

Published in *Semeia* 65 (1994): 7-36.

Semeia is an experimental journal devoted to the exploration of new and emergent areas and methods of biblical criticism. Studies employing the methods, models, and findings of linguistics, folklore studies, contemporary literary criticism, structuralism, social anthropology, and other such disciplines and approaches are invited. Although experimental in both form and content, *Semeia* proposes to publish work that reflects a well-defined methodology that is appropriate to the material being interpreted.

Semeia is complemented by *Semeia Studies*, also published by Scholars Press. As a monograph series, *Semeia Studies* encourages publication of more elaborate explorations of new and emergent approaches to the study of the Bible.

FOUNDING EDITOR (1974-1980): Robert W. Funk
GENERAL EDITOR: Daniel Patte, Vanderbilt University
EDITOR for *Semeia Studies*: Vincent Wimbush,
Union Theological Seminary

ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Alice Bach, Stanford University; Randall C. Bailey, Interdenominational Theological Center; Bernard Brandon Scott, Phillips Graduate Seminary; Phyllis Bird, Garrett Evangelical Seminary; R. Alan Culpepper, Baylor University; Tamara C. Eskenazi, Hebrew Union College; Danna Nolan Fewell, Perkins School of Theology; Dennis R. MacDonald, Iliff School of Theology; Bruce J. Malina, Creighton University; Carol Meyers, Duke University; Ilana Pardes, The Hebrew University; Daniel Patte (General Editor), Vanderbilt University; Gary Phillips, College of the Holy Cross; Regina M. Schwartz, Duke University; Vincent L. Wimbush (*Semeia Studies* Editor), Union Theological Seminary.

ASSISTANT TO THE GENERAL EDITOR: Nicole Wilkinson, Vanderbilt University

Issues of *Semeia* are unified around a central theme and edited by members of the editorial board or guest editors. Future themes and editors are given at the back of each issue of *Semeia*. Inquiries or manuscripts should be sent to the General Editor: Daniel Patte, Department of Religious Studies, Vanderbilt University, Box 1704 St. B, Nashville, TN 37235.

Inquiries or manuscripts for *Semeia Studies* should be sent to the series editor: Vincent Wimbush, Union Theological Seminary, 3041 Broadway, New York, NY, 10027-5714.

Semeia and *Semeia Studies* are sponsored by the Society of Biblical literature as part of its research and publications program.

A subscription unit to *Semeia* consists of four issues (65-68 for 1994), and costs \$25 for SBL or AAR members (\$20 if *Semeia* subscription is paid at the same time as AAR or SBL membership dues); \$35 for non-members and institutions. Members and subscribers outside the U.S., Canada, and Mexico are requested to add a \$5.00 postal surcharge. AU payments should be in U.S. currency or its equivalency. Single issues are \$19.95 (\$14.95 to members). Subscriptions should be sent to Scholars Press Membership Services, P.O. Box 15288, Atlanta, GA 30333. Orders for single issues (including multiple-copy orders) should be sent to SCHOLARS PRESS CUSTOMER SERVICES, P.O. Box 6996, Alpharetta, GA 30239-6996, Phone: (800) 437-6692 or (404) 442-8633, Fax: (404) 442-9742.

SEMEIA 65

ORALITY AND TEXTUALITY IN EARLY
CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Editor: Joanna Dewey
Board Editor: Elizabeth Struthers Malbon

©1995
by the Society of Biblical Literature

JESUS OF NAZARETH AND THE WATERSHED OF ANCIENT ORALITY AND LITERACY¹

Thomas E. Boomershine
United Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT

As research sheds light on the relationship between communications technology and culture, (Thomas 1989, 1992; Havelock 1982; Patterson), the picture of the interaction between oral and written communications systems and the religious communities of Israel in antiquity is changing. Rather than a smooth, linear transition from orality to literacy, the formation of the communications system of writing and reading in antiquity was associated with a long, highly complex cultural revolution. The first task is, then, to sketch a more complex and, hopefully, more accurate picture of the watershed between orality and literacy in the ancient near East.

Since the dominant picture of Jesus was decisively shaped by nineteenth century assumptions about the transition from orality to literacy that now appear inaccurate, Jesus' role looks very different when seen from this new perspective. His role needs to be seen now in the context of the long struggle of Judaism with Hellenistic literate culture. Jesus' role in this cultural setting is clarified by comparison with the role of Socrates, who wrote nothing but developed a mode of thought and communication that was generative for the emerging literate culture. There are clear signs in the overall social context of Hellenistic Galilee and in the corpus of Jesus' parables that Jesus developed a mode of thought and communication that was a source for the distinctive ways in which early Christianity reshaped ancient Judaism in the culture of literacy.

COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH AND BIBLICAL METHODOLOGY

The field of communications research has emerged in the twentieth century in response to the need to understand the complex effects of electronic communications technology on contemporary culture (Carey; Czitrom; Delia: 20-98; Fiske; Lowery and DeFleur). Contemporary communications research has developed a more comprehensive and nuanced awareness of the complex interactions between communications systems and cultural formation. The foundational conclusion of this research has been that changes in communications systems are related to profound shifts in modes of perception and thought, patterns of cultural formation, and religious values.

The most widely recognized figure in communications research has been Marshall McLuhan. From the foundations laid by Harold Innis (195:11, 1972), McLuhan popularized communications research in his book *Understanding Media*, which contained the now famous cliché, "the medium is the message." McLuhan argued that communications media

¹ I am deeply grateful to Lawrence Welborn for his suggestions for the bibliographical resources, to Gilbert Bartholomew and Amelia Cooper for their suggestions for the editing of the text, and to the editor of this volume, Joanna Dewey, without whose toughminded encouragement this article would not have been completed.

are, rather than neutral transmitters of meaning, the major factor in the formation of culture.² In the past three decades, the basic presuppositions of communications research have been applied to the history of orality and literacy, above all by Walter Ong. Building on the work of McLuhan, Milmann Perry, Albert Lord, and Eric Havelock, Ong has traced the impact of changes in communications technology throughout the history of human civilization (Farrell: 25-43).

The methodological presuppositions of form criticism were based on the communications theories of the nineteenth-century. The assumption was that oral and literary communications were relatively neutral means for the transmission of tradition. In light of Ong's work, Werner Kelber recognized the formative role of this presupposition in the work of Bultmann and Gerhardsson. Kelber accurately identifies Bultmann's underlying assumption:

What strengthened Bultmann's model of an effortlessly evolutionary transition from the pre-gospel stream of tradition to the written gospel was his insistence on the irrelevance of a distinction between orality and literacy. In most cases it was considered "immaterial" (*nebensächlich*) whether the oral or the written tradition has been responsible; there exists no difference in principle (6).

This nineteenth-century picture of the orality/literacy transition in antiquity was a basic presupposition of form criticism. The key to understanding the history of tradition was the identification of the earlier oral forms of the sayings and stories. This picture generated a relatively narrow focus in historical critical study of the Gospels on the tradition history of individual pericopes. While form criticism theoretically included the critical analysis of the differences between oral and written tradition,³ it primarily treated oral tradition as a causal factor in the formation of the written tradition and saw no need to interpret the Gospel tradition in the context of the shift from orality to literacy in the broader culture.⁴ As a result of recent orality/literacy research, however, we now know that changes in communications systems are complex, pervasive, and conflictual, rather than smooth and easy. Furthermore, if these inaccurate assumptions have shaped our picture of the New Testament tradition, they also have affected our picture of Jesus.

THE PUZZLE OF OUR PRESENT PICTURE OF JESUS

² While McLuhan's work has been appropriately criticized as media determinism, his descriptions of the pervasive influence of communications systems have been highly generative; see, for example, the reflections upon McLuhan's work by Eco: 135-44.

³ The point was grasped by Overbeck in 1882. The systemic differences between oral and written communication were more fully appreciated in the school of form criticism that descends from Martin Dibelius to Philip Vielhauer and Gerd Theissen.

⁴ This criticism applies mainly to Bultmann's use of form criticism in his history of the synoptic tradition. A further problem in historical criticism has been the assumption that, once the tradition had been written down, the communications system of antiquity was the same as that of the later periods of print culture. As a result, the role of the communications system of the Enlightenment in the formation of historical criticism has been almost wholly unrecognized. Throughout this period, for example, scholars have continued to refer to "the reader" as if ancient receptors were generally readers reading manuscripts alone in silence rather than audiences listening to public readings (Achtmeier).

When seen from the perspective of communications systems, our present picture of Jesus is profoundly enigmatic. The problem is the apparent discontinuity between Jesus' life and the movement that developed from his life and work. The radical distinction between the so-called historical Jesus and the Christ of faith may have been discredited, but remnants of that distinction remain very much in place.⁵ One of those remnants is our picture of Jesus' relationship to the watershed of oral and written communications systems in antiquity.

Jesus was largely seen as an oral communicator within a Palestinian Jewish environment that was significantly separated from the more literate Hellenistic world.⁶ His ministry was mainly to Jews (Sanders 1985; Senior' and Stuhlmüller; cf. Hahn 1974: 26-41). The assumption is that he spoke Aramaic (Fitzmyer: 6-10), though a few scholars suggest Greek as well (Argyle; Sevenster). The historical Jesus was then a relatively insignificant oral teacher who formed one of the several proto-messianic movements in first-century Judaism (so Horsley). According to this construction, Paul was the great innovator who formed the Hellenistic Gentile church as a distinctive development that went far beyond the intentions of Jesus (Harnack 1924). In Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*, for example, Jesus is identified with the Jewish sources and the beginnings of New Testament theology are identified with Paul (Bultmann 1951:3-26; see also Braun). Paul formed a literate communications system that, in turn, established a new form of Judaism in the midst of Hellenistic culture (Hartman: 137-46). Thus, Jesus operated in the communications world of orality while Paul moved aggressively into the communications world of literacy. In this process, Jesus became the Christ whose death and resurrection were the decisive events in the history of salvation but whose actual life and teaching were of relative insignificance (Heitmüller 1972:308-19; Wrede: 53).

The movement Jesus established within Judaism had some impact for a time. The history of Jewish Christianity is a sign of this ongoing movement; the opposition of the rabbis of the post-70 CE period confirms its existence (Simon 1948:145-325; Daniélou; Schoeps 1949). TM Jewish mission was, nevertheless, only minimally successful (Strecker: 241-85; Simon 1972:37- 54; Lüdemann: 161-73; 245-54). It was within the urban Greek-speaking world that Christianity flourished and became a religion that far exceeded its ethnic, oral roots. From this perspective, Paul was the central figure in the transformation of the movement of Jesus into a religion in which Jesus Christ was the central figure.

This understanding of Jesus' role is related to our picture of the communications situation in the first-century of the common era: Jesus was an oral communicator who wrote virtually nothing, the only recorded instance being whatever he wrote—a symbol, doodlings, a word, or a picture—to a woman accused of adultery (John 8:2-11). Early Christianity was significantly based on the composition and distribution of documents (Barnett; see also Harnack). From a communications perspective, our present picture paints Jesus as the oral precursor for the more literary movement that rapidly developed around his memory. Furthermore, Kelber's picture of orality and literacy in early Christianity (1983) widens the chasm between the communicators of the oral gospel — Jesus and his nonliterate followers, particularly Peter — and the more literate authors of the written gospel, such as Mark. Thus, the watershed between oral and written communications systems is presently located between Jesus and the traditions of the church.

⁵ While Martin Kahler is the source of the classic articulation of the distinction, the ghost is still abroad in a work such as that of Burton Mack.

⁶ While this picture of Jesus dominated the last century, it is largely absent from recent scholarship, though it still lingers in textbooks. Among recent scholars, E. P. Sanders argues that Jesus' Galilee was not greatly influenced by Greek and Roman culture.

Yet this conclusion is itself a puzzle. Is it probable that there would be such radical discontinuity between the founder of a movement and the movement itself?⁷ Was Paul such a charismatic figure that he was able to turn the Jesus movement in a radically different direction from that initiated by Jesus himself?⁸ Furthermore, if Jesus lived more or less exclusively on the oral side of the great divide between the systems of orality and literacy, is it likely that he would have founded a movement that was structurally related to the world of literacy?

A needed step in a reexamination of these questions is to clarify the roles of oral and written communications in the first century. Just as we used to assume that Judaism and Hellenism were radically distinct until it became clear that Hellenism had thoroughly permeated Palestine (Hengel 1974; Momigliano: 74-122; Batey), so also the interaction of oral and written communications systems may have been far more complex than we have previously assumed. The formation of early Christianity and the documents of the New Testament need to be seen in the context of the history of communications systems in antiquity and in the religion of Israel.

ORALITY AND LITERACY IN ANTIQUITY

A comprehensive picture of the transition from orality to literacy in antiquity can only be drawn in its broadest outlines here. The extension of literacy in the ancient world was a slow process. The earliest evidence now available places the invention of writing in both Mesopotamia and Egypt near the end of the fourth millennium BCE (ca. 3200-3000 BCE)(Baines: 3;4). The extensive tablets discovered in Elba reflect the uses of writing that were dominant until the later centuries of the second millennium BCE: records of business transactions and military victories. Throughout the next two and a half millennia (3200-700 BCE), writing was the province of a professional group of scribes and was limited in its overall cultural impact. This is reflected in the political roles of the scribes: they were subordinates to illiterate kings who used scribes but exercised power by oral decree. Thus, the communications system of literacy was developed in service of oral communication.

The first period in which writing appears to become a dominant factor in the formation of culture begins around 500 BCE. Though the same processes may have been happening elsewhere in the ancient world, the most extensive evidence for the formation of an early literate culture is in Athens. There a critical mass of early philosophers, scientists, and historians developed the characteristic institutions and modes of thought of literate culture. The Hellenistic empire of Alexander and his successors was the preeminent promoter of literate culture in the ancient world (Trn; Hadas; Hengel 1974:58-106). In the Hellenistic empire, writing and its modes of communication were organized around the Greek language, and the disciplines of philosophy and rhetoric gradually became important factors in the shaping of communication and culture (Hengel 1979:94-115, 126-43). Particularly in urban centers, writing became the preeminent system of communication and culture as the literate minority controlled the instrumentalities of power (Jones: 285). This process continued

⁷ The use of the criterion of dissimilarity, while methodologically necessary for purposes of historical verifiability, accentuates the disjunction between Jesus and Christianity. For a critique, R. S. Barbour: 5-20. On the question in general, see Bultmann 1967:445-69; Hahn 1974:11-77; Käsemann: 23-65.

⁸ This was the position of the "history of religions" school in general: see the critique by Schoeps 1961:53. This view of the radical disjunction between Jesus and Paul has recently been revived by Hyam Maccoby.

through the early centuries of the Roman empire (MacMullen: 1-56; Rostovtzeff 1957:255-78, 344-52).

The watershed between orality and literacy in antiquity is probably most accurately drawn in the Hellenistic era of the fourth to the third centuries BCE. The transition from archives to libraries is one sign of that watershed. The earliest archives of written materials, such as Ashurbanipal's (668-627 BCE) collection of some 25,000 tablets, essentially functioned as museums for the preservation of written monuments. The first libraries of manuscripts designed to facilitate reading and study appear in classical Athens during the fourth century. The most famous collection was founded by Aristotle and became the model for the great library at Alexandria, which was built by Ptolemy II Philadelphus in the third century (308-246 BCE) (Francis: 856-57).

While the basic elements of the communications system of literacy were formed during the Hellenistic era, the ability to read and write remained relatively rare in the general population. Estimates of the levels of literacy in the ancient world are steadily being revised downwards as the documentary evidence is being assessed. Thus, William Harris, in a recent work, *Ancient Literacy*, concludes that the overall rate of literacy in Attica is not likely to have risen above 10-15% by the end of the fourth century (328). Literacy was largely confined to the ruling classes, hoplites and above (Thomas 1992; Harvey: 585-635; Harris). In the period of the Hellenistic empire, literacy levels in regions other than Greece gradually increased to levels closer to that of classical Athens (Hengel 1974:58-59). Furthermore, Harris's conclusions are that the great majority of the populations of the Roman Empire, including Rome itself, remained nonliterate. He estimates that the combined literacy level in Rome in the period before 100 BC is unlikely to have much exceeded 10% (329). Literacy was largely confined to free men, although at least some slaves and women in the Roman world became literate (see also Youtie 1966: 127-43; 1971a:161-76; 1971b:239-61; Beard). While the levels of literacy may have been relatively low, the cultures of the Hellenistic world were nevertheless dominated by the culture of literacy. Power and prestige in every area of life were connected with literacy (Jüthner: 25-26, 34; Marrou: 95-100, 150; Hengel 1976:106; Youtie 1975).

However, while the literate culture became increasingly dominant, the marks of oral culture were always present and remained central for the majority of persons. Harris's conclusion about literacy in the world of antiquity is appropriately nuanced:

there occurred a transition away from oral culture. This was, however, a transition not to written culture (in the sense in which modern cultures are written cultures) but to an intermediate condition, neither primitive nor modern. In this world, after the archaic period, the entire elite relied heavily on writing, and the entirety of the rest of the population was affected by it. But some of the marks of an oral culture always remain visible, most notably a widespread reliance on, and cultivation of, the faculty of memory (327).

Thus, the overall picture of communications in the ancient world is constituted by the new mix composed of the growing power of writing in the midst of a changing though always present oral culture. The communications systems of literacy were inextricably connected with the emergence and power of the great empires of the era. It is no coincidence that the centers of literacy – Babylonia, Persia, Egypt, Greece, Rome – were also the centers of military, economic, and political power that successively subjugated Israel. As Claude Lévi-

Strauss has provocatively observed about the role of literacy in human civilization, "The primary function of written communication is to facilitate slavery" (299).⁹

ORAL AND LITERATE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS IN ISRAEL

The appropriation of literacy in ancient Israel was an extremely complex process. Three stages can be identified in this process: initial signs of writing, the formation of literate systems of communications, and the development of sustainable communication systems for the preservation and extension of the religion in the culture of literacy. The signs of formation of a literate communications system are the integration of reading and writing into the structural patterns of religious and political life. The integration of literacy into the life of Israel was a response to the emergence of literate culture in the empires of the ancient Near East. Israel's experience of the culture of literacy was inextricably connected with political and economic domination by the literate centers of power: Babylonia, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and finally, Rome. Israel was, however, also a distinctive participant in the development of the culture of literacy.

Initial Signs

The first references to writing in Israel are to Moses, who writes the covenant (Exod 24) and reads his song and the law (Deut 31). Descriptions of reading and writing without further editorial comment refer to Joshua (Josh 1:8; 24:26), Samuel (1 Sam 10:25), David (2 Sam 11:14), Jezebel (1 Kgs 21:8-9), Jehu (2 Kgs 10), and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19) (Millard: 388). The first accounts of the reading of major literary compositions with relatively specific historical dates in the history of Israelite religion are the reading of the Deuteronomy scroll (2 Kgs 22-approximately 621 BCE) and the reading of Jeremiah's scroll (Jer 36-approximately 605 BCE).

Epigraphic evidence, particularly from the seventh to the early sixth century BCE, corroborates the biblical signs of an emerging literate communications system in Israel (Millard: 338). Furthermore, the synagogue as a community where literacy was required for the reading of sacred writings was probably established during the exile (Schürer: 447; Hengel 1974:82-83). And it was probably during the period of the exile that the Pentateuch and the classical prophets were codified. That is, the first substantial signs of more extensive literary activity, and the initial formation of a literate culture and institutions based on reading and writing, appear in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE.

Formation of a Literary Communications System

The first accounts in biblical literature in which the marks of a literary communications system appear are the descriptions of the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah. In the accounts of the covenant renewal in 444 BCE, the authors of Ezra and Nehemiah fully integrated reading and writing into the narrative fabric of Israel's religious life. Ezra, as the leader of the religious community, is named as a scribe. He is presented as the first fully literate person in the history of Israel to have significant political power. The introductions of Ezra emphasize his literate credentials: "He was a scribe skilled in the law of

⁹ In his discussion of slavery, Lévi-Strauss clearly is referring to political, cultural, and economic domination rather than chattel slavery. His discussion is of particular importance because of the tendency of scholars and other high literates to idealize literacy in comparison to both oral and electronic communications systems.

Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given ... " (Ezra 7:6); "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel" (7:10); "This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to the priest Ezra, the scribe, a scholar of the text of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel ... " (7:11). This last reference suggests a connection between Ezra's literacy and his authorization by King Artaxerxes of Persia.

As described in Nehemiah 8, the foundational act in the covenant renewal ceremony is a new communications event: a combination of the written and the oral Torah. While Ezra read the book of the law of Moses, the Levites, thirteen of whom are listed (8:7), provided an oral interpretation of the Law, "so that the people understood the reading" (8:8). During the celebration of the Feast of Booths that followed, Ezra is described as reading from the book of the law of God each of the seven days (8:18), and on the twenty-fourth day the people made confession to God after hearing a reading from the book of the law for "a fourth part of the day" (9:1-3). This story is the first sign in the tradition of the characteristic pattern of the dual torah: written texts combined with oral commentary on those texts. A further dimension of the integration of reading and writing into the account of the covenant renewal is the signing of the written covenant (Nehemiah 10). Apparently the scribes wrote a new covenant and representatives of the people – officials, Levites, and priests – signed it. The names of those who signed the covenant are listed in Nehemiah 10:1-27.

The composition of Ezra and Nehemiah is now dated between 400 and 300 BCE (Klein: 732). Thus, the first descriptions of the systematic integration of reading and writing into the religious life of Israel appear in the early second temple period. The identification of this time period as the watershed between orality and literacy in Israel is supported by additional literary records. It was during this period that the literature that formed the balance of the Scriptures was written. The later canonical writings, the Apocrypha, and the Pseudepigrapha are the records of extensive literary movements that developed in Israel during the Hellenistic and Roman eras. These movements were based on the composition of documents by authors who apparently wrote them for distribution to communities of literate Jews. This was also the period of the Septuagint translation (third century BCE to early first century BCE). Furthermore, the discovery of the literary legacy of the community at Qumran has given us a picture of a Jewish religious community in the late second temple period that had thoroughly appropriated reading and writing into its internal life. And, not surprisingly, all of this literary activity took place in the same period as the emergence of literate systems in the wider Hellenistic culture. From the perspective of communications systems, therefore, these developments in the literature of Israel are further signs of the emergence of a full system of literary communications.

As the reform of Ezra and Nehemiah indicates, however, the political impetus in Israel for the development of a system of communications based on writing was the desire to protect Israel from corruption by the culture of Hellenism. This desire was, however, in tension with the inevitable need to adapt to the new cultural system and, in a variety of ways, to adopt Hellenistic ways. As Martin Hengel has shown in his richly nuanced studies (1974, 1976), the adoption of Hellenistic civilization by ancient Judaism and the conflict which resulted was a highly complex development that involved many levels of extreme tension. The issue for Judaism throughout the second temple period was how to deal with the powerful cultural forces of Hellenism, an integral aspect of which was the power of reading and writing.

The Emergence of Sustainable Communications Systems

The next major development in communications systems in the history of ancient Judaism was, from the point of view of media history, in many ways the most remarkable. In the aftermath of the Jewish war and the destruction of the temple, two significantly different communications systems emerged, the systems that shaped the basic character of what have become Judaism and Christianity.

The formation of rabbinic Judaism was associated with the development of the communications system that produced the writings and symbolic system of the dual Torah. As a result of the historical critical analysis of the canonical writings of rabbinic Judaism, most characteristically the Mishnah and the Talmud, we now have a much dearer picture of the distinctive character of this system. As Jacob Neusner has shown in his multi-faceted analyses and comparisons with other literatures, the Judaism of the dual Torah was a fully literate system based on the formation of textual communities.¹⁰ The formation of the mind of rabbinic Judaism was based on highly sophisticated textual logics that interpreted the written texts in relation to the realities of Jewish life in the new cultural setting created by the loss of the temple.

The distinctiveness of the Mishnah and Talmud was in part the result of the particular combination of oral composition and transmission in a fully textual environment. Thus, for example, the students of the Rabbis memorized their oral sayings,¹¹ thereby approximating the accuracy of written transmission in oral tradition. In the manner of oral tradition, nothing was written for decades or even centuries, but the modes of oral transmission were rigorous. The entire cultural communications system on which rabbinic Judaism was thereafter established had its foundations in the systematic oral interpretation of written Scripture.

The complexity and importance of the relationship between the development of Judaism and modes of communication can be seen in a fact that is initially surprising. The formation of rabbinic Judaism in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple was based on the more or less exclusive development of the communications system of the dual Torah (Vermees: 79-95). Eventually the literary tradition of the second temple period virtually disappeared from the transmitted Jewish tradition. Samuel Sandmel writes:

By the strangest quirk of fate respecting literature that I know of, large numbers of writings by Jews were completely lost from the transmitted Jewish heritage. These documents stem roughly from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200. Not only the so-called Pseudepigrapha, but even such important and extensive writings as those by Philo and Josephus have not been part of the Jewish inheritance from its past; these were preserved and transmitted by Christians (xi).

This disassociation of rabbinic Judaism from the literary traditions of the second temple period did not happen immediately. The contents of the two volumes of Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* provide clear evidence that Jews continued to write apocalyptic, testaments, wisdom, and even philosophy in the second - fourth centuries of the common era. Furthermore, these literary traditions may have been preserved in some rabbinic circles in the tannaitic and amoraic periods. Nevertheless, the new system that the rabbis established in the

¹⁰ Neusner, on the one hand, rejects the significance of the differences between orality and literacy as "vastly overstated, especially for the culture of the Jews in antiquity;" (1988:14). On the other hand, at other points in his work he utilizes, in a fully acknowledged manner, both the categories and concepts that have grown out of the investigation of orality and literacy (1987:8-19).

¹¹ See Jacob Neusner (1984:28; also 1985:112).

late first century CE eventually resulted in the characteristic patterns of Judaism that Sandmel has described.

In light of the recognition of the radical character of shifts in communications systems, we can speculate that the exclusion of whole categories of Jewish writings was more or less intentional, analogous to Plato's exclusion of the poets from the Republic, rather than a quirk of fate or a puzzling forgetfulness. It may be that the rabbis recognized instinctively that the only way to maintain a community of purity in the midst of Gentile culture was to form a distinctive communications system and to cut the explicit links of the religion to Hellenistic literary culture. Regardless of the reasons for its formation, however, the system of the dual Torah was a highly creative and distinctive innovation in communications systems that sustained rabbinic Judaism throughout the ages of the dominance of literate communications systems in the West.

The other new development in communications systems among ancient Jews was the formation of the system of the Jewish sectarians who accepted Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah. The early Christian church developed a communications system that was another new synthesis of oral and written tradition. The composition of the New Testament writings in the first - second century CE established a tradition that generated the writings of first the Apologists and then the ante-Nicene fathers. The development of theology was, from the perspective of communications, a radically new post-biblical development within early Christianity. In the patristic period, Christian writers produced a veritable flood of new literary forms and traditions – the rhetorical traditions of homiletics, liturgical writings, hymns, letters, dogmatic writings, and early canon law – as well as the more traditional literary forms – Gospels, Acts, Apocalypses, and Epistles – now collected in the so-called New Testament Apocrypha.

Christians established a network of textual communities that produced and distributed a widely diversified literary tradition. Christians were aggressive in the appropriation of the communications technology of literacy. For example, among the earliest archeological discoveries of the codex rather than the scroll, as a means of producing and distributing written works, are fragments of Christian books from the second century CE. The development of a new communications system was foundational to the expansion of what began as a small Jewish sect into what became, in the fourth century, the dominant religion of the Roman Empire.

If there is a significant positive correlation between the emergence of new religious traditions and the development of new communications systems, then the split between Judaism and Christianity may have been, in addition to the various doctrinal, organizational, and ethnic differences, a consequence of different directions in their communications systems. The rabbis of the Mishnaic tradition maintained the role of texts as the recording of long-established oral traditions and poured their energy into the development of the oral Torah. This system defended the culture and religion of Israel from corruption by the culture of Hellenism and appropriated literacy as a communications system in strict subordination to orality.

In contrast, early Christians developed an extensive contemporary literary tradition in continuity with other aspects of the literary communications system that was formed in the period of the second temple (Alexander: 221-47; Roberts). This literature was either composed in writing, dictated to a secretary, or composed orally and written down after a relatively short period of oral transmission. It was then more or less immediately distributed in manuscripts for public reading. Christianity was then the Jewish sectarian group in the post-70 CE period that continued and further developed these characteristics of the literate communications system of the second temple period. In this context Christian preservation of the literary traditions of the Pseudepigrapha, and other writings of the second temple period

was a natural and consistent development. In the internal struggle within Judaism about the uses of writing, the Christian sect continued the approach to literate communications developed by the more Hellenistic Jewish writers of the second temple period. In contrast to the communications system of rabbinic Judaism, which preserved and defended the community's cultic purity, the communications system formed by early Christianity extended the knowledge of God in Hellenistic culture and transformed the impact of literacy on religious and political life.

When seen in relation to the transition from oral to literate communications systems in antiquity, however, both of these new systems were efforts to enable the religion of Israel to survive and to maintain faithfulness in a new cultural environment. Both rabbinic Judaism and Christianity formed new systems of literate communications that have continued to be viable in the literate cultures of the West. It is within these broad parameters that new light may be shed on the puzzle of the relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and the formation of Christianity.

ORALITY AND LITERACY IN JESUS' GALILEAN MINISTRY

Clear evidence about the extent of literacy in Galilee is sparse, but the general situation can be discerned in broad outlines from the available data. It is generally assumed that there was a close association between the extension of literacy and the extension of Hellenism. The assumption may not be fully valid since there were persons who were literate in Hebrew who may not have known Greek. Nevertheless, it is probable that in the overall cultural world of the first centuries BCE/ CE, there was a general correlation between Hellenistic culture and literacy. Wherever there is evidence of Hellenistic culture and, the use of Greek, there are also signs of the extension of literacy.

One of the more surprising results of recent archeological work has been the evidence of the wide use of Greek in Galilee (Batey: 56, 80, *passim*). There is an overall consensus in the current discussion that Aramaic was the primary language of Palestine. Evidence, however, continues to grow that Greek was also an important language of social intercourse and perhaps even family life. The most striking sign of the use of Greek that have surfaced are the ossuary inscriptions. More than two-thirds of those discovered in Palestine are in Greek. As Meyers and Strange summarize the data, "From a corpus of 194 inscribed ossuaries, 26 percent are inscribed in Hebrew or Aramaic, 9 percent are in Greek and a Semitic language, and 64 percent are inscribed in Greek alone" (65). In the excavation of Beth Shearim, a second century town in Galilee, 33 of the 37 inscriptions discovered in catacombs 12 and 13 were in Greek and only 4 in Hebrew and Aramaic, with an additional 4 Hebrew inscriptions in catacomb 14 (Schwabe: 249). This evidence indicates that Greek was widely used even in the highly private context of family burials.

A further surprising indication of the prevalence of Greek is the third letter of the Bar-Kokhba correspondence. This letter, written from within the fortress in the last year of the revolt (135 CE), asks for palm branches and citrons for "the camp of the Jews" and then states, "the letter is written in Greek as we have no one who knows Hebrew [or Aramaic]" (Yadin: 130). This is, if anything, even more striking in relation to the prevalence of Greek since speaking Greek was regarded by many conservative Jews as a sign of defection to the Hellenists. The explanation is clearly in response to conservative sensibilities.

These archeological data are the most striking of the widespread attestations of Greek material in Palestine in the time of Jesus. Furthermore, the evidence in regard to Galilee indicates that, with the exception of Jerusalem itself, Greek was used more widely in "Galilee of the Gentiles" than elsewhere in Palestine. This makes sense since Galilee was on the boundary between Palestine and the northern and eastern countries dominated by Greek

culture. Finally, the extensive use of Greek is a sign of the degree to which Hellenistic culture had permeated Galilee in this period (see also Downing 1987, 1988; Mack: 65-66; Crossan: 19-324; Kee: 15).

Jesus' Language

Both this general evidence and specific episodes in the records of Jesus' life indicate that he may have spoken Greek as a second or third language after Aramaic and Hebrew. There are reports of Jesus' conversations with Gentiles in the Gospels: the centurion (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:6-10); the Syro-Phoenician woman, whom Mark calls "a Greek" (Mark 7:24-30; Matt 15:21-28); and Pilate (Matt 27:1.1-14; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:3; John 18:33-19:11). It is highly unlikely that any of these persons would have known Aramaic or Hebrew. In the absence of any translators, these conversations were only possible if Jesus spoke Greek. There are, however, significant historical questions in relation to these reports. In Luke's version of the centurion story, Jesus never speaks with the centurion directly but only through mediators who could have also been translators. Whether the version of Luke or Matthew, in which Jesus speaks directly to the centurion, is more historically accurate is difficult to determine. In the Pilate trial narratives, only in John does Jesus say more than two words in Greek to Pilate. The Syro-Phoenician woman episode is only recorded in Mark and Matthew and may have been generated by Mark's interest in including Gentiles in Jesus' mission.

Thus, while the evidence from the Gospels at most indicates a probability that Jesus spoke some Greek, the emerging picture of language use in Galilee makes it more likely. John Meier's conclusion seems accurate: "Jesus regularly and perhaps exclusively taught in Aramaic, his Greek being of a practical, business type, and perhaps rudimentary to boot" (268). In light of the growing evidence of the prevalence of Greek in Palestine among Jews, however, it is possible to suggest that he did teach in Greek as well as in Aramaic to some Greek-speaking groups of Jews.

This heterodox language situation in Galilee is also reflected in the names of Jesus' disciples. Andrew, Philip, and Bartholomew are familiar Greek names; Simon can be derived from the Hebrew Simeon, but was also a widely-attested Greek name; likewise Thomas can be derived from the Aramaic for "twin," but was also a widely attested Greek name. Thus, Jesus' disciples reflected a wide range of definitions of what it meant to be Jewish, including having a Greek name.

The question of Jesus' ability to read is in some ways more difficult. The rates of literacy in Galilee during this period can only be inferred on the basis of comparative data. On the basis of Harris' data, it would be difficult to think of literacy rates higher than ten percent in Galilee. Meier rightly observes that Judaism in this period had generated written Scriptures, which fostered high respect for literacy. And while it was fully possible to be a Jew who was unable to read, the practice of the religion was increasingly organized around reading and discussing sacred texts (Meier: 258-59). That is, there was a growing Jewish literate culture in the first century.

The only credible evidence in the Gospels that Jesus may have been literate is his conversations with scribes and Pharisees about the interpretation of the Scriptures. The specific stories in the Gospels that present Jesus as literate are historically ambiguous. Luke's story of Jesus reading in the Nazareth synagogue, not present in Matthew and Mark, is the most explicit account of Jesus' literacy. The distinctiveness of Luke's version, the composite character of the Isaiah text, and the presence of Lukan motifs are, however, signs of Lukan composition (see Fitzmyer 1981:526-28). The Lukan narrative is, therefore, an uncertain source of historical information since it is an integral part of the editor's portrayal of Jesus as a literate teacher. The story in John 8:6 of Jesus drawing on the ground proves nothing about

his ability to write, even if it is a historically reliable tradition, since nothing is specified about what he drew. However, the question of the Jerusalem skeptics in John 7: 15-"How does this fellow know his letters [know how to read: **γράμματα οἴοεν**] when he has not studied?" -has no obvious redactional motive. It reflects the overall picture of Jesus in the Gospels as a person with a solid knowledge of Scripture and skill in interpretation that was frequently tested. In the absence of other figures in Judaism in this period who had this reputation and were illiterate, the most probable explanation is that this text reflects a tradition of Jesus as literate.

John Meier has investigated the question of Jesus' literacy, first in relation to these texts and then in relation to the broader context of Jewish education in the period. While the state of Jewish education in the first century is unclear, there is no doubt that there was an extensive community of scriptural debate in Palestinian Judaism in which virtually all streams of Gospel tradition show Jesus as a skilled participant. While it was possible to know the Scriptures from hearing them read in the synagogue, the range of knowledge and distinctiveness of interpretation reflected in the conflict stories is most naturally explained by Jesus having the ability to read the texts himself. Meier concludes as follows:

... general considerations about first-century Palestinian Judaism, plus the consistent witness of many different streams of Gospel tradition about Jesus' teaching activity, plus the indirect evidence from John 7:15 make it likely that Jesus could both read the Hebrew Scriptures and engage in disputes about their meaning (278).

Thus, it is probable that Jesus was literate.

The literacy of the disciples is doubtful. In Acts 4, Peter and John are described as **ἀγραμματοί**, which characterizes them as at least unable to write but probably as illiterate. There are no explicit signs that any of the disciples were literate, although the possibility is that Levi, the tax collector, was at least able to handle written records. It is highly unlikely, however, that literacy was a requirement for discipleship. Unlike the rabbinic schools of the post-70 period, which were located in a place and could have books, Jesus taught his disciples on the move; there are no indications that they carried scrolls with them. Finally, John Dominic Crossan's recent study of the historical Jesus pursues a radically different methodology for the quest, which has yielded surprising results. When the available data about Jesus of Nazareth is compared with the various movements in the world of the period, the highest degree of congruence both in lifestyle and modes of thought is with the Cynics. Crossan distinguishes between upper-class, urban, literate Cynics and the lower-class, peasant variety whose literacy is improbable (84-88), in which class Jesus presumably falls. It is not necessarily valid, however, to extend these broad generalizations about Cynic lifestyles to a particular Jewish teacher. In my view, the overall picture is that Jesus adopted aspects of the ways of the Cynics in a highly distinctive Jewish way that in no way excludes literacy. This congruence between Jesus and a broad philosophical movement in the Greco-Roman world is another indication of the degree to which Jesus of Nazareth can be seen within the overall framework of the Galilean Hellenistic literate culture.

Thus, Jesus' ministry was far more complex than that of a simple Galilean peasant who taught Aramaic parables to other Jewish peasants. The world of Jesus' day was going through a major shift in communications and culture. There is abundant evidence that this shift was happening in Galilee, as well as elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. In that cultural world, Jesus was a teacher who was probably literate, who spoke Aramaic, some Greek, and probably also Hebrew. His level of literacy was probably relatively low and did not include the ability to write. His ability to read was probably largely centered on reading the already orally familiar Scriptures. For example, he probably did not read Greek philosophical

literature of the period. Whether he had read Jewish works written in Greek, such as Enoch, appears initially unlikely, but the influence of apocalyptic on Jesus' teaching leaves open the possibility.

JESUS AS TEACHER

The Socratic Analogy

Even if Jesus was literate to some degree, spoke Greek, and was in dialogue with Hellenistic culture, how could he have been the seminal figure in the establishment of a movement that participated so rapidly and thoroughly in the culture of literacy when he himself wrote nothing? The search for a clue to the puzzle of Jesus' role in relation to orality and literacy leads to Socrates. Socrates' role in the formation of the literate culture of Athens was seminal. He accomplished the essential task of enabling his students to think constructively in the patterns and forms of the emerging culture of literacy. In order to do this, he did not need to write but rather used oral speech in a new way. The similarities between these two pivotal figures in antiquity are striking. Socrates, like Jesus, was an oral teacher who did not write but who trained followers who did write. In the writings of Plato, Socrates is the main character of the dialogues, just as Jesus is the main character of, for example, Matthew's Gospel. Socrates anticipated a radically new age for which he prepared his students by the establishment of a new community, the Academy. He did this by forming their minds to think about ideas objectively in the manner of the age of literacy. And, like Jesus of Nazareth, Socrates was martyred for his role in initiating radical cultural and religious change.

Socrates' dialogues laid the foundations for the ways of knowing associated with literacy. In *Preface to Plato*, Eric Havelock argued that Plato banished the poets from the Republic because he wanted to break the ways of knowing that were characteristic of oral culture. Plato identifies Socrates as the person who established a new way of knowing. In Plato's writings, Socrates is steadily seeking to needle his dialogue partners into reflection on ideas, instead of continuing to identify uncritically with the heroes of the great poetic epics. Socrates' questions were a steady invitation to step back from the immediacy of experience and to reflect critically on the presuppositions and ideas that were implicit in the conversation. What Havelock calls the "separation of the knower from the known," in which the known can be examined as an object, is the essential turn of mind that makes it possible to participate in the world of literacy (Havelock 1963:197-233). Socrates and his student, Plato, invited persons to stand back from experience and to think objectively about ideas.

Furthermore, Plato's theory of forms shifts the definition of reality from the world of sense experience to the world of a priori ideas present in the mind. For Plato, the enemy was the centuries long practice of self-identification with oral tradition. As Havelock writes, "The net effect...of the theory of forms is to dramatize the split between the image-thinking of poetry and the abstract thinking of philosophy" (Havelock: 266). This Platonic move established the foundations for the communications culture of literacy over against the culture of orality (Szlezák).

Thus, prior to Jesus, at an earlier stage in the extension of literacy in Hellenistic culture, Socrates was another seminal figure who was fully literate but did not write. In a radically different context, Socrates established the foundations for the development of literate culture and its ways of knowing.

The Parabolic Teaching of Jesus

Did Jesus in any analogous manner develop a way of knowing that was seminal in the establishment of a movement within Judaism that became rapidly literate? As with Socrates, there is no evidence that Jesus wrote. Furthermore, the teachings of both men were composed for oral transmission. The form of Socrates' oral teaching, the dialogue, is the most visible sign of the new epistemology of the culture of literacy. The characteristic form of Jesus' teaching was the parable.

Bernard Brandon Scott's recent comprehensive study of the parables has clarified the distinctiveness of Jesus' parables. Against the background of the Hebrew Bible, the parables are related to the *mashal*, any saying that is "proverblike." The *mashal* utilizes connotative language, is memorable through the use of metaphors and vivid images, and is typical and representative rather than context-specific (Scott: 13). In Jesus' usage, however, the parable is, to use Scott's definition, "a *mashal* that employs a short narrative fiction ... " (8). While Nathan's warning to David and Ezekiel's tale of the eagle are developments toward parable, Scott rightly concludes: "no *mashal* in the Hebrew Bible directly parallels parable as a short narrative" (13).

Furthermore, Jesus' use of the form of parable is distinctive when compared with the traditions that can be reasonably identified with the Pharisees of the pre-70 CE period. Jacob Neusner's survey of pre-70 Pharisaic traditions finds wisdom sentences in the tradition, but not parables: "As to other sorts of Wisdom literature, such as riddles, parables, fables of animals or trees, and allegories, we find nothing comparable in the materials before us" (1972: 360). The parable is used extensively as a form of scriptural exegesis in the Palestinian (400 CE) and Babylonian (600 CE) Talmuds and occurs in the Tosephta (twelve instances) and the Mishnah (one parable). This use of parable is both later than and distinct from that found in the Jesus tradition (Scott: 13-18). Thus, when seen as a whole, the traditions of Jesus are distinctive in the centrality and uniqueness of the form of parable.

Recent literary-critical research on the parables from a variety of perspectives has come to a surprisingly wide consensus about the overall effect of Jesus' characteristic form of teaching. From Jeremias's traditions history reconstruction to Scott's recent literary critical study, a common theme is that the parables are shocking and profoundly paradoxical. The question is whether this shock can be seen as a new epistemology that is in any way structural to Jesus' parables.

Two characteristic elements in the structure of Jesus' parables that have emerged in recent study are the reversal of expectation and hyperbole. Sometimes only one of these elements occurs, as in the hyperbolic celebration of the shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep or the reversal of expectations in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Frequently, however, both reversal and hyperbole are present, as in the celebration of the younger son's return in the prodigal son or in the punishment of the "one-talent" servant. What, then, is the epistemological effect of these two characteristic elements in Jesus' parables?

An analysis of the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) reveals a dynamic structure that is characterized by what can be called epistemological shock. The parable begins by leading the audience into the rich man's dilemma-"What am I going to do?"- and decision-"I know what I'll do."¹² The function of an extensive inside view is to invite involvement:

¹² The inside views of the shrewd steward's dilemma (Luke 16:4) and the prodigal son's meditation (Luke 15:17-19) have introductory formulas similar to the inside view of the rich man. Furthermore, the structure of the rich man's speech (12:17-18) is the same as the shrewd steward's (16:3-4): "What am I going to do ... I know what I'll do ... " These verbal and structural similarities in each case invite listener involvement with the character's dilemma.

What will I do, since I have nowhere to store my crops? I know what I'll do: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry!" (Luke 12:17-19).

Jesus' listeners were invited to enter into the rich man's problem and his joyful anticipation of being free from any anxiety about the necessities of life. In its oral performance, this section of the parable probably moved from the rich man's quiet meditation on his problem to the boisterous celebration of his plan. The structure of the internal dialogue inside the rich man's mind – question, answer, and address to his soul – is an appeal to the listener to enter into the mind of the rich man and to experience his dilemma, his solution, and his celebration of freedom from anxiety. It is from this place inside the rich man's mind that the listener hears God's judgment: "But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (Luke 12:20). In the oral reading or telling of the parable, God's speech is experienced as being addressed directly to each listener.

The parable is structured as a highly-charged shock to the listeners. The combination of hyperbolic judgment in the sentence of death and the reversal of expectations from a long life of ease to sudden death is psychologically and linguistically wrenching. Insofar as Jesus' listeners identified with the rich man, they experienced the possibility of instant and total reversal of fortune in the moment of hearing the word of God: "Fool!" The impact of this parable is far more than a point such as: "It is not wise to build up money as a strategy for abundant life in the future Kingdom of God" or "It is not wise to mismanage the miracle of God's abundant harvest by appropriating it for one's own self-interest." The parable shocks the listeners into reflection on their relationship to God and their attitudes about wealth. The reversal forces the listeners to stand back suddenly from preoccupation with the "real world" and to think from a radically different perspective.

The effect of the parable, then, is what could be called an alienation effect: it creates a high degree of separation or mental distance between the listener and everyday experience. The ones who are seeking knowledge about the Reign of God are suddenly distanced from the object seeking to be known and are forced to think and reflect about their own assumptions. I would propose that this effect, this sudden shock, is the same epistemological move that Socrates made in asking questions of his interlocutors. In place of sympathetic identification with the people of Israel escaping from Egypt and entering the promised land as a way of knowing the Reign of God, the experience of hearing Jesus' parable was a sudden reversal of expectations that created psychological distance and demanded reflection. Jesus' parable makes the same basic epistemological move in knowing the Reign of God as Socrates' dialogues in knowing the world of the forms. It is the foundational epistemological move of the literate culture of Hellenism: the turn of mind away from the experiential ways of knowing associated with oral culture to the reflective ways of knowing associated with literacy.

Is this alienation effect characteristic of Jesus' parables? A similar dynamic structure can be found in a number of parables in which there is an appeal for identification with characters who are sympathetic or gifted at the beginning and who are radically criticized or condemned at the end: the parable of the vineyard/wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-11/Matt 21:33-44/Luke 20:9-18/Thomas 65); the unmerciful servant (Matt 18:23-35); the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16); the great banquet and the guest without a wedding garment (Matt 22:1-14/Luke 14:16-24/Thomas 64); the faithful/unfaithful servant (Matt 24:45-51/Luke 12:42-46); the ten virgins (Matt 25:1-13); the talents (Matt 25:14-30/Luke 19:12-27); the last judgment (Matt 25:31-46); the prodigal son, in which the climactic emphasis is on the elder

son (Luke 15:11-32); and the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Variations on this structure occur in the parable of the dishonest steward (Luke 16:1-9), in which a character with whom the listener is invited to identify is first condemned and then surprisingly praised, and the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35), in which there is a primary reversal of audience expectations in the actions of the priest/Levite and the Samaritan.

The effect or impact of these parables is the same as that of the parable of the rich fool. The parable invites the listeners to enter into a situation in which a character is initially presented positively but is condemned in the parable's final turn. The distinctiveness of these short narrative fictions is that the puzzle or paradox of the reversal is necessarily connected with the audience's understanding of the Reign of God. Jesus' parables have the same effect as Socrates' questions: they require the audience to reflect from a position of psychological distance.

The question then is whether the new epistemology implicit in the parables can be traced back to Jesus. Undoubtedly, many of the parables have been shaped by subsequent redactors. The dynamic structure is, however, so pervasive in the parables that it is highly improbable that the redactors created it. The higher probability is that this was a pattern of oral teaching that Jesus established and that the redactors preserved to varying degrees. Thus, what can be identified here is the deep structure of a distinctive way of teaching about God.

In a seminal essay, Ernst Käsemann proposed that the origins of theology are to be found in apocalyptic: "Apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology - since we cannot really class the preaching of Jesus as theology" (Käsemann: 102). What Käsemann calls "apocalyptic" is essentially cosmic, holistic thinking. In apocalyptic the key question is: "to whom does the sovereignty of the world belong?" Thus, one might rephrase Käsemann: reflection on cosmic questions was the beginning of Christian theology.

As a result of his rejection of the authenticity of the third person Son of Man sayings, and indeed all of the apocalyptic sayings of Jesus, as creations of the early church, Käsemann sees the beginnings of theology only in the writings of Paul. The primary evidence of apocalyptic modes of thought in the teachings of Jesus is not, however, in the apocalyptic sayings, but in the parables. The structure of epistemological shock identified above is directly related to the cosmic modes of apocalyptic thought. The essential characteristic of the parables is thinking back from the end of time into the present. The parable of the last judgment is the most explicit in its cosmic, apocalyptic content, but each of the parables listed above has this holistic perspective. The shocking reversals of the parables communicate a new understanding of the character of God's sovereignty in cosmic time.

Jesus' development of the dynamic structures of the parable was, therefore, directly related to the epistemological sources of theology. Just as Socrates developed styles of argumentation in his dialogues, which led to the full emergence of philosophy, so Jesus developed a style of oral discourse in his parables that led to the development of theology. Jesus' oral discourse was characterized by a dynamic structure that shocked listeners into reflection and an implicit demand for thought that was cosmic in scale. Jesus developed a way of interpreting the tradition of Israel's religion that was both congruent with the tradition and viable in the emerging literate culture. The clearest sign of its viability in literate culture is the impact of Jesus' parables in the two millennia of Western civilization. Whether his teaching was faithful to the traditions of Israel is an ongoing debate.

DIRECTIONS

When seen against the background of the communications systems of the Hellenistic world and the religion of Israel in the second temple period, the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth can be interpreted as moving toward a literate religious culture. Obviously, this

inquiry is only an initial exploration of a certain direction in research. The initial results suggest that a clearer picture of the broad developments of the communications systems of orality and literacy in the ancient world may modify our understanding of Jesus' relationship to the formation of Christianity. If, for example, Jesus established the epistemological foundations for a form of Judaism that was viable in Hellenistic literate culture and in a literate communications system, there may be deeper lines of continuity between Jesus and Paul than were previously recognized. From this perspective, Paul simply developed what Jesus had already initiated.

Furthermore, a clearer picture of the history of religious communications systems may help to clarify the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees as the predecessors of the nascent movements that became Judaism and Christianity in the post-70 CE period. Both of the Jewish sectarian movements that survived the war developed new and viable ways of maintaining faithfulness to the God of Israel in the midst of literate Hellenistic culture. The study of communications systems may shed new light on the common problem they faced and the different approaches they developed. Thus, the decision of the rabbis to disassociate rabbinic Judaism from most of the literary heritage of the second temple period made sense as an effort to control the impact of the new habits of mind and the patterns of communication associated with Hellenistic literate culture that were changing Israel's tradition. Likewise, the decision of early Christian Jews to develop further the literary traditions of the second temple period in a manner that would invite the Hellenistic literate world to participate in the monotheism of the religion of Israel also makes sense.

When the interaction of oral and written communications in antiquity is seen as the interaction of communications systems instead of simply as a neutral stage in the formation, transmission, and meaning of individual literary works, the outline of a different picture of Jesus of Nazareth emerges. The image is somewhat more literate and is set against a more thoroughly Greek background. The picture also reveals more lines of connection with Paul and the early church than have appeared in the past. These lines appear because the basic transition from orality and literacy in the culture of antiquity happened before rather than between them. The Jewish sects that survived in the literate culture of the future did so because they formed new systems of thought and communication. In this picture, Jesus and Paul were both working on the same task. Furthermore, when this image of Jesus is seen against the background of the watershed of orality and literacy in antiquity, it can be seen that he established a distinctive style of communication that made a form of Judaism viable in the emerging culture of literacy.

WORKS CONSULTED

Achtemeier, Paul

- 1990 "Omnes verbum sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity." *JBL* 109:3-27.

Alexander, Lovejoy

- 1990 "The Living Voice: Scepticism Towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Graeco-Roman Texts." pp. 221-47 in *The Bible in Three Dimensions*. JSOT, Sup 87. Ed. D. J. A. Clines. Sheffield: JSOT.

Argyle, Aubrey W.

- 1955 "Did Jesus Speak Greek?" *Exp Tim* 67:91-93.

Baines, John

- 1992 "Literacy (ANE)." Pp. 333-37 in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4. New York: Doubleday.

Barbour, R S.

- 1972 *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels*. London: SPCK.

Batey, Richard

- 1991 *Jesus and the Forgotten City: New Light on Sepphoris and the Urban World of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Braun, Herbert

- 1979 *Jesus of Nazareth: The Man and His Time*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Bultmann, Rudolph

- 1951 *Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Scribner's.
1963 *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. New York Harper & Row.
1967 "Das Verhältnis der urchrlstlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus." Pp. 445-69 in *Exegetica*. Ed. E. Dinkler. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.

Carey, James W.

- 1989 *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Charlesworth, James H., Ed.

- 1983 *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Crossan, John Dominic

- 1991 *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco.

Czitrom, Daniel J.

- 1982 *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Daniélou, Jean

1965 *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*. Philadelphia: Westminster.

Delia, J.

1987 "Communication Research: A History." Pp. 20-98 in *Handbook of Communication Science*. Ed. Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Downing, F. Gerald

1987 *Jesus and the Threat of Freedom*. London: SCM.

1988 *The Christ and the Cynics*. Sheffield: JSOT.

Eco, Umberto

1986 *Travels in Hyperreality*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Farrell, Thomas J.

1991 "An Overview of Walter J. Ong's Work." Pp.25-43 in *Media, Consciousness, and Culture: Explorations of Walter Ong's Thought*. Ed. Bruce E. Gronbeck, Thomas J. Farrell, Paul A. Soukup. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fiske, John

1982. *Introduction to Communications Studies*. New York: Methuen.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A.

1979 *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*. Missoula: Scholars.

1981 *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Francis, Sir Frank C.

1980 "Library." Pp. 856-67 in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 10. London: Helen Hemingway Benton.

Hadas, Moses

1972. *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion*. New York: Norton.

Hahn, Ferdinand

1965 *Mission in the New Testament*. Naperville, IL: Allenson.

1974 "Methodische Oberlegungen zur Rückfrage nach Jesus." pp. 11-77 in *Rückfrage nach Jesus*. Ed. K. Kertelge. Munich: Kaiser.

Harnack, Adolf von

1924 *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*. 4th ed. Leipzig: Hinrichs.

1926 *Die Briefsammlung des Apostel Paulus*. Leipzig: Hinrichs.

Harris, William V.

1989 *Ancient Literacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hartman, Lars

1986 "On Reading Others' Letters." Pp. 137-46 in *Christians Among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*. Ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg and G. W. MacRae. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Harvey, F. D.

1966 "Literacy in the Athenian Democracy." *Revue des etudes Greques* 79:585-635.

Havelock, Eric A.

1963 *Preface to Plato*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

1982 *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Heitmillier, Wilhelm

1912 "Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus." *ZNW* 13:320-327.

1972 "Hellenistic Christianity Before Paul." Pp. 308-19 in *The Writings of St. Paul*. Ed; Wayne Meeks. New York: Norton.

Hengel, Martin

1974 *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Hellenistic Period*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

1976 "Hellenisierung als literarisches, philosophisches, sprachliches und religioes Problem" and "Die Obernahme griechischer Sprache und Bildung durch die jiidische Diaspora im ptolemaischen Agypten." pp. 94-115 and 126-44 in *Juden, Griechen und Barbaren: Aspekte der Hellenisierung des Judentums in vorchristlicher Zeit*. SBS 76. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk.

Horsley, Richard A.

1987 *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine*. New York: Harper & Row.

Humphrey, J. H., ed.

1991 *Literacy in the Roman World*. *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Supplementary Series 3. Ann Arbor, MI.

Innis, Harold.

1951 *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press .

1972 *Empire and Communications*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Jones, A. H. M.

1940 *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Jüthner, Julius

1923 *Hellenen und Barbaren*. Leipzig: Teubner.

Kähler, Martin

1964 *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Biblical Christ of Faith*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Käsemann, Ernst

1969 *New Testament Questions of Today*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Kee, Howard Clark

- 1992 "Early Christianity in the Galilee: Reassessing the Evidence from the Gospels." Pp. 3-22 in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*. Ed. Lee Levine. New York and Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary.

Kelber, Werner

- 1983 *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul and Q*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Klein, Ralph W.

- 1992 "Books of Ezra-Nehemiah." Pp. 731-42 in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2. New York: Doubleday.

Lévi.-Strauss, Claude

- 1973 *Tristes Tropiques*. Trans. John & Doreen Weightman. New York: Atheneum.

Lord, Albert B.

- 1978 *The Singer of Tales*. New York: Atheneum.

Lowery, Shearon A. and Melvin L. DeFleur

- 1983 *Milestones in Mass Communications Research: Media Effects*. New York: Longman.

Ludemann, Gerd

- 1980 "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity." Pp. 161-73,245-54 in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*. Ed. E. P. Sanders. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Mack, Burton L.

- 1988 *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

MacMullen, Ramsay

- 1974 *Roman Social Relations 50 B.C.-A.D. 284*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Maccoby, Hyam

- 1986 *The Myth-maker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity*. New York: Harper & Row.

Marrou, Henri Irene

- 1982 *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

McLuhan, Marshall

- 1964 *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Meier, John P.

- 1991 *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. New York: Doubleday.

Meyers, Eric and James F. Strange

- 1981 *Archeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Millard, A. R.

1992 "Literacy (Israel)." Pp. 337-40 in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4. New York: Doubleday.

Momigliano, Arnaldo ,

1975 *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Neusner, Jacob

1972 "Types and Forms in Ancient Jewish Literature: Some Comparisons." *HR* 11:354-90.

1978 "Comparing Judaisms: Essay-Review of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* by E. P. Sanders," *HR* 18:177-91.

1984 *Invitation to the Talmud*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Harper and Row

1985 *The Memorized Torah: The Mnemonic System of the Torah*. Chico, CA:

Scholars.

1987 *The Making of the Mind of Judaism*. Atlanta: Scholars.

1988 *The Formation of the Jewish Intellect*. Atlanta: Scholars.

Ong, Walter J.

1967 *The Presence of the Word*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

1982 *Orality and Literacy*. New York: Methuen.

1986 "Text as Interpretation: Mark and After." pp. 147-169 in *Oral Tradition in Literature: Interpretation in Context*. Ed. John Miles Foley. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

Overbeck, Franz

1882 "Über die Anfänge der patristischen Literatur." *Historische Zeitschrift* 12:417-72.

Pattison, Robert

1982 *On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, Colin Henderson

1979 *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rostovtzeff, Mikail Ivanovich

1957 *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. 2nd .ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sanders, E. P.

1985 *Jesus and Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

1992 *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66CE*. Philadelphia: Trinity.

1993 "Jesus in Historical Context." *T Today* 50:429-48.

Sandmel, Samuel

1983 "Foreword for Jews." Pp. xi-xiii in *The Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. I. Ed. James H. Charlesworth. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Schoeps, Hans-Joachim

- 1949 *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentums*. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck.
1961 *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*. Philadelphia: Westminster.

Schiirer, Emil

- 1979 *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. II. Rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, et al. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

Schwabe, M.

- "Greek Inscriptions Found at Beth Shearim in the Fifth Excavation Season, 1953." *IEJ* 4:249-261.

Scott, Bernard Brandon

- 1989 *Hear Then the Parable*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Senior, Donald and Carroll Stuhlmueller

- 1983 *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Sevenster, J. N.

- 1968 *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?* NovTSup 19. Leiden: Brill.

Simon, Marcel

- 1948 *Verus Israel: Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'empire romain*. Paris: Boccard.
1972 "La Migration à Pella: Légende ou réalité?" in *Judéo-Christianisme: volume offert au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*. *RSR* 60:37-54.

Strecker, Georg

- 1971 "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity" Pp. 241-85 in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Ed. Walter Bauer. Philadelphia: Westminster.

Szlezák, Thomas Alexander

- 1985 *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Tam, William Woodthorpe

- 1956 *Alexander the Great*. Boston: Beacon.

Theissen, Gerd

- 1974 *Urchristliche Wundergeschichte: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*. Gütersloh: Mohn.

Thomas, Rosalind

- 1989 *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1992 *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vermes, Geza

- 1986 "Scripture and Oral Tradition in Judaism: Written and Oral Torah." Pp. 79-95 in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*. Ed. G. Baumann. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vielhauer, Philipp

- 1975 *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Wrede, William.

- 1907 *Paulus*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Yadin, Yigael

- 1971 *Bar-Kokhba*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Youtie, H. C.

- 1966 "Pétaus, fils de Pétaus, ou le scribe qui ne savait pas écrire." *Chronique d'Egypte* 41:127-43.

- 1971 "Agrammatos: An Aspect of Greek Society in Egypt," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 75:161-76.

- 1971 "Bradeos graphoth: Between Literacy and Illiteracy," *GRBS* 12:239-61.

- 1975 "Hypographeus: The Social Impact of Illiteracy in Graeco-Roman Egypt," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 17:201-21.