 of the book of Acts, the ascension of Jesus accompanied by a promise of the Holy Spirit is followed by an event entitled, The Pentecost, in which all the believers were gathered together in one place:

\begin{quote}
2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.
\end{quote}

At this event, onlookers accused the Christians of being filled with “too much wine”\textsuperscript{148} because of their frantic actions. Nevertheless, everyone around was amazed at the sights, and subsequently, Peter began to preach. He called to the listeners to believe what he was saying, that

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{146} Acts 26: 13
\footnotetext{147} Calvin \textit{Institutes} 268
\footnotetext{148} Acts 2:13
\end{footnotes}
Jesus of Nazareth knew God and was resurrected from the dead.\textsuperscript{149} Upon hearing this, the listeners “were cut to the heart”\textsuperscript{150} at Peter’s words spoken through this new Power he has received and three thousand were added to the number of believers that day.\textsuperscript{151}

In the first Chapter of Acts, Jesus speaks one final time to his disciples before his ascension. In the opening of the book, the author declares, “until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.”\textsuperscript{152} With this statement, the reader is able to acknowledge that Jesus himself was giving commands “through the Holy Spirit,” such that it was a force that was leading Jesus’ speaking and henceforth, this power was transferred onto the believers on the day of Pentecost. This Power is previously named through the Gospels as “Helper” (John 14:16), “Advocate” (Acts 16:21), and “Teacher” (John 14:26). This Spirit through these means acted as a guide for Jesus as he preached, leading him where to go and what to say and subsequently did the same in Acts for the apostles as they preached and performed miracles.

Socrates, in the dialogue \textit{Phaedrus}, after a period of speaking with Phaedrus in the afternoon under a tree, prepares to leave their outing in a moment of frustration before he is led into doing anything more immoral.\textsuperscript{153} As he is about to cross the stream heading toward his home, Socrates’ “\textDelta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\nu,” or his own internal divine voice (also referenced in The Apology), speaks to Socrates inclination him not to leave (Phaedrus 242b8-242c1). Upon prompting of his soul, Socrates returns to Phaedrus, in accordance with his internal Guide. After his return, Socrates continues his time with Phaedrus by performing a second speech regarding love as a form of madness. This simple act of an internal voice acting as a guide and speaking direction is

\textsuperscript{149} Acts 2:29-32  
\textsuperscript{150} Acts 2:37  
\textsuperscript{151} Acts 2:41  
\textsuperscript{152} Acts 1:2 ESV  
\textsuperscript{153} Phaedrus 237b4
an early example of the kind of acts of the Holy Spirit. Later in the speech, Socrates gives a
description of Rhetoric as “a kind of skillful leading of the soul.”

Rhetoric as a leading of the soul implies that it is an internal agent. This agent provides
the owner of such agent with a knack for the correct way of doing things, an aptitude for truth. In
this, one acting on the leading of that force, or acting upon Rhetoric, is enabled with a heightened
ability to persuade. Moreover, if Rhetoric is the art of persuasion and persuasion has three
essential elements to its body- ethos, logos and pathos (according to Aristotle)- and these
elements involve speech, credibility and emotion, then the skillful leading of the soul that is the
Holy Spirit is the motivating factor behind the rhetoric of Acts.

The purpose of this Rhetorical strategy throughout the dialogues as well as inside the
historical narrative of Acts is that it provides a means of authority of action. For Paul and the
other apostles, the Spirit leads them; therefore, the authority of God inspires their doings. For
Socrates, his Δαίμον provides him with a divine leading in the way that is right henceforth
heightening the power behind his actions because they are from divine inspiration. For the reader
of these stories, there is a lesser sense of doubt in the protagonist’s sense of direction and action
because the guide behind the actions of Paul and Socrates is divine and therefore above human
understanding and authority. An author may easily utilize this Rhetorical technique in order to
ensure the influence of the story.

III. Rhetoric of The Aeneid and The Iliad

The book of Acts is widely dated by Richard Pervo at 60-140 C.E., a window of time that
was the height of epic narrative, as seen in Richard Pervo’s research on dating Acts. In light of

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154 Phaedrus 261a9
the rhetorical device of mimesis, it is pertinent to date both *The Aeneid* and *The Iliad* to adequately discuss their narrative similarities.

**I. Acts and The Aeneid: Destiny and a Shipwreck**

Publuis Vergilius Maro, known as Virgil, originally penned *The Aeneid*. In the preface to Robert Fagels’ English translation of *The Aeneid*, Bernard Knox claims, “In his comparatively short life, [Virgil] became the supreme poet of his age.”\(^{156}\) *The Aeneid* is an epic poem about the origins of Rome told through the hero Aeneas. The poem is dated between 29 and 19 B.C.E., inferring that it would have been well circulated by the time the author of Acts would be writing his own history of Christianity.

Book One of *The Aeneid* begins with the hero, Aeneas, caught in an exciting shipwreck.

*Wars and a man I wing-an exile driven on by fate, he was the first to flee the coast of Troy. Destined to reach Lavinian shores and Italian soil, yet many blows he took on land and sea from the gods above-thanks to cruel Juno’s relentless rage-and many losses he bore in battle too, before he could found a city, bring his gods to Latinum, source of the Latin race, the Alban lords and the high walls of Rome.*\(^{157}\) [book 1 lines 1-8]

In this shipwreck story, the reader is engaged immediately with excitement. Language is utilized setting the stage of destiny and a long journey ahead. Virgil speaks of the ‘many blows he took on land and sea’ and the ‘many losses he bore in battle’ before the hero was able to reach Rome. In line 12 following, the narrative questions why a man “so famous for his devotion should bear such trials.”\(^{158}\) In this same way, Paul, devoted to the kingdom of God endured great hardships on his journey to Rome:

\(^{22}\) “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. \(^{23}\) I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. \(^{24}\) However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only

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\(157\) Virgil 47

\(158\) Virgil 47
aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.\(^{159}\)

After undergoing great suffering, both Aeneas and Paul pressed on toward Rome. Through prison and hardships, blows on land and sea leading to ultimate shipwrecks, the heros were carried through extraordinary circumstances to a final refuge, an ultimate safe haven in Rome after their storms. The utilization of a shipwreck in both stories draws attention to the Rhetorical device of mimesis in that the similarity is evidence that the author of Acts replicated the idea of the hero enduring and surviving a shipwreck from Virgil.

For Christianity as a Social Movement, the Rhetorical device of a shipwreck and the presence of a hero facing trials and prevailing indefinitely guide the reader to an understanding that followers of this God will persevere through trials. The reader can then take heart in the comfort of participating in this movement because they have read multiple accounts of the ways in which Christians were triumphant in their efforts to further the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the movement of Christianity may progress with a confident hope that the stories they have read about the experiences of other followers will be also true for their lives.

**ii. Acts and The Iliad: Repetition, Repetition, Repetition**

“The Homeric poems provide our earliest direct insights into the religious thought of the Greeks,\(^{160}\) and because “religion has often been looked upon as the center from which all other forms of human motivation gradually diverged”\(^{161}\) according to Kenneth Burke, it would seem evident that the next step in religious rhetorical study would be to turn to the Homeric poems.

\(^{159}\) Acts 20:22-24
\(^{161}\) Burke Foreword
themselves. As earlier quoted, “the subject of Religion falls under the head of Rhetoric in the sense that Rhetoric is the art of persuasion.”

The rhetorical device of repetition is utilized heavily in biblical text. To reiterate Edith Humphrey’s claims that Luke works “through drama in order to coax the ideal reader to a desired conclusion,” I draw attention to the above discussion of Saul’s conversion in Acts in relation to a similar usage of repetition in the Homeric poems. “It should be no surprise that Christians taught Homer to Christians in the schools of the fourth-century empire;” therefore, the Homeric style of writing would naturally be an element of Christian reading and interpretation.

*The Iliad*, an ancient Greek epic poem set during the Trojan War dated around the eighth century B.C.E., is widely accepted to be a guide to future writers and thinkers. The rhetorical repetitions appear in large and small number in *The Iliad*. In a specific occasion, Agamemnon reports to the Achaean council of elders the dream vision he has experienced. Five lines of the passage describing the scene exist in *The Iliad* three times. First in Zeus’ order, second in Dream’s announcement, and third in Agamemnon’s own account of the dream. In book 2 line 11, Zeus tells the Dream to repeat his words exactly.

Bid him quickly arm long-haired Achaean troops, for now they’ll capture Troy, city of wide streets. Immortal gods who dwell on Mount Olympus no longer disagree about all this. Hera’s entreaties have persuaded them. Trojans can expect more sorrows, more disasters.

Following this, Dream fled off and spoke to Agamemnon:

He bids you quickly arm long-haired Achaean, for now you can take Troy, city of wide streets. The immortal gods who dwell on Mount Olympus no longer disagree about all

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162 Burke Foreword
164 Lambert 241
166 Frobish 16
167 Iliad Book 2 Lines 12-17
The final retelling of the dream is Agamemnon’s own account to the crowd of the night Dream came to him and Zeus’ telling. Agamemnon calls his friends to listen, saying a divine dream has come to him.  

*He bids you quickly arm long-haired Achaeans, for now you can take Troy, city of wide streets. Immortal gods who dwell on Mount Olympus no longer disagree about all this. Hera’s entreaties have persuaded them. The Trojans can expect from Zeus more sorrows, more disasters. Remember what I’ve said.*

Agamemnon then reports that dream flew off and Sleep returned to him.

These three reports align with Paul’s three retellings of his conversion in that the first telling(s) involves the actual event followed by a retelling by the experiencer himself ensuring that the reader is likely to absorb the story. This story of a conversion and also of a dream from Zeus are relevant because each account were both first experienced by the character in the story and then retold in the form of a speech by the character himself.

Consequentially, for the furtherment of Christianity as a movement, the repetition of this story ensures the probability that the reader absorbs this story and takes to heart the information being presented. This idea of Paul’s conversion presents multiple levels of information, first that he was a man persecuting Christians and was converted to being a Christian himself shows the reader than anyone of any lifestyle can become a Christian. Also, it shows that your life can be turned around in an instant by becoming a part of this movement. Therefore, the repetition of this story three times in the narrative of Acts brings greater certainty that the reader would grasp its brevity.

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168 Iliad Book 2 Lines 33-39  
169 Iliad Book 2:65-66  
170 Iliad book 2 lines 78-84
iii. A Skillful Leading of the Soul

The final rhetorical device in question involves Rhetoric itself as a skillful leading of the soul. This leading exists in Acts in the form of a divine influencer called the Holy Spirit. This Spirit is given to the believers upon conversion and provides instructions toward truth and acts as a guide within the believer. This divine influence among Greek and Latin epics was present from Homer to Plato.

Just as Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit, so were the followers after the ascension. This leading increases the credibility of the words and actions of the apostles, therefore increasing persuasiveness. The increased credibility is related to the above discussion of the Holy Spirit in that by placing a divine guide behind the actions there is, again, a higher level of truth and rightness in the act. This leading was previously present in Platonic dialogues such as Phaedrus and the Apology in which Socrates refers to the way in which he knows truth is by his διδασκάλιον, his internal divine voice which leads him. Homer also was often called a ‘divine poet’ because of his use of the gods to constitute an authoritative source of information.

Aristotle refers to rhetoric itself as a skillful leading of the soul; this skillful leading shows the possessor the true way. By utilizing the power of a divine leader, an epic writer establishes a rhetorical means to persuasion. The goal in the utilization of this device is to insure credibility and to further the understandings that the author is presenting. For example, in the Platonic dialogues, Socrates follows the divine leading. In reading this, the understanding is that Socrates’ actions are righteous because of his διδασκάλιον. For Paul, the book of Acts is the historical narrative of the beginning of the Christian church; therefore, Paul’s actions are essential to the further movement of Christianity. When Paul speaks and acts, it is done through the leading of

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171 Lamberton 254
the Holy Spirit and his words and actions provide a sort of template to the future Christian. For this reason, the Rhetorical device of utilizing a divine power as influence and inspiration plays an essential part in the goal of furthering a movement through a text.

**IV. Narrative Analysis Undone**

Finally, it is important to address what this Narrative Analysis tells us about the Rhetoric of Acts. Having engaged in Narrative Analysis by deeply reading into Acts and addressing and discussing the uses of specific rhetorical devices I have discovered that the uses of these devices were likely imitated from previous epic writers. This mimesis, however, was likely done to ensure the credibility of the text and to utilize the obvious talents of previous epic narrative writers.

Furthermore, I have discovered that the use of repetition inside of a narrative heightens the likelihood that the reader would take in the information presented. Therefore, important messages, such as the conversion of Paul, are repeated so that the reader would be more likely to grasp hold of the brevity of that event. Also, the utilization of dramatic techniques such as the incorporation of multiple trials and epic adventures intensifies the story so that the reader would be more engaged and excited about the stories and events. Incorporations of elements like a dramatic shipwreck also are present to showcase the divinity of God because He succeeded in saving Paul and his companions from pain of death.

Finally, the incorporation of a divine presence such as the Holy Spirit serves to bring legitimacy to the actions of the followers because they are simply acting on the leading of their divine guide. This divine guide serves as a compass for truth because of its divinity; therefore, what the Holy Spirit leads in Acts becomes truth for the characters as well as for the readers to observe as they read and experience the story.
For Christianity, all of this sums up to display the way in which the Rhetoric of Acts served as a launch pad for the forward motion of this movement. Through Narrative Analysis, a critical reader is able to recall these Rhetorical devices crafted inside of the story and ultimately is able to observe the text through knowledge and wisdom.

V. Christianity as a Social Movement

“To persuade men toward certain acts, religions would form the kinds of attitudes which prepare men for such acts.”172 Kenneth Burke opens with this idea concerning Religion as a tool of Rhetoric. To understand Christianity as a social movement involves understanding what a movement is and how it is carried out. Robert Cathcart argues that for an event to be labeled a ‘movement,’ it “would have an activity that seeks corrective change.”173 In the context of the birth of the Church, many active calls for change were presented. In the framework of a predominantly Jewish culture, Jesus’ Gospel challenged the way in which followers believed, prayed and acted. “Movements are carried forward through language, both verbal and non-verbal, in strategic ways.”174 For the purpose of Rhetorical discussion, the language in which this movement thrived upon is of upmost relevance.

i. Social Movements Theory Applied

Following this narrative analysis of Acts and the rhetorical devices used in its crafting, the final thing I seek to discover in this thesis is what these devices do in the convictions of the reader and how these devices act to influence persuasion and furthermore social change. In the third edition of *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism*, Robert S. Cathcart writes specifically on The

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172 Burke Foreword
173 Brock 364
174 Brock 362-370
Social Movements Approach. Cathcart argues that “movements are carried forward through language;”¹⁷⁵ this movement is Christianity, and the language in question is the book of Acts.

This rhetorical theory evaluates the process of human behavior as it is influenced by language. The power of words and their ability to produce action is the power of Rhetoric. This power exists in Acts, as the story unfolds. As events transpire, like the above-mentioned Pentecost, thousands are added to the number of Christians through the words of the followers. Speeches are given, like one spoken by Peter in Acts Chapter 4 and five thousand were added to the numbers that day.¹⁷⁶ These are specific examples of the way in which the words of the apostles propelled the movement of Christianity forward.

The evidence leading to the understanding of Christianity as a ‘Movement’ stems from Cathcart as well. “Movement is a form related to rationale and purpose”¹⁷⁷ Cathcart claims as referenced in Brock, Scott, and Cheesbro’s research. Further definitions of a movement include a tendency or trend; a series of organized activities working toward an objective; an organized effort to promote or attain an end.¹⁷⁸ According to these classifications, it is plausible to continue on the vein of understanding of Christianity as a “movement.” This is played out in Christianity

This Christian movement has been an element of this world for over two thousand years. It has influenced the lives of men from their every day lives to the death of martyrs. Further according to Cathcart, “For a movement to be perceived as something other than the evolving status quo or the legitimate action of system change agents, there must be a created drama or

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¹⁷⁵ Brock 362
¹⁷⁶ Acts 4:4
¹⁷⁷ Brock 362
agonistic ritual which forces a response from the establishment.”

179 This legitimate action of change is the conversion of an individual and the created drama is the book of Acts.

Doug McAdam and W. Richard Scott discuss their framework of word and organizations and movements. Within this framework, there are four phases, the first three of which are familiar to social movement scholars according to McAdam. 180 Phase 1 is the ‘Origins’ of the movement regarding Christianity, this phase would be Chapter 1 of Acts in which Jesus ascends into heaven this beginning what we know today as Christianity. Phase 2 is the ‘Heyday’ of the movement, in which a quick uprising abounds and dramatic numbers are added to the movement. Phase 3 is Mass Movement, this phase is a broad level in which difficult targets are confronted and an embrace of radical goals, tactics and rhetoric are characterized. For Christianity, this phase exists within Acts itself continuing onto the New Testament. In this phase, the movement establishes goals and firms its rules. In Acts, the guidelines of Christian life are in their infancy and are being laid by Paul and the other Apostles. Finally, Phase 4 is the ‘Institutionalization’ in which the creation and expansion settles into real initiative. This phase occurred post-Acts in which this marginal movement of twelve poor fishermena and tax-collectors followed a man named Jesus Christ through Jerusalem and Rome and around the Mediterranean grew into what we know today as one of the world’s top three Religions.

5. Conclusion

With all said and done, it is important again to return to the original inspiration for this thesis, that is, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s argument presented in the opening. “The one thing in the

179 Brock 367
180 McAdam 30
world, of value, is the active soul…each age, must write its own books or rather, each
generation, for the books of an older period will not fit his. Man hopes, genius creates.”¹⁸¹

I. Concluding Thoughts

Rhetoric is the process of persuasion and persuasion is power. Harnessing the ability to
persuade a person, a crowd, or a reader is the ability to control and influence change. Authors in
ancient Greece and Rome harnessed this power is the form of producing dialogues and
narratives. Following the circulation of these texts, the early Christian New Testament writers
appropriated this power when producing their own religious texts. Through close narrative
analysis of Acts as well as other similar ancient texts the rhetorical devices used in Acts can be
analyzed and compared to those used in earlier ancient texts, such as the Latin Aeneid and the
Greek Iliad. Through the appropriation of these techniques, the author of Acts is able to craft an
epic narrative of the history of the origins of Christianity for future followers to read and use as a
guide.

In the introduction of this thesis, I asked the question: Why approach material that was
lived 2000 years ago, material that has been examined by endless sources of inquiry? The answer
is found in Emerson’s argument that each generation must create new thought and thus write its
own books and that is exactly what I sought to do. I aimed to critically analyze the New
Testament, as it is the only book that stands on its own. Acts is a historical narrative, it is neither
a gospel nor an epistle, and it is written to and for future believers, making it a unique element
for analysis.

¹⁸¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson (New York: Modern Library
Through narrative analysis of the book of Acts, I have discovered the depth behind its Rhetorical contingencies. I have drawn lines between the rhetorical devices used in Acts to those same devices used in *The Aeneid* and *The Iliad* and observed how those devices are used to increase persuasive power and thus influence change. The change in question involves the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles to this new religion of Christianity. Conversion occurs in and after Acts, and individual conversion is the first step in the growth and movement of the Christian Church, which originates in Acts.

By critically analyzing the rhetorical devices used in Acts, the reader may better observe its effects on the world. The rhetoric of Acts is the origin of the movement towards a Christian body of believers and therefore is essentially the birthplace of Christianity as it functions as a movement. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, McCarthy argues for the importance of local membership of the individual. The member must feel part of the local community and also part of the larger body of the movement. For Christianity as a movement, the individual receives the Holy Spirit, as in Acts 2- the Pentecost. The individual becomes part of the larger body of Christianity, as a unit of the Kingdom of God. After this, the unit moves forward to spread and influence change having been motivated to do so. In the understanding of the Rhetoric of Acts, one can begin to understand the way in which the movement of Christianity began and was recorded through linguistic technique further providing inspiration for the movement to develop and grow to the caliber at which it exists today.

The driving force behind seeking this information is understanding. Through first establishing a definition of Rhetoric and then digging into what Rhetoric originated as from its initial sources, a foundation was laid for this study. I thought that it was most important to seek this idea of Rhetoric in its birth in order to grasp what it was discovered to be by those who
sought to harness its power. Secondly, I sought to find a unique way to approach the text of Acts and the natural train of research led to contextualizing its authorship alongside its contemporary pieces of literature. In this I utilized the process of narrative analysis to evaluate Acts alongside *The Aeneid* and *The Iliad*, drawing lines between similar uses of rhetorical devices in their textual bodies. Finally, looking again only at Acts, I sought to apply Social Movements Theory to Christianity insofar as the Rhetoric of Acts was a key element to Christianity’s birth and initial growth. And so, the Rhetoric of Acts, carefully crafted and executed, does in fact serve to increase the persuasiveness of the text to further the movement of Christianity to the ends of the earth.

### II. Limitations and Horizons

This thesis does, however, have limits. The only book I provide analysis for rhetorically is the book of Acts. This book, I believe, is extremely important because of its unique literary elements; however, it is only one of an entire body of canonized holy text used by the Christian Church. The New Testament as whole is used by the church as a tool of understanding the way to build a church and lead a Christian life; therefore, in order to further study this topic, a researcher may continue the scope of rhetorical analysis onto the whole of the New Testament. Also in Greek and Latin literary comparison, I have chosen two texts to draw comparisons to Acts for this thesis, yet endless dynamic relationships of narrative analysis may perhaps lie undiscovered across the realm of ancient epics.

I seek to provide a spark with this thesis into the excitement of digging deeper into Religious text by means of rhetorical analysis. These roads were traveled by Kenneth Burke and further paved by George Kennedy and now it is our turn to take the reins on Rhetoric and Religion. Further research can be done based upon the information in this thesis in many
academic directions. The idea of analyzing biblical text alongside other ancient epics opens up a variety of opportunities to discover new relationships and draw further and deeper conclusions about the crafting of biblical text itself. Furthermore, viewing through the lens of narrative analysis allows for a unique viewpoint and alternative perspective to a text that had already been excessively studied and scrupulously scrutinized for centuries.

**III. Finally**

After all has been said and said again, the journey is hardly over. Horizons are big for Rhetoric and Religion. With this thesis, I hoped to provide a detailed analysis of particular rhetorical devices present in Acts alongside similar rhetorical devices present in other ancient epics. I seek not to claim truth or falsity but only to further the path of knowledge by continuing to inquire tirelessly no matter the limitations. I believe in the power of Rhetoric and its place in Religious movements. I believe that this area of research matters.

Christianity is a movement that has since its birth brought radical social change to whatever region it encounters. Since the ability to influence social change is the key to power, if anyone seeks to understand power, this is an excellent place to find reference. This religious movement had inspired crusades and deaths of martyrs. I find that anything a man is willing to die for has certainly made sanctuary in his deepest soul. Through the recorded words of a Messiah and the letters of His followers this Christian Bible has been comprised. As a textual body, this Bible has acted as a guiding light and driving force behind Christians for centuries. Therefore, the power lies within said book. The New Testament words are powerful enough to warrant martyrdom and that alone is testimony to its Rhetorical strength. The book of Acts holds twenty eight chapters of conversions, speeches, miracles and a violent shipwreck all telling the
epic history of the origins of the Church. Further research can be done and additional conclusions drawn; all that’s needed is the spark of excitement and the eagerness to discover. “The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul.”182 Let us not waste our minds, but let us have eyes to see the power of Rhetoric and minds to understand its diligent place in the study of Religion and press on toward the goal.

182 Emerson 46
Bibliography


