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**Can We Hear What They Heard?  
The Effect of Orality Upon a Markan Reading-Event**

by  
David F. Smith

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Durham  
2002**

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## Abstract

### *Can We Hear What They Heard?: The Effect of Orality upon a Markan Reading-Event*

David F. Smith

This dissertation arises from recent investigations in the field of orality and the potential that it has for Markan studies. Chapter one identifies the epistemological divide which separates a contemporary reading experience from one situated in the first century. Further, chapter one will focus this hermeneutical question upon the difference in how a text functions between a modern and an ancient literary critic; specifically, modern meaning versus ancient effect.

Chapter two seeks to survey the nature of communication in the New Testament world and how this information was created, stored, and conveyed to its audience. Furthermore, it will seek to identify what skills were required by the manuscript's creator, reader, and receiver(s). The goal is to define and develop the nature of a reading-event of antiquity.

Chapter three will continue our prolegomena to method with a description of the complex inter-relationship between a reader, an audience, and a manuscript in the ancient world. It will be defined as a partnership whereby their respective functions commingle as they create a communal reading-event. Next, an oral hermeneutic will be described in two parts. First, it will present a summary of the *historical reading-event* constructed from the previous chapters. Then, an oral/performative approach will be developed under the rubric of a *hypothetical reading-effect*. It will be an attempt to recreate the oral/aural aspects which alert the reader and the listeners to the story's movement. Furthermore, it will attempt to document the affective value of a hearer's encounter with the narrative.

Finally, chapter four will put into practice the aforementioned method to recreate a reading-event of the Second Gospel. We will explore how the text of Mark provides keys to the reader for how to orally present the Second Gospel. At the same time, our reading model will assist us to determine how the reading-event itself produces a controlled reading-effect upon a listening audience. Throughout the detailed work on Mark, we will attempt to show how an oral perspective reveals distinctive features which otherwise might be left unheard to silent readers.

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# 1

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## A Question of Hermeneutics

It is hoped that the modern reader - who inevitably approaches this subject with certain preconceptions as to what a 'book' should look like and how it is to be read - may be helped to form an idea of the fundamental differences between ancient and modern literary culture. . . . The modern reader, who is accustomed to taking in literature through the eye rather than through the ear, cannot be too frequently reminded that nearly all books discussed in history were written to be listened to.

E. J. Kenny, *Books and Readers in the Roman World*

A sincere reader is not so much instructed when he carefully analyzes [the text] as he is set on fire when he recites it with glowing feeling.

St. Augustine of Hippo, *Christian Instruction* 4.7.21

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### 1 PERSONAL REFLECTION

A number of years ago I read these words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "How shall we read the scriptures? In family devotions it is best that the various members thereof undertake the consecutive reading in turn. When this is done it will soon become apparent that *it is not easy to read the Bible aloud.*"<sup>1</sup> As I continued to read I was surprised with Bonhoeffer's conclusions. He argues that as one reads the Bible,

The more artless, the more objective, the more humble one's attitude toward the material is, the better will the reading accord with the subject. . . . It may be taken as a rule for the right reading (aloud) of the Scripture that the reader should never identify himself (*sic*) with the person who is speaking in the Bible. . . . Otherwise I will become rhetorical, emotional, sentimental, or coercive and imperative; that is I will be directing the listener's attention to myself instead of to the Word. But this is to commit the worst of sins in presenting the scriptures.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1954), 55-56.

<sup>2</sup>Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 56. Thanks to Gilbert Bartholomew, "Feed My Lambs: John 21:15-19 as Oral Gospel," *Semeia* 39 (1987), 93 n11 for reminding me of this passage. Bonhoeffer takes this one step

Bonhoeffer's humility arises out of his desire to honor the scriptures against misinterpretation. His notion of pursuing an "artless" and an "objective" reading will direct the listener's attention away from the reader onto the Word. Yet Bonhoeffer's conclusions can subtly cause readers and listeners to disengage their hearts (emotions) as they approach the Living Word. Furthermore, evidence from antiquity undermines Bonhoeffer's preference of reading style for the scriptures. As a matter of fact, ancient reading demonstrated a flair for the dramatic as the reader, text, and the listening audience each played integral roles in the reception of the Word.<sup>3</sup>

Sandra Schneiders is Bonhoeffer's mirror image as she argues that the practice of reading aloud is a hermeneutical key to unlock one's understanding of a text.

Just to read a text aloud, meaningfully, is to interpret it. Where one places the emphasis, how one phrases the sentences, where and how one pauses, and so on constitute an interpretation. It suffices to listen to different preachers read the line from the Johannine passion account, "What is truth?" spoken by Pilate to Jesus (John 18:38), to realize how integral to reading is interpretation. Did Pilate speak cynically, pensively, sarcastically, dismissively, longingly? Was he asking the question of Jesus, or of himself, or was he challenging the bystanders? Did he say it aloud to all present or musingly? How one reads this line depends on how one has interpreted the entire interaction between Pilate and Jesus up to this point but also the effect of what follows this scene on one's interpretation of the scene. The way one reads the line constitutes an interpretation of the entire trial scene.<sup>4</sup>

These two opposing views brought to my attention the interpretative value of hearing the gospel, an effect which my visually trained reading style has long overlooked. Moreover, a cursory examination of this oral/aural phenomenon caused me to realize that hearing the gospel read aloud was the communication system

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further as he states, "Proper reading of Scripture is not a technical exercise that can be learned; it is something that grows or diminishes according to one's own spiritual frame of mind" (56-57).

<sup>3</sup>Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 163-68.

<sup>4</sup>Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpretation the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 125-126.

available to the ancient world, not the modern technique of silently reading the text from a printed page. Two obvious questions arose for me. First, did this shift of media, from voice to text, in some fashion reify the meaning and effects of the spoken word? And if so, does this introduce to some degree, a hermeneutical distortion of the gospel itself? This thesis is driven by a corollary question, has our contemporary internalization of print so altered our conception of and relationship to the gospel that we have become alienated from a first century manuscript society?<sup>5</sup> If true, is our only recourse to interpret first century documents through modern methodologies based upon principles which were ontologically and epistemologically foreign to the original authors and audiences of the gospels? Staley, assuming this to be true, asks the question,

[I]f, as Ong argues, we have internalized writing and print so much so that it has changed our entire way of interacting with the world, then what specific effects might this technology have had upon biblical exegesis and hermeneutics in the recent past, and how might an awareness of its impact upon the human psyche help today's biblical scholar to address the text in new and creative ways?"<sup>6</sup>

Staley lauds where we are as modern readers, affirming the current status of "word technology," and "will employ Reader Response Criticism [which] focuses upon a form of discourse which is indebted to the internalization of writing and print."<sup>7</sup> His work is a creative push forward in interpreting the Fourth Gospel utilizing modern reading methods. However, I am convinced that beginning the investigation with a

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<sup>5</sup>Jeffrey L. Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 3. Staley argues in his introduction that issues such as inerrancy, intertextuality, and even the Synoptic problem might be related to the problems raised by the internalization of print.

<sup>6</sup>Staley, *The Print's First Kiss*, 3. Walter Ong, "Writing Restructures Consciousness," in *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 78-116.

<sup>7</sup>Staley, *The Print's First Kiss*, 4.

methodology which intentionally ignores the impact of a text's original oral medium is problematic.<sup>8</sup>

The German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, in *Truth and Method* argues that when method controls the investigation, it may lead to accurate data but not necessarily to the truth.

Method, understood as a preestablished set of procedures for investigating some phenomenon, in fact not only *attains* its object but *creates* its object. In other words, it determines a priori what kind of data can be obtained and will be considered relevant . . . Method not only assures a systematic coverage of certain areas of investigation; it also rules out of court any data not discoverable by that method.<sup>9</sup>

If Gadamer is right, study cannot begin on the basis of method alone, for it will systematically exclude a whole range of questions which are essential to an overall hermeneutical approach. Thus, my desire is to start with the manuscript culture and communications systems of the first century. Thus, prior to applying a method to our reading of the text, we must first establish a historically accurate theory of reading. Not in an abstract, linguistic sense; nor in a post-Gutenberg print oriented reading experience but in a first century mode which will allow us to experience the story of Mark in a manner comparable to the original audience.<sup>10</sup> Analyzing this statement in reverse order, this thesis places itself under the realm of the social situation in the first

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<sup>8</sup>Staley himself states this neglect when he says, "We have chosen to study the text in its original language [Greek] but not its original medium, i.e., chirography. As we have noted earlier, the medium of print carries with it its own peculiar conventions" (36 n66). Thus, Staley's interpretation overlooks two stages of media shift; from oral to chirographic and from chirographic to print.

<sup>9</sup>Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 23-24, emphasis original, paraphrases Gadamer.

<sup>10</sup>At this point in the investigation, I use the term "original audience" in a generic fashion, speaking more to the time period than to a specific people or place. I understand the complex problems inherent with the issues surrounding identification of a specific audience. However, I expand the term beyond an isolated social setting (i.e., a group in Rome facing impending persecution or an agrarian society in Galilee) to a generic first century community in which the Gospel of Mark was presented and received orally. Furthermore, I am making another assumption, that the Gospel of Mark was never intended for a specific closed community but for a much wider, multi-faceted community (Cf. *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard Bauckham [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998]).

century world with the original audience. At this point I am not concerned with defining the exact time (pre- or post-temple destruction in 70 C.E.) or the precise location (Judea, Galilee, or Rome) of the text's early recipients; merely the era. It was a time and a place so remote from our contemporary world that anachronisms are prone to surface without recognizing them, just as Bonhoeffer's *Zeitgeist* influenced his approach to reading more than the literary culture which gave birth to the New Testament.

Second, it is the experience of the story of Mark which lures me. Yet I do not limit Mark simply to the story as preserved in a text. For, if we carefully engage Mark in its first century manuscript culture, we will find that a text does not stand in isolation. It cries out for a reader to deliver the words. Further, it implies an audience to hear and interact with the story, providing tangible elements of feedback for the reader as it communicates meaning beyond the words on the page. Thus, with Mark, I assume a triad of participants consisting of reader, audience, and story all contributing difference facets to the reading experience. This partnership of reader, audience, and story creates what I will call a "reading-event." Thus, my desire is recreate an ancient encounter with Mark.

## 2 OVERVIEW OF APPROACH

The first three chapters of this thesis will attempt to situate the Markan narrative in its historical and cultural setting as it documents the communication techniques available in proclaiming the gospel message to a first century audience(s). The first chapter serves as a preface to the work as it identifies the epistemological divide which separates a contemporary reading experience from one of antiquity. For example, today a text is handled physically by individual readers who visually assimilate its contents in relative silence. Conversely, in antiquity, a manuscript was read aloud, by a reader to a listening audience in a public forum. Chapter 1 will begin by describing some of the typographical presuppositions a modern interpreter must overcome prior to experiencing Mark in a manner analogous to a first century audience.

Further, Chapter 1 will raise a specific hermeneutical question, was there a pronounced difference between the goal of an ancient literary critic and one in modern times? To simplify the question, the chief concern of modern approaches is to expound the meaning of the text. The critic's central tenet assumes that until a text is rightly understood it cannot be properly evaluated. Thus, the text is first to be interpreted and only then to be evaluated. However, the handbooks of rhetorical teachers from the first century were not so concerned with the precise meanings of a text as they were with describing the multiplicity of effects a story may create within their listening audience. When posed with this modern-ancient dilemma, George Kennedy said, "Aristotle, in *Poetics* has nothing to say about the political or philosophical meaning of the Greek Tragedies, the principal subjects of modern interpreters, but he is clearly interested in the effect of pity and fear on the audience. . . [A]ncient critics, rhetorical critics in particular, often neglected 'meaning' for 'effect.'"<sup>11</sup> The second chapter, building upon the premises established by the first, seeks to survey and document the nature of communication in the New Testament world. The chapter will define the nature of an

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<sup>11</sup>Personal correspondence with George A. Kennedy, 19 February, 1999.

ancient reading-event and what skills were required by the manuscript's creator, reader, and listener(s) and whether the skills were individually possessed or held by the community as a whole. Specifically, this task will be carried out by answering two separate but closely related questions. First, what was the technology at work in the realm of communications in the first century and second, what was the function of writing in a time often described by scholars as an essentially oral environment?

The first two chapters lay a foundation that first century communication was primarily oral. This presupposition in no way disregards or devalues the extensive use of written texts during the decades before and after the time of Jesus. Nor does it deny that the New Testament texts were written and soon became the main repository for preserving and transmitting the apostles' teaching. Nor does an argument which proposes the primacy of oral communication ignore the awesome power which authorities exerted over the Greco-Roman world by means of the written word. On the contrary, for the purpose of this thesis, describing the first century as an oral-rhetorical environment is simply observing a cultural phenomenon: the origin of communication was predominantly oral (dictation) and the end result was the living voice of a speaker. Writing served primarily as a means of preserving and transporting the *viva vox*. Thus, oral communication does not imply an ignorance of the function or the power which writing held in the ancient world, rather an understanding that communication in the first century culminated in the oral/aural realm.

Thus, chapter three will continue our prolegomena to method; a description of the complex inter-relationship between a reader, an audience, and a manuscript in the ancient world. We will demonstrate that they established a partnership whereby their respective functions commingled as they created a "community reading-event." It will be in the context of this oral/aural experience that we will pose the question, what methodological approach would be appropriate for interpreting an ancient manuscript that was meant to be heard by its audience? Further, this penultimate chapter further will argue that any critical methodology which bases its interpretation primarily upon

the careful visual inspection of the biblical text, all the while neglecting its oral/aural origin and presentation, is inherently introducing media anachronisms.

Thus, the oral hermeneutic presented in the latter half of the third chapter will be described in two parts. First, we will present a summary of the *historical reading-event* constructed from the previous chapters. Then, we will develop an oral critical/performance critical approach under the rubric of *hypothetical reading-effect*. It will be an attempt to re-create the oral/aural aspects which alert the reader on how to present the story to the listening audience. Furthermore, it will attempt to document the affective value of a hearer's encounter with the narrative. This aspect has long been neglected in biblical studies, in part due to the interpreter's inability to set up adequate controls while discussing the text's meaning and its affective impact upon a listener. Thus, it seems only appropriate to use a method which addresses the text with similar affective expectations as the critics of antiquity, such as Longinus, Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and Quintilian.

Finally, chapter four will put into practice the aforementioned method. We will examine large blocks of material investigating book-level Markan themes and we will focus upon specific passages in the passion narrative to see if an oral approach might help return the story of Mark to the feel of a divine drama in the midst of its people. Throughout the application of this reading model we will point out the differences between a modern "bookish" literary technique and the results of an ancient reading-event.

### 3 THE HERMENEUTICAL QUESTION

A simple story may help. A traveler spent the night in a small West Texas town. He joined a group of men who were quietly sitting on the porch of the general store. After several vain attempts to start a conversation, he asked, "Is there a law against talking in this town?" "No law against it," said one old-timer. "We just like to make sure it's an improvement on silence."<sup>12</sup>

Silence is the only game in town in contemporary biblical studies. The men on the porch, isolated scholars if you will, are surrounded by books, each fashioning a "fresh reading" of the biblical text, all the while overlooking a basic historic fact, the gospel was orally conceived and communicated. Furthermore, most accepted interpretative methodologies presuppose a typographic text, read silently. On the one hand, it would be arrogant to dismiss the work of scholars who have tilled the soil of Markan interpretation. On the other hand, "we have to consider what might be missing from these endless readings, namely, a sense of how these [biblical] texts would have been received as oral productions in the primitive church."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, we should not disregard the fact that with the first century's low literacy rate,<sup>14</sup> the expense of a handwritten text,<sup>15</sup> and the sheer difficulty of reading a text written in *scriptio continua*,<sup>16</sup> it was all but impossible for the listening audience of antiquity to reflect leisurely over a

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<sup>12</sup>Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), vii.

<sup>13</sup>Darryl Tippens, "Reading at Cockcrow: Oral Reception and Ritual Experience in Mark's Passion Narrative," *Essays in Literature* 20 (1993), 146.

<sup>14</sup>It is estimated that no more than five to ten percent of the population was literate, almost exclusively restricted to the elite or their servants. Cf., Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 10; William Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), 272.

<sup>15</sup>Joanna Dewey, "From Storytelling to Written Text," *BTB* 26 (1996), 73; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 232.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Achtemeier, "Omne Verbum Sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity," *JBL* 109 (1990), 10; William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word* (Cambridge: University Press, 1987), 34. For a discussion of the difficulty in mastering an ancient manuscript, cf. Chapter 2 of this thesis, Physical Form of Manuscript.

manuscript in a manner necessitated by a modern methodology. Thus, though most scholars acknowledge the existence of this cultural transmutation, something has prevented them from incorporating this phenomenon in a significant fashion into their interpretations. Stephen Moore argues that when we neglect the oral/aural feature, "Do we not transfer the psycho-cultural assumptions of a typographic (i.e., print-centered) culture back into the ancient oral and scribal context?"<sup>17</sup> Richard Rohrbaugh warns that

Human perception is selective, limited, culture-bound and prone to be unaware that it is any or all of the above. Cognitive maps with which we select, sort, and categorize complex data interpose themselves between the events and our interpretation of them whether we like it or not. The only real question may be whether we choose to raise this process to a conscious level and examine it or prefer to leave our biases alone.<sup>18</sup>

If I am to achieve the goal of encountering the story of Mark as the original audience did, the oral presentation must be integrated into the interpretative method.<sup>19</sup>

This raises a second problem associated with modern methodologies, if the Gospels were written to be heard, a text-alone approach tends to neglect the human element from the gospel presentation. I must be precise in my meaning since current trends in methodology assumes the reader will be active in the discovery of meaning.

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<sup>17</sup>Stephen Moore, *Literary Criticism and The Gospels* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 84.

<sup>18</sup>Richard Rohrbaugh, "Models and Muddles," *Foundations and Facets Forum* 3/22, 23-33, as quoted in Pieter J. J. Botha "The Task of Understanding the Gospel Traditions: Werner Kelber's Contribution to New Testament Research," *HTS* 46 (1990), 67.

<sup>19</sup>One particular methodology which I find simultaneously intriguing and troubling is Reader-Response, as practiced by Robert Fowler in his ground-breaking study, *Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (later published as *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark*, SBLDS [Chino, CA: Scholars Press, 1981]). Fowler has contributed much to unearth the structure and literary technique of the Markan feeding narratives. However, he deliberately sets aside the question of what the historical reader was like. His reader, as critiqued by Beavis (*Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4:11-12* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989], 16) "is a sort of a trans-historical entity, unaffected by factors of place, time, and culture." In the concluding remarks of his dissertation, Fowler states, "we have found it most refreshing to engage in a discussion of the implied community of the gospel, i.e. the community of those who read aright Mark's gospel. This particular community is one about which a critic may speak quite intelligibly; it is far more difficult to speak intelligibly about a supposed historical Christian community" (*Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark*, 220, emphasis added).

Umberto Eco, among other literary critics, affirm that "any narrative . . . can not say everything about [its] narrative world. It hints at it and then asks the reader to fill in a whole series of gaps. Every text, after all is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work."<sup>20</sup> This is not the tendency to which I am reacting. Rather, my objection is to the method's careful negation of an actual reader relating to a flesh and blood audience and in turn replacing them with an amorphous implied author and implied reader. This problem can be illustrated with the methodological discussion of Richard Edwards, "When I speak about the reader I am not attempting to describe a real person (of the first, third, tenth, or twentieth century) but the person posited *by the text* as the reader."<sup>21</sup> I recognize that this construct is essential if the text itself is going to be the controlling force in the interpretive process. Furthermore, it pays honor to the final form of the text. However, at the same time it seems to intentionally introduce media anachronisms into the reading of the text.<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Culler puts it in perspective, "To speak of an ideal reader is to forget that reading has a history. There is no reason to suggest that the perfect master of today's interpretative techniques would be the ideal reader or that any trans-historic ideal could be conceived."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1994) 3.

<sup>21</sup>Richard Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 10 emphasis original. Others who employ this assumption, Jouette Bassler, "The Parable of the Loaves," *JR* 66 (1986), 157-172; Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*; David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

<sup>22</sup>Tom Boomershine, in a personal communication (30 August, 1998) responding to a question I posed regarding the methodology in his dissertation (*Mark as Storyteller: Rhetorical-Critical Investigation of Mark's Passion and Resurrection Narrative*, Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1974) said, "My conclusion is that the only adequate methodology for understanding of Mark is that which presupposes a multiple/composite/communal 'author' who is writing a story to be read by a 'storyteller' to an 'audience' which is broad in its conception." He goes on to conclude that "any other methodology intentionally introduces epistemological and media anachronisms. This method does not exclude sources of distortion but at least it does not knowingly introduce them."

<sup>23</sup>Jonathan Culler, "Prolegomena to a Theory of Reading," *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, eds. S. R. Suleiman and I. Crosman, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 53, n 3. Cf. also Jane Tompkins, "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response," in *Reader-Response Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 201-32.

This chapter's focus will not be wholly polemical against either traditional historical-critical or modern literary approaches. To the contrary, literary criticism should be applauded for its underlying covenant to base interpretation upon the text alone. Yet even text-centered interpretation can be carried to the extreme, such as assigning to the text an autonomy which allows it to stand over against established historical data.<sup>24</sup> Mark should not be viewed or interpreted as an autonomous text. Rather, to borrow from the field of linguistics, a "text is a verbal record of a communicative event."<sup>25</sup> This study will propel the interpretation of Mark beyond the task of observing grammatical structures and literary relationships. The text will be interpreted taking into consideration how it was actualized in ancient society, utilizing in part the study of communications whereby its meaning is discovered in a healthy balance of semantics (actual language) and pragmatics (accompanying circumstances).<sup>26</sup> At these points, this study becomes dialogical in nature. On the one hand pointing out the richness found in a modern reading, and on the other, indicating that if the text is allowed to function autonomously, excluding the relationships of real authors to real audiences, much of the work's affective impact will be reified.

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<sup>24</sup>Ong (*Orality and Literacy*) relates how writing tends to produce a sense of closure which may not be intended in a dialogue. "Writing establishes what may be called 'context-free' language or 'autonomous' discourse, discourse which can not be directly questioned or contested as oral speech can because written speech has been detached from its author. . . . There is no way to directly refute a text. . . . This is one reason why 'the book says' is popularly tantamount to 'it is true'" (78-79).

<sup>25</sup>Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 6.

<sup>26</sup>Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1989), 13.

#### 4 HISTORY OF THE DEBATE

The traditional place for the *Forschungsbericht* is the start of the thesis. The purpose is to present the current state of scholarship, thereby justifying the need for the thesis. However, in this thesis, part of my argument hinges on establishing the epistemological divide which exists between an ancient and modern reading-event. Then, we will engage the pertinent material concretely as the various authors' views become relevant to the debate.

In this history of debate section, I will simply try to outline the range of opinions. Some scholars, following the lead of early form critics, mistakenly assume that a change in media would not alter the message. The presuppositions of the form critics of the first half of this century were based upon a communications theory of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Werner Kelber points out 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.<sup>27</sup>

Rather the relationship between the oral and the written Gospel was understood as a linear relationship of continuity.<sup>28</sup> Referring to the "oral vs. written" debate, recent

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<sup>27</sup>*The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 6.

<sup>28</sup>Kelber (*Oral and Written Gospel*) says that "form-criticism had difficulty in treating oral units truly as spoken words that conformed to the laws of acoustics and oral remembering. The tendency was to identify oral forms and to assume their compliance with the rule of growth" (32). Redaction criticism, on the other hand, was inclined to perceive pre-gospel materials in a textual tradition only. Kelber goes on to say, "This disquieting hermeneutical development has occurred in the absence of actual evidence of pre-gospel textuality, let alone oral/textual evolution" (33).

Barry W. Henaut, (*Oral Tradition and the Gospels: The Problem of Mark 4* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993]) asked, is it possible to work backward from a text and recover actual oral traditions, for example, Jesus' parabolic teaching in Mark 4. Can we isolate and/or extricate oral tradition from its textual container? His conclusion is that "the oral phase is now lost, hidden behind a series of Gospel texts and pre-Gospel sources that are full-fledged textuality - a textuality that does not intend to preserve an accurate account of the oral tradition but rather to convey a theological response to a new social situation" (14). Ironically, Henaut cannot discover behind the text any original oral shaping but sees, through a redaction critical lens how the evangelist shaped the text for his supposed theological agenda. He states,

study has shown serious implications arise from neglecting the issue. Thomas Boomershine has pointed out that “changes in communications systems (e.g., change of medium from oral to chirographic) are related to profound shifts in modes of perception and thought, patterns of cultural formation and religious values.”<sup>29</sup> Boomershine’s thesis should alert modern interpreters to be aware that the media change works in both directions. Too often, scholars who are well schooled in ancient rhetoric and classic theory, neglect to incorporate a proper understanding of the change in media with how it functioned within a first century communication system.<sup>30</sup> Simply put, scholars readily acknowledge that Jesus’ words were preserved in print for current study. Yet, at the same time, they overlook the fact that the same text was not engaged in a similar fashion by a first century audience. If ancients heard a text and moderns read a text, is there not a possibility of distortion?

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“Each author’s [evangelist’s] distinctive literary style and theological concerns need to be established before recourse to ‘orality’ can be invoked as an explanation” (74).

Bultmann’s form critical approach was similarly flawed, as he used a model of how literary authors handled their already written sources as a model for their supposedly oral tradition (*The History of the Synoptic Tradition* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1963], 6). Even Bultmann’s critics overlooked the distinctive difference between the oral and written medium, “The tendencies of the one are presumably the tendencies of the other” (E. P. Sanders, *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*, SNTSMS 9 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969]). The most thorough discussion is found in Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 6-8. In a later work, Kelber sums up the issue metaphorically when he says, that it makes sense in a print-oriented culture “to visualize texts as palimpsests, with layer superimposed upon layer, and stratum superseding stratum, building up to layered edifices that, if taken apart . . . will take us back to the single root of the evolutionary tree” (“Jesus and Tradition,” *Semeia* 65 [1994], 140-141).

<sup>29</sup>Thomas Boomershine, “Jesus of Nazareth and the Watershed of Ancient Orality and Literacy,” *Semeia* 65 (1994), 8. Members of the biblical community who have dealt extensively with the issue: Thomas Boomershine, Pieter J. J. Botha, Joanna Dewey, Werner Kelber, and Mary Ann Tolbert.

<sup>30</sup>An excellent example comes in the seminal work of Shadi Bartsch (*Decoding the Ancient Novel* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989]). Her shortcoming is similar to many who have trod the same ground before her; she overlooks the oral-performative medium of the ancient novel. Continually, she speaks of the “readers” of the novels in a manner suspiciously close to a modern counterpart, as if they are isolated individuals, reading a text silently. This neglect of orality abandons both the oral-aural aspect of the performance and the possibility of a community of listeners involved in the interpretation process.

This short-coming is, at least in part, eliminated in her later work, *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and DoubleSpeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 1994). In the chapter named “Oppositional Innuendo: Performance, Allusion, and the Audience” she is quite aware of the tool in the hands of an ancient rhetorician in moving and persuading an audience.

Scholars dealing with the written texts of antiquity often fall into several categories. First, some scholars (unwittingly?) assume that written media in the first century operated similarly to our modern print media world, giving priority to issues such as linear thinking and to the inflexibility of written texts. The issue regarding a fixed text is taken as axiomatic in modern biblical studies. However, the mere act of writing an ancient text in manuscript form does not preclude its future alteration or amendment. For example, authors in classical times often released early editions of their work for public scrutiny with the full knowledge that later forms may be altered dramatically based upon public opinion and feedback.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, accuracy and/or comparative work did not become a science until the post-Gutenberg era. Textual history shows a proclivity to fluidity until long after the innovation of the printed text.<sup>32</sup> Rosalind Thomas says, "Indeed, one may wonder if a concept of accuracy that demands exact repetition of even the punctuation can exist without the printed word."<sup>33</sup> Other scholars take this one step further. For example, Raymond Person argues that numerous variants in our manuscripts "are only variants from our literate point of view" and "what [the scribes] understood as a faithful copy of their *Vorlagen*, we would understand as containing variants."<sup>34</sup> Raymond Person argues that even in a textually dependent culture such as ancient Israel, "the ancient Israelite scribes were not mere copyists but were also performers."<sup>35</sup> He demonstrates a vast difference in meaning

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<sup>31</sup>For a more thorough discussion of publishing practices in antiquity, see Chapter 3 of this thesis *The Effect of the Audience on the Shaping of the Text*.

<sup>32</sup>Larry Hurtado, "Greco-Roman Textuality and the Gospel of Mark," *BBR* 7 (1997), 102-105. Hurtado summarizes, "We must beware of assuming that the concern for exactness characteristic of the printed text . . . was shared by the ancients in general. That was manifestly not the case."

<sup>33</sup>Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 47.

<sup>34</sup>Raymond Person, "The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer," *JBL* 117 (1998), 608.

<sup>35</sup>Person, "The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer," 602; This position is similar to those presented by Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster, 1996); A. N. Doane, "The Ethnography of Scribal Writing and Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Scribe as Performer," *Oral Tradition* 9 (1994), 420-439; K. O'Keefe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge:

between our highly literate understanding of "word" and that of an oral culture which perceives "word" as an equivalent to a line, stanza, or even an entire epic.<sup>36</sup> He goes on to conclude that scribes in an oral culture "do not copy texts verbatim in a good literate manner (as we would expect of ourselves)."<sup>37</sup>

Regarding the former issue raised above, Markan scholars accustomed to the feature of linear plot development associated with print narrative often impose a similar presupposition upon the Markan narrative. Havelock describes the oral method of composition as the echo principle:

What is to be said and remembered later is cast in the form of an echo of something said already; the future is encoded in the past. All oral narrative is in structure continually both prophetic and retrospective . . . Though the narrative syntax is paratactic - the basic conjunction being "and then", and "next" - the narrative is not linear but turns back on itself in order to assist the memory to reach the end by having it anticipated somehow in the beginning.<sup>38</sup>

When Mark's cause-and-effect relationship is not found, the gospel's form must then be established as simple, clumsy, or attributed to the author's choice of sources.<sup>39</sup> It becomes clear that the ancient work is being asked to conform to modern expectations rather than to stand independently within its own cultural world. Furthermore, scholars who impose this notion ignore the functional aspects writing served in an oral culture, which are different from a print culture.<sup>40</sup> This notion of cultural relativism

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Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>36</sup>Person, "The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer," 603. Cf., J. M. Foley, "Editing Oral Epic Texts: Theory and Practice," *Text* 1 (1981), 77-78; idem, *Traditional Oral Epics: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), chap. 4-6.

<sup>37</sup>Person, "The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer," 609.

<sup>38</sup>Eric Havelock, "Oral Composition in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles," *New Literary History* 16 (1984), 183.

<sup>39</sup>Joanna Dewey, "Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark," *Interp* 43 (1989), 38.

<sup>40</sup>This argument has been made by numerous scholars, cf. Joanna Dewey, "Textuality in an Oral Culture: A Survey of the Pauline Traditions," *Semeia* 65 (1994), 37 and several works by Pieter J. J. Botha, "Greco-Roman Literacy as Setting for the New Testament Writings," *Neot* 26 (1992), 195-215; "Mute Manuscripts: Analyzing a Neglected Aspect of Ancient Communication," *ThEv* 23 (1990), 35-47. Kenneth

arises, in part, out of the post-Gutenberg, print-oriented bias where "social scientists . . . treat all societies as if their intellectual processes were essentially the same. Similar yes, the same no."<sup>41</sup>

At the opposite end of the spectrum are scholars who treat the written work of antiquity in a condescending fashion, labeling it as primitive and unsophisticated. This diachronic approach to the issue of orality and literacy implies an evolutionary model, placing the cultural contribution of an oral culture below that of a literate one. These scholars imply that the ancients' work would be more efficacious if it took on the form and style of the modern world of print, books, and computers. A great divide between the oral and literate world is envisioned, as if when an oral epic is written it will be permanently severed from its primitive oral culture.<sup>42</sup>

A middle ground of scholars fully support and employ the findings of social-scientific methods in their interpretative work. At the same time they utilize a modern literary approach to the text. An inherent question arises in this clash of world views, which sociological phenomenon(s) will be incorporated into the discussion and which one(s) will be rejected? For example, scholars would unanimously agree that culture-specific issues such as "honor and shame" or "patron-client relationships" must be carefully considered to prevent an anachronistic reading of an ancient text. Yet, is it methodologically sound to ignore the impact of other established cultural practices, such as the oral recitation of a text?

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Quinn ("The Poet and his Audience in the Augustan Age," *ANRW* II, 30.1, [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982]) says, "Today we take it as a matter of course that you cannot really claim acquaintance with a book until you have read it for yourself, turned over the pages with your own hands, scanned each paragraph for yourself. It requires an effort of historical imagination to conceive of a society where that might not be so. . . . It meant foisting upon the ancient world a way of doing things which was based upon the way literature functions in modern society - the context which has grown up for literature since the invention of printing" (82).

<sup>41</sup>John Goody, "Literacy, Criticism, and the Growth of Knowledge" in *Culture and Its Creators* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 226-227.

<sup>42</sup>Werner Kelber, "Scripture and Logos: The Hermeneutics of Communication," 1991 SBL Annual Papers.

## 5 ANCIENT-MODERN EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIVIDE

The best way to investigate the first century's communication process is to introduce a scholarly paradigm shift, placing an interpretative emphasis on the ancient aspects of reading the gospel aloud while minimizing our modern practice of visually inspecting the printed text. But a new paradigm must do more than present different options to be worthy of consideration. It must explain anomalies that the current "textual" paradigm could neither explain nor identify.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, in order to create enough cognitive dissonance to warrant the shift, we will begin with a description of our modern culture's bias towards the printed text and how that presupposition deafens the ability of modern ears to hear the aural nature of an ancient text.<sup>44</sup>

### 5.1 SCOPE OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIVIDE LIMITED

This section will attempt to survey the epistemological divide which separates the ancient listener from the modern reader. The pre-scientific rhetorical times which dominated the apostolic period are distinct from the concreteness of the nineteenth century rationalistic period which was the foundation of most modern historical-critical methodological approaches. This will not be an exhaustive study but in the end will demonstrate the need for modern scholarship to investigate not only the overt historical issues regarding a narrated event in a text but also the overlooked epistemological questions which may ask how a manuscript was presented, heard, understood, and functioned in the society of its origin. William Graham summarizes,

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<sup>43</sup>One such example is to answer the intriguing question about the Markan text: How does one explain the effective narration of the story through an ostensibly inept style? See Charles Hedrick, "Narrator and Story in the Gospel of Mark: Hermeneia and Paradosis," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 14 (1987), 251-252 for several narrative problems (historical, geographical, etc.). This question has been noted frequently yet the answer is usually inadequately resolved. However, an approach focusing on the communication process of antiquity (oral critical method) may begin to answer it in a new manner.

<sup>44</sup>While orality-literacy studies in the humanities have proliferated since the 1970's, biblical scholarship has not kept pace with this trend. Kelber supposes this to be true because "print was the medium in which modern biblical scholarship was born and raised, and from which it acquired its formative methodological habits." ("Jesus and Tradition," 140).

the great chasm in forms of communication turns out to be not that between literate and nonliterate societies but the gulf between our own modern Western, post-Enlightenment world of the printed page and *all* past cultures (including our own predecessors in the West), as well as most contemporary ones.<sup>45</sup>

Nowhere is this chasm more apparent than in the scholarly and intellectual disciplines of the last three centuries where what Walter Ong calls “the relentless dominance of textuality in the scholarly mind” has taken on new dimensions under the influence of print.<sup>46</sup>

Whereas in ancient days, the written word was often suspect, today, only seeing (in print) is believing. Paul Achtemeier illustrates this point during his 1990 presidential address to the *Society of Biblical Literature*. The presentation, entitled *Omne Verbum Sonat*, was an overview of orality in the first century. He argues that for orality to be effective, its basic structures must be obvious to the ear and not just to the eye. “This means of course that listeners will have been sensitive to oral effects, more sensitive than we are who primarily rely upon sight.” Then as a powerful illustration of what he was arguing, in a verbal aside he adds, “even as some of you hearing this presentation are saying to yourself that you will suspend judgment on [my findings] until you have seen it in printed form!”<sup>47</sup>

In most modern Western cultures, reading and writing are activities whose acquisition are encouraged from the cradle and the nonperformance of these skills brings about personal shame. Thus, a two-fold difficulty faces a biblical scholar. First, s/he must identify the cultural biases and values which have become ingrained in the twentieth century print-oriented reader. For example, the goal of many Western educators espouses mass literacy as society’s savior, with the underlying assumption that more information in the hands of an individual will solve heretofore unresolvable

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<sup>45</sup>Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, 29, emphasis original.

<sup>46</sup>Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 10.

<sup>47</sup>Achtemeier, “*Omne Verbum Sonat*,” 18.

economic and social dilemmas.<sup>48</sup> This may or may not be true in the twentieth century world but it certainly never occurred to a first century individual. The skill of literacy was found in only a small percent of an ancient society, almost exclusively limited to the cultural elite. One would be hard-pressed to substantiate historically that any egalitarian rationale for embracing literacy existed in the ancient world.<sup>49</sup> Thus it will take a counter-cultural corrective to dislocate our print-oriented presuppositions and free the modern reader to think in terms of the prevailing communication process available to the ancients; orality. Second, the presumption is made that once our cultural biases are identified, we moderns can disengage ourselves from the cumulative effects which our typographical culture may exert. This is an exceedingly difficult task in academic circles where the consumption and creation of written material is essential for survival and the lifeblood of success.

At the outset it is important to set limits on our discussion. Literacy and its cultural nuances will only be discussed as they occur and function in two specific cultures; the ancient Greco-Roman world and the modern western society. The boundaries are established by the reading audiences; first, the audience(s) of the New Testament in its original setting and second, the modern reader of this thesis. A primary argument which this thesis will attempt to present is that modern readers have

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<sup>48</sup>The United Nations effort to wipe out world illiteracy in the mid-1960's was based upon similar self-evident axioms and hope rather than science. "No scientific evidence connects progress, health, and economic well-being with literacy." (Harvey Graff, *Labyrinths of Literacy* [Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995], 20). Graff goes on to say, "the data of the past strongly suggest that a simple, linear, modernization model of literacy as a prerequisite for development will not do (21)." Cf. Graff, *Labyrinths of Literacy*, 35-60 for his response to the UNESCO Final Report at the 1976 International Symposium on Literacy. Numerous other scholars stand firmly with Graff. Cf., Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 16-28 for discussion and references in addressing the question, "How far is literacy an agent of change?"; Brian Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Shirley Heath, *Ways With Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>49</sup>Sadly, the same can be said about the modern world. Idyllically, mass literacy in the modern world is seen as a foundational skill for bringing whole societies out of poverty. Realistically, in practice, attempts at mass literacy has done little more than to promote ideological prejudices and political hegemony. Cf. M. T. Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1979), 119ff for numerous examples.

an approach to reading substantially different from the ancients. Further, that written texts themselves function in a culturally specific manner. Thus, we moderns will first need to acknowledge these cultural dissimilarities and second, to employ a method whereby we can quell our typographical tendency to reify texts in order to better understand an ancient text's original oral/aural experience.

## 5.2 MODERN LITERARY BIAS

Let us examine a few of the specifics which encompass the modern-ancient epistemological problem. In the modern world, books and manuscripts are studied in relative silence. Readers quickly scan the printed characters on the page as their minds absorb thoughts and images. From their earliest encounters with texts, modern readers are trained to move away from the elementary stages of sounding the words to the accepted ideal for reading; swift, voiceless, and visual.<sup>50</sup> For optimal reading efficiency, speech should be eliminated. For moderns, a reader "sounding" a text is associated with the semi-literacy of childhood. Yet this practice is alien to classical theory. "Classical texts were never intended to be read only by the eye and brain like algebraical formulae. Written words were more like memory-aids to remind readers of certain sounds."<sup>51</sup> As Quintilian (39-96 A.D.) puts it, "The use of letters is to preserve vocal sounds and to return them to the readers as a sacred trust."<sup>52</sup> This highlights the depth of the problem which lies before the modern scholar who is schooled in visual

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<sup>50</sup>W. B. Stanford, *The Sound of Greek: Studies in the Greek Theory and Practice of Euphony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 1. Stanford elaborates how most texts in the education and psychology of reading theory will have a section entitled, "Training to Decrease Vocalization." Cf., Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), "Our implicit model of written literature is the mode of communication to a silent reader through the eye alone, from a definitive text" (29).

<sup>51</sup>Stanford, *The Sound of Greek*, 3.

<sup>52</sup>Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), 1.7.31.

learning.<sup>53</sup> The extant records available to study the words of classical texts are found only in papyrus or a later copied version. Yet, in actuality, the end result of the communication process of antiquity was not quill, ink, and papyrus. Rather, these tools were means to an end which climaxed in sound, as the text was transferred from the mouth of a reader to the ears of a listening audience. Thus, it is vital to keep in mind that the works of classical authors was often encountered audibly by their audiences not through the visual arena in which modern scholars engage the printed record of the oral event.

Typographic culture is, to use Kelber's metaphor, a biosphere.<sup>54</sup> We are enclosed not just in culture but also in consciousness. Eric Havelock, a classical scholar on orality points out that one of the primary results of literacy is the change in how one approaches a text, specifically the introduction to society of abstract thinking.<sup>55</sup> He goes on to caution his readers that, "as we learn to use abstractions, we learn to distance ourselves from [the senses/sensual] level of experience, and so learn to distance ourselves from physical and emotional reality." Orality, on the other hand, is a

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<sup>53</sup>A personal and concrete example: When I travel in the car, occasionally I listen to German language tapes. Recently I discovered that the process I use is visual, not auditory. As the speaker talks, I visually transcribe the words in my mind and then translate them one word or phrase at a time. If I can not visualize a word, I cannot grasp its meaning.

<sup>54</sup>Kelber, "Jesus and Tradition," 151ff.

<sup>55</sup>Eric Havelock, "Orality, Literacy, and Star Wars," *Written Communication* 15 (1998), 351-361. I believe that Havelock is overstating his case for the sense of effect on the more general audience he is addressing in his presentation. However, numerous studies have come to a less definitive yet similar conclusion. Cf. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, "More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness" (78). This same premise is supported in numerous other studies where scholars have connected the development of logic with literacy. Cf. Eric Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). For a detailed study of Goody's and other's ideas about differences between literate, semi-literate, and non-literate cultures, cf., Marilyn Waldman, "Primitive Mind/Modern Mind," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. R. Martin (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985). Cf. A. R. Luria, *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Sociological Foundations*, ed. M. Cole, trans. M. Lopez-Morillas (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); S. Scribner and M. Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, cited by T. Farrell, "Kelber's Breakthrough," *Semeia* 39 (1987), 29-30. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, stresses this as he defines orality's agonistic nature; "writing separates the knower from the known [while] orality presumes a face-to-face encounter that situates knowledge within a context of struggle" (44).

language of action, reaction and of sharp, poignant emotions, not an exercise in pure logic. "It deals with the specifics of what one senses and feels . . . in down-to-earth terms."<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, moderns not only think differently from the ancients, but also learn differently. Pedagogically, moderns who encounter volumes of new material on a regular basis *read to learn* while earlier societies *recited to learn*.<sup>57</sup> In antiquity, reading was considered a skill more than a necessity for the educational process.<sup>58</sup> Most ancient education, including much of the overall rhetorical training, took place apart from actual reading, such as in apprenticeships<sup>59</sup> or in dialogues with a teacher.<sup>60</sup> Conversely, in a print culture, students learn to read because much of their education is contained in books. Note the shift from public to private, from oral to written, from speaking to silence.

Boomershine presents a helpful analogy from music. Symphonies were originally composed to be heard, even though the compositions are written and can be studied as documents. "Our present pattern of experiencing biblical traditions is as if we were primarily to study Mozart's *Requiem* or *The Magic Flute* by only reading the

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<sup>56</sup>Havelock, "Orality, Literacy, and Star Wars," 353.

<sup>57</sup>E. L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1:65. The same may be said with reference to writing; learning to write vs. writing to learn. The art of Rhetoric may fall into the latter category (pointed out by Lucretia Yaghjian in private conversation).

<sup>58</sup>Pieter Botha, "The Verbal Art of the Pauline Letters," in *Rhetoric and The New Testament*, ed. S. Porter and T. Olbricht (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), "In Graeco-Roman societies one could be educated without having the ability to read and write. In fact being literate (proficient with texts) was not necessarily connected to oneself writing and reading" (414).

<sup>59</sup>Henri-Jean Martin, *The History and Power of Writing*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 69. Following a detailed reference to Marrou's work on the laborious educational process (*A History of Education in Antiquity*), Martin then concludes, "The method [ancient education] offered little enrichment, and it is hardly surprising that pupils progressed very slowly or that their real education took place elsewhere in the many contacts that daily life provided in the ancient city." The discontinuity of learning styles, modern and ancient, should not be overlooked.

<sup>60</sup>Nicholas Horsfall, "Statistics or States of Mind," in *Literacy in the Roman World*, ed. Mary Beard (Ann Arbor, MI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1991).

scores and talk about them without ever performing or listening to his music."<sup>61</sup> Boomershine goes on to conclude that "to study the texts of the biblical traditions without reciting and hearing them is to limit our experience of the traditions to a secondary and derivative medium."<sup>62</sup> J. D. G. Dunn refines the discussion as he says it's not just the difference between reading silently and hearing. "For anyone who has experienced a (for them) first performance of a great musical work, like Beethoven's *Ninth* or Verdi's *Requiem*, the difference between hearing in the electric atmosphere of the live performance and hearing the recorded version played later at home (let alone simply reading the score) is unmistakable."<sup>63</sup> The aural effect should not be taken to the extreme, as if to assume that the conceptual meaning of ancient literature is contained solely in sound. The primary point being made is that the original medium, orality, should not be disregarded and replaced by a seemingly superior visual approach to the text.

### 5.3 FALLACY 1: MODERN NECESSITY OF LITERACY

The epistemological divide between the modern and ancient cultures might best be identified by answering the question, How does literacy function in each society?

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<sup>61</sup>Boomershine, "Peter's Denial as Polemic or Confession," 54. Cf. Also, Quinn, "The Poet and Audience in Augustan Age," 30.1, "But books were not the normal means by which the literary public became familiar with a work of literature. It is for that reason that the analogy of the musical score seems preferable to what might seem the more obvious analogy of the printed version of a play: for with us the habit of private reading has become so highly developed that most of us who are interested at all in literature read more plays than we see performed. Everything suggests that, outside specialist circles, it was otherwise at Rome. Those who were not in some way professionals probably consulted a text only to clear up a particular point (91). Cf. Gellius 18.5.11: Antonius Julianus complains the *Ennianista* whose performance he has attended has garbled a passage and claims to have consulted a famous edition by Lampadio, for which he had to pay a consultation fee.

<sup>62</sup>Boomershine, "Peter's Denial as Polemic or Confession," 54. Another helpful perspective on this musical metaphor can be found in Nicholas Lash, "Performing the Scriptures," originally published in *The Furrow* in 1982 and republished in his collection, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM, 1986), 37-46. A thoroughgoing review of his treatment regarding performance and interpretation is found in Stephen C. Barton, "New Testament Interpretation as Performance," *SJT* 52 (1999), 180-187.

<sup>63</sup>"Jesus in Oral Memory: The Initial Stages of the Jesus Tradition," in *Jesus: A Colloquium in the Holy Land*, ed. D. Donnelly, (New York & London: Continuum, 2001), 89.

Whatever our working definition may be(come), it must be defined according to the context in which it is used, for literacy is "a cultural phenomenon with social and communicative functions . . . a social product shaped by factors such as politics and ideology."<sup>64</sup>

Literacy's positive value for modern Western society is axiomatic. Thus, it will be difficult to discuss the topic without any prejudice in favor of it. For closely associated with a cultural phenomenon such as literacy, we find ideological assumptions and value judgments which can cloud its usefulness when attempting to transport its definition from one time and culture to another. For example, in the contemporary world, it is difficult to avoid the assumption that literary skills are an essential ingredient in daily experience. The word "literacy" as it is used today, "indexes an individual's integration into society; it is the measure of a successful child, the standard of an employable adult."<sup>65</sup> Literacy being a cornerstone of success is an accepted, self-evident truth. Surprisingly, empirical evidence gathered through modern sociological studies proves just the opposite. Only a minority of those who learned to read and write in Classical through Medieval times can be proven to have benefitted either economically or culturally from the acquisition of literary skills.<sup>66</sup> Generally speaking, the only verifiable fact regarding literacy is that it demonstrates an individual's acceptance of and success in the educational process.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, 96.

<sup>65</sup>O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 10.

<sup>66</sup>Graff (*Labyrinths of Literacy*) points out that, "Literacy's relationship with the process of economic development, *from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century*, provides one of the most striking examples of patterns of contradictions. Contrary to popular and scholarly wisdom, major steps forward in trade, commerce, and even industry took place in some periods with remarkably low levels of literacy. . . . More important than high levels have been the educational levels and power relations of key persons rather than the many" (19, emphasis added).

<sup>67</sup>H. J. Graff, *Literacy and Social Development in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 258, 260; Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 118.

Furthermore, we must be cautious that the terms we utilize in the definition of literacy do not themselves contain socio-cultural presuppositions. For example, if we define literacy as the ability to read and write, the skills and functions which comprise reading and writing must be defined in context. Until recently, reading was an oral, often communal activity, not a private, silent one. Thus, literacy should be described in relation to other activities within a specific historical and cultural situation. Brian Street criticizes what he calls "autonomous" models of literacy, in which literacy is considered culturally neutral and whose effects can be measured irrespective of their cultural contexts. As an alternative, Street prefers an "ideological model" for literacy which focuses its attention on the specific social practices of reading and writing which acknowledges their culturally embedded nature.<sup>68</sup>

The issue of literacy not only carries with it society's ideological assumptions but also each culture attaches value judgements to their respective definitions of literacy.<sup>69</sup> For example, many scholars today employ the standard designation, illiteracy/literacy. However, piggybacking on the preceding discussion, cultural consideration must be taken since the term illiterate (ἀγράμματος) was a technical term in antiquity used on legal documents, and a socially descriptive epithet, but not exclusively a pejorative one.<sup>70</sup> Here is another example of how easily modern value judgements can be

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<sup>68</sup>Street, *Literacy in Theory and in Practice*, 2.

<sup>69</sup>O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 10.

<sup>70</sup>Lucretia Yaghjian, "Ancient Reading," in *The Social Sciences and NT Interpretation* ed. Richard Rohrbaugh (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 209. Cf. Botha, "The Verbal Art of the Pauline Letters," "We must remind ourselves that the connection between education and literacy, which seems so natural to us, is simply a cultural convention of our times. In Graeco-Roman societies one could be educated without having the ability to read and write. In fact being literate (proficient with texts) was not necessarily connected to oneself writing and reading . . . Writing in antiquity was a technology employed by a small section of a pre-print society (414)." Ann Ellis Hanson ("Ancient Illiteracy," in *Literacy in the Roman World* [Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991]) summarizes, "Ancient literacy differed from modern literacy in that the stance of Greek and Roman governments toward illiteracy was one of casual indifference. The governments reflected the attitudes of society at large, a society in which illiterates and those of restricted literacy functioned without prejudice in the company of literates in the pre-technological marketplace (162)." Many primary sources cited in H. C. Youtie, "ΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΣ An Aspect of Greek Society in Egypt," *HSCPh* 75 (1971), 161-176. Finally, the word ἀγράμματος, from its use

unsuitably attached to the past. A person today who does not have the writing skills to sign his/her name is labeled as a social outcast, whereas in Greco-Roman times most educated people did not write for themselves; rather, they preferred dictation.<sup>71</sup> Even more so, people of antiquity refrained from signing their names for “they did not put value on their personal signatures because the cross was the most solemn symbol of Christian truth.”<sup>72</sup> Honor was linked to an individual’s person and not to a signed contract. Signing with a cross became a symbol of illiteracy only after the Reformation.<sup>73</sup>

It is easy to see how ethnocentric values can creep into our discourse, permitting modern interpreters to believe that they can read an ancient text with more clarity because of an individual’s or a society’s high literacy rate; even though the author never assumed one’s ability to “read” was an essential part of the material’s original design. We must remain cautious not to let our modern presuppositions sway our knowledge surrounding the function of the text in antiquity.<sup>74</sup>

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in Greek papyri found in Egypt, in its strictest technical sense meant “one who could not write Greek letters.” Some of those who were said “not to know their letters” were capable of writing demotic, the native Egyptian language.

<sup>71</sup>Raymond Starr, “Reading Aloud: Lectores and Roman Reading,” *CJ* 86 (1991), “[D]ictation became so common that the Latin word *dictare* came virtually to mean ‘to compose’ as well as ‘to dictate’” (337). Cf. T. C. Skeat, “The Use of Dictation in Ancient Book Production,” *Proc. British Academy* 42 (1956), 179-208. Skeat demonstrates that the presence of phonetic errors can be attributed to writing by dictation.

<sup>72</sup>In antiquity people signed with a cross “†” rather than an “x.” Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 8.

<sup>73</sup>Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 8. Ironically enough, the importance of an intermediary (*hypographeus*) signing for the consenting party’s personal statement (*hypographe*) can not be underestimated. Through this cultural feature, scholars have come to know the majority of the functional illiterates in the Greco-Roman world. (H. Youtie, “ΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΥΣ: Social Impact of Illiteracy in Greco-Roman Egypt,” *ZPE* 17 (1975), 201-221. Specifically, in the agricultural village of Tebtynis (Egypt) during the 30’s and 40’s A.D., 90% of the contracts drawn up mention at least one party in the transaction as being unable to write the acknowledgment or their signature. Throughout Greco-Roman Egypt (which is where most of the extant papyrus have survived) the figures for other contracts in other cities is consistent. Cf. Hanson, “Ancient Illiteracy,” (167).

<sup>74</sup>Cf. Chapter 2, Towards a Functional Understanding of Writing for details.

Beyond the issues of what a culture's ideological assumptions and value judgements may place upon one's understanding of literacy, a rigid dichotomy which would define literacy solely in terms of either/or propositions must be avoided. Polar opposites, such as "literate vs. illiterate" and "oral vs. written" are invalid, for these dichotomies do not describe actual circumstances. In fact, they prevent a historically accurate conceptualization.<sup>75</sup> Rather, history does not depict an either/or choice on these complex matters but a rich process of interaction as literacy slowly gained influence.<sup>76</sup> Harris' conclusion about literacy shows the indispensable nuance,

There occurred a transition away from the oral culture. This was, however, a transition not to a written culture (in the modern sense) 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.<sup>77</sup>

Most recent studies discuss the relationship in terms of an oral-literate continuum, discovering areas of continuity and cooperation rather than conflict and competition.<sup>78</sup>

Statistically speaking, in the Greco-Roman world, only a small percentage of people could read and write, and those groups were overwhelmingly upper-class and urban. However, for a few individuals, the acquisition of literacy skills undeniably enhanced their economic well-being. Though this number was minimal, there were

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<sup>75</sup>Graff, *Labyrinths of Literacy*, 12.

<sup>76</sup>For an understanding of just how long orality remained strong, cf. William Nelson, "From 'Listen, Lordings' to 'Dear Reader,'" *UTQ* 46 (1976), 110-124. Nelson argues that there was not a decline in the *viva voce* until the late seventeenth century.

<sup>77</sup>Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 327. Tony Lentz (*Orality and Literacy in Hellenic Greece* [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989]), makes an important contribution as his study shows the symbiotic relationship of oral tradition and memory interacting with the written tradition of verbatim perseveration and abstract thought; demonstrating that each reinforced the strengths of the other.

<sup>78</sup>Person, "The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer," 601; Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, 1. For similar conclusions, cf. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*; Brian Stock, *The Implication of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); idem, *Listening to the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Records*; Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*.

groups of people who became upwardly mobile based solely upon their ability to read and write.<sup>79</sup> The number of professional scribes whose livelihood was based upon literacy grew exponentially. Moreover, many occupations benefitted peripherally from new literary skills; merchants, slaves<sup>80</sup>, governmental bureaucrats, teachers<sup>81</sup>, and individuals in the military<sup>82</sup> all could advance socially and economically in a society which heretofore saw the status quo as the norm. Using the most conservative estimates, if the literacy rate within the adult male population was only 5%, that still means that there were over one million readers in the Mediterranean world during the time of Jesus.<sup>83</sup> These people who lived throughout the Roman world laid the foundation, to some degree, for the political, economic, and social changes which took place. In sheer numbers, the literate population was minimal, yet the cultural landscape was ripe for change.

Nevertheless, though illiteracy flourished, this should not be seen as anything more than a lack of technological skill, which was readily available from a literate family member or in the local marketplace.<sup>84</sup> In Greco-Roman society, one who did not "know their letters" (ἀγράμματος) was far from dysfunctional. As a matter of fact, Ann Hanson has concluded that surviving papyri from Egypt demonstrate how an inherently literate system was negotiated by illiterates and semi-literates who employed the technological skills of others in dealing with Greek documents.<sup>85</sup> It is vital to keep

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<sup>79</sup>Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 30ff.; E. A. Judge, *Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St. Paul*, Broadhead Memorial Lecture, (University of Canterbury, 1982), 18-19.

<sup>80</sup>Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 255-259.

<sup>81</sup>Marrou, and for a whole array of upwardly mobile teachers, cf., Suet., *Gram. And Rhet.*

<sup>82</sup>Keith Hopkins, "Conquest by Book," in *Literacy in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press, 1991), 138.

<sup>83</sup>Hopkins, "Conquest by Book," 134-135.

<sup>84</sup>Hanson, "Ancient Illiteracy," 164-167.

<sup>85</sup>Hanson, "Ancient Illiteracy," 167.

in mind that being illiterate did not exclude one from basic communications process, written or otherwise. As a matter of fact, the basic structure of society envisions potential readers, even in rural areas too remote for the government to place their own bureaucrats.<sup>86</sup>

Additionally, ancients did not acquire the skills of literacy for a purpose completely analogous to our own. They did not necessarily learn to read so they could utilize that skill to acquire knowledge. This can be best articulated by distinguishing the difference between “phonetic literacy” and “comprehension literacy.”<sup>87</sup> Comprehension literacy is the ability “to decode the text silently, word by word” and understand it fully. Phonetic literacy was the ability “to decode texts syllable by syllable and to pronounce them orally, close to oral rote memorization.”<sup>88</sup> Phonetic literacy may be particularly relevant to the writings of antiquity since texts were often read for memorization. Thus, phonetic literacy served the purpose of reminding the reader of his/her previous encounter with a familiar text. Even in rhetorical speeches, which were often written down prior their oral performance, the text was only an aid to recollection and memorization.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, it might be best to define reading not in terms of a set of skills one possesses but rather as a social practice confined within a particular cultural context. Lucretia Yaghjian accomplishes this with her precise categories of literacy

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<sup>86</sup>Hanson, “Ancient Illiteracy,” 180.

<sup>87</sup>Darnton (“History of Reading,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke. [University Park, PA.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991]) discusses the way that phonetic literacy was the method used by students to learn to read in early modern France and England. There was no a connection between sight and sound. “The phonetic fuzziness did not really matter because the letters were meant as a visual stimulus to trigger the memory of a text that had already been learned by heart” (154). Cf. also Thomas, *Orality and Literacy*, 9, 13, 92.

<sup>88</sup>P. Saenger, “Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages, “ in *The Culture in Print*, ed R. Chartier (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 142.

<sup>89</sup>Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 92.

contextualized to the first century:<sup>90</sup> (1) *Auraliterate* reading is the practice of hearing something read or reading received aurally by readers' ears, as when Paul writes these words designed for oral delivery; "And when this letter has been read (*ἀναγνώσθη*) among you, have it read (*ἀναγνώσθη*) also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read (*ἀναγνώτε*) also the letter from Laodicea" (Col 4:16). This usage of *ἀναγινώσκω* is used as an inclusive strategy to address a mixed audience of readers and hearers. (2) *Oraliterate* reading is oral recitation or recall of a memorized text as in the Matthean controversies (cf. Matt 12:1-4, "Have you not read [*οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε*]). Oraliterate readers may not know their letters (*ἀγράμματος*, Acts 4:13) but they know the sacred writings by heart and can recite them with natural proficiency. (3) *Oculiterate* reading is performed by readers who can decode a written text (cf. The Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:27ff). In oculiterate reading, both eye and ear participate in the reading process, and the written document is not only referred to but read from. It is this group which places the writings of the New Testament into the oral form which can be heard by communities for whom otherwise the written materials may be symbols of divine authority but personally indecipherable. (4) *Scribaliterate* reading is reading for technical, professional, or religious purposes (cf. Philip's interpretation of Isaiah 53 for the eunuch, Acts 8:32-35). Using these categories will prevent ethnocentric conclusions inappropriate for the first century.

#### 5.4 FALLACY 2: MODERN OBJECTIVITY VERSES ANCIENT SUBJECTIVITY

Another issue which thwarts modern attempts to hear a text analogously to ancient audiences comes from the methodological lens through which a text was viewed: ancient rhetoric.<sup>91</sup> Robert Scott has noted that rhetoric, as viewed by moderns,

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<sup>90</sup>The following categories can be credited to Yaghjian, "Ancient Reading," 208-209.

<sup>91</sup>George Kennedy ("Language and Meaning in Archaic and Classical Greece," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism Volume I: Classical Criticism*, ed. George A. Kennedy [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989]) says, "[I]t should be recognized that we are often viewing their thought on the basis of modern assumptions about the implications of what they say, rather than entering into their own

tends to be considered epistemologically empty.<sup>92</sup> To be more precise, moderns believe that rhetoric "is interested in action: in mere activity, as opposed to knowledge; in unpredictable practices, rather than absolute truths."<sup>93</sup> This modern assumption seems to be based upon two false premises: first that knowledge itself is objective in nature and second, that people initially know what they are going to do and only then do it. In actuality, Scott proposed the opposite to be the norm. "One may act assuming that the truth is fixed and that his persuasion, for example, is simply carrying out the dictates of that truth, but he will be deceiving himself."<sup>94</sup> David Cunningham has further argued that "We do not wait until we have gained full knowledge in order to act or speak; in fact we only gain knowledge through the process of acting and speaking."<sup>95</sup> Further studies demonstrate that people act, speak, and write when they face incomplete knowledge and possible irreconcilable conflict.<sup>96</sup>

The following point builds upon the preceding one but will take it in a slightly different direction. The question to be asked is whether a modern critic can set aside certain linguistic conventions which we accept as timeless truths, such as formal logic.<sup>97</sup> Or is it possible for a modern critic to judge a text utilizing a rhetorical criterion from antiquity: its ability to persuade the audience. The problem being addressed is that

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epistemic system" (78).

<sup>92</sup>Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967), 9-17. Cf. Also the follow-up article, Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later," *Central States Speech Journal* 27 (1976), 258-266.

<sup>93</sup>David Cunningham, *Faithful Persuasion: In Aid of a Rhetoric of Christian Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 27.

<sup>94</sup>Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," 15.

<sup>95</sup>Cunningham, *Faithful Persuasion*, 28.

<sup>96</sup>Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins, *Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), Richard Gregg, *Symbolic Inducement and Knowing: A Study in the Foundations of Rhetoric* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984). For a concise survey of the situation, Walter Carleton, "On Rhetorical Knowing," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985), 227-237.

<sup>97</sup>Cf. Cunningham, *Faithful Persuasion*, 148-203 for a full discussion of these ideas.

formal logic finds its authority through the category of validity. An argument is always valid, regardless of the character of the speaker or the effect of its persuasive appeal, a purely modern phenomenon. "In making the criterion of validity the supreme arbiter of judgment, formal logic attempts to give argument some degree of intersubjectivity."<sup>98</sup> Once again, we find this appeal depends upon awarding an epistemological priority to objectivity, an assumption that has been subjected to increasing scrutiny in recent years, even in the realm of the natural sciences.<sup>99</sup>

The impact of these observations should not be taken lightly. For if we place an epistemological priority on objectivity over subjectivity, knowledge over action, and logic over persuasive efficacy, we will be functioning in a world set up by human logic, but essentially far from the historic reality of antiquity.<sup>100</sup> This false dualism of objectivity verses subjectivity is in opposition to the Aristotelian perspective on rhetoric. When men and women communicate, they do so with the whole person "which is capable of combining reason and emotion in premises that address the concrete affairs of daily life."<sup>101</sup>

## 5.5 FALLACY 3: MODERN CONTENT VERSES ANCIENT AFFECT

Thus far, our ancient-modern epistemological divide can be summarized:

In the First Century

In the Twenty-First Century

<sup>98</sup>Cunningham, *Faithful Persuasion*, 150-151.

<sup>99</sup>Works include, Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1973); Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of An Anachronistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1978).

<sup>100</sup>For a helpful discussion of the fallacy of objectivity in Historical-Theological work, cf., Joel B. Green, "In Quest of the Historical: Jesus, the Gospels, and Historicisms Old and New," *CSR* 28 (1999), 544-556. Green says, "Since the onset of the (first) Quest to the present, the search for historical data and the interpretation of that data has largely been shaped by locating it within a modern ideology and within the horizons of the quester's own culture" (550). Cf., also, Barton "New Testament Interpretation as Performance," 183.

<sup>101</sup>Walter Jost, *Rhetorical Thought in John Henry Newman*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1989), 78-79.

- Mark was heard
- in Koine Greek<sup>102</sup>
- by a listening community
- with focus on affective meaning
- Mark is silently read
- in English, with Greek as a tool,
- in solitude
- with focus on cognitive meaning

It is to the final category from the list above that we now turn our attention.

Specifically, is there a difference in expectation brought to an encounter with the text by an ancient audience and a modern reader? To form the question in more contemporary terms; what is a critic's ultimate goal?

Taking a firm stand that the difference exists, the reader-response critic Jane Tompkins argues that for most modern readers, "the text remains an object rather than an instrument, an occasion for the elaboration of meaning rather than a force exerted upon the world."<sup>103</sup> Conversely, literature steeped in the rhetoric of antiquity was a call for the orator to persuade the audience to adopt his/her moral perspective.<sup>104</sup> This persuasive function of rhetorical material is undergirded by the ancients' belief that language had an overwhelming influence on human behavior. The classical attitude towards literature is distinguished from contemporary in two specific ways; first, "the identification of language with power and [second] the assimilation of the aesthetic to the political realm in Greek life. . . . The ancients generally agree that the force of poetic

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<sup>102</sup>I include the language barrier with the understanding that most biblical scholars do in fact read *koine* Greek. However, it is not their first language and as stated, it serves more as an interpretative tool than as a primary means of communication.

<sup>103</sup>Jane Tompkins, "The Reader in History," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 225.

<sup>104</sup>Gareth Schmeling ("The Spectrum of Narrative," in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, ed. R. Hock, J. Chance, J. Perkins, [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998]) in discussing the effect of an ancient novel in antiquity says, "When we look back at ancient classical narratives we must always bear in mind that the writer is more interested in the moral lessons to be learned from the example of an individual than the scientific, sterile evidence of fact. The moral lesson is the point, the moral of the narrative" (27). In the same volume, Whitney Shiner ("*Creating Plot in Episodic Narratives: The Life of Aesop and the Gospel of Mark*") concurs when he says, "Modern readers are trained to use the events in the story to construct the psychology of the characters and see how that psychology develops as characters react to those events. Ancient audiences, on the other hand, tended to see characters as more static. Characters were often treated in terms of moral types" (175).

language must be harnessed to the needs of the state."<sup>105</sup> The roles of author and audience could never be understood in an abstract fashion, separate from one another. The situation can be summarized, "The reader in antiquity is seen as a citizen of the state, the author as a shaper of civic morality, and the critic as a guardian of the public interest: literature, its producers, and consumers are all seen in relation to the needs of the polity as a whole."<sup>106</sup>

This affective nature reveals language's quintessential function in antiquity. Ancient literature was "thought of as existing primarily in order to produce results, and not as an end in itself. A literary work is not so much an object . . . [but] a unit of force whose power is exerted upon the world in a particular direction."<sup>107</sup> It also characterizes the subtle yet real difference between modern and ancient critics in terms of how they each approach a text. For example, modern critics are single minded in their goal for analyzing a text; *to forge a meaning*.<sup>108</sup> Conversely, the ancients are more concerned with rhetorical strategies employed in the text, how they affect the audience, and the moral aspirations which proceed from the experience. This explains why the

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<sup>105</sup>Tompkins, "The Reader in History," 204. For primary sources, cf. Horace, *Epistles* 2.1 for a lengthy open letter which Horace addressed to Augustus about the state and the function of poetry in Rome.

<sup>106</sup>Atkins, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 1:6-7.

<sup>107</sup>Tompkins, "The Reader in History," 204.

<sup>108</sup>Moore (*Literary Criticism and the Gospels*) makes a similar argument when he says, "The experiences that modern audience-oriented critics ascribe to their hypothetical readers are, in contrast to their ancient or Renaissance counterparts, generally *cognitive* rather than *affective*: not feeling shivers along the spine, weeping in sympathy, or being transported with awe, but having one's expectations proved false, struggling with an unresolvable ambiguity, or questioning the assumptions upon which one had relied. . . . Their experience of the text is an ineluctably cerebral one. Identification with story participants, potentially the most affective sphere of reader involvement, is typically framed in epistemic terms" (96). The reception theorist, Hans Robert Jauss ("Levels of Identification of Heroes and Audience," *New Literary History* 5 [1974]), says, "Prevailing aesthetic theory . . . tends, as far as possible, to remove all the emotional identification from aesthetic pleasure in order to reduce the latter to aesthetic reflection, sensitized perception, and emancipatory consciousness" (284).

modern critic, despite his/her interest in audience reaction, does not really mean the same thing as Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Longinus do.<sup>109</sup>

Though Aristotle may be considered in the camp of the moderns, as he preferred that rhetoric dealt only with facts (*Rhetoric* 3.1.5, 1404a), he includes a lengthy discussion on the essential use of emotions in persuasion (2.1.8-2.11.7, 1378a-1388b). Moreover, by the time of Quintilian in the first century, ambivalence regarding the role of emotion had largely disappeared. He states, “. . . the power of eloquence is greatest in emotional appeals . . . For it is in its power over the emotions that the life and soul of oratory is to be found.”<sup>110</sup> Quintilian goes so far as to say that emotional appeal is more persuasive than logical proof:

Proofs, it is true, may induce the judges to regard our case as superior to that of our opponent, but the appeal to the emotions will do more, for it will make them wish our case to be the better. And what they wish, they will also believe. . . . Thus the verdict of the court shows how much weight has been carried by the arguments and the evidence; but when the judge has been really moved by the orator he reveals his feelings while he is still sitting and listening to the case. When those tears, which are the aim of most perorations, well forth from his eyes, is he not giving his verdict for all to see?<sup>111</sup>

The validity of this observation can be tested by turning to a passage from Longinus' *On the Sublime*, which deals with the way a passage in Herodotus affects the hearer.<sup>112</sup>

So also Herodotus: “From the city of Elephantine thou shalt sail upwards and then shalt come to a level plain; and after crossing this tract thou shalt embark upon another vessel and sail for two days, and then shalt thou come to a great city whose name is Meroe.” Do you observe, my friend, how he leads you in

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<sup>109</sup>In a private communication with George A. Kennedy (2-19-99), he shared, “I think it is reasonable to say that ancient critics, rhetorical critics in particular, often neglected ‘meaning’ for ‘effect.’ Even Aristotle, in *Poetics* has nothing to say about the philosophical meaning of Greek tragedies, the principle subjects of modern interpreters, but is clearly interested in the effect of pity and fear on his audience. So is Longinus.”

<sup>110</sup>*Inst. Or.* 4.5.6 and *Inst. Or.* 6.2.7.

<sup>111</sup>*Inst. Or.* 6.2.4-7.

<sup>112</sup>The following extended discussion is drawn from Tompkins, “The Reader in History,” 202-204.

imagination through the region and makes you see what you hear? All such cases of direct personal address place the hearer on the very scene of action. So it is when you seem to be speaking, not to all and sundry, but to a single individual; -

But Tydeides - thou wouldst not have known him, for whom that hero fought. You will make your hearer more excited and more attentive, and full of active participation, if you keep him alert by words addressed to himself.<sup>113</sup>

Tompkins provides an extended discussion on Longinus' ancient critique of Herodotus' text,

Although Longinus' reference to a hearer who is "full of active participation" might have come from an essay by Wolfgang Iser; a modern critic influenced by Iser or Fish would not approach the passage from Herodotus as Longinus does. The modern critic would begin by showing in some detail how the language of the quotation makes the reader undergo certain mental and emotional experiences. The cognitive processes which the style forces the reader to enact would then be shown to embody some underlying principle of the work - Herodotean concept of space and time, or the historian's characteristic manner of organizing perceptual data. A modern critic, in short, would describe the reader's experience in such a way, as to provide the basis for an interpretation of the work. Longinus quotes the passage for an entirely different reason. He wishes to demonstrate that direct address effectively draws the reader into the scene of the action. He has no interest in the meaning of the passage, and indeed, it is doubtful that he would recognize "meaning" as a critical issue at all. For if the reader has become part of the action, is caught up in the language, the question of what the passage "means" does not arise. Once the desired *effect* has been achieved, there is no need, or room, for interpretation.<sup>114</sup>

Modern criticism takes meaning to be the object of critical investigation. Unlike the ancients, for whom language is not equated with action but with significance. This is not to say that the rise of Reader-Response criticism in the 1970's was a return to the classical approach of the ancients. For the only real difference between any contemporary approach to literature and a Reader-Response approach is to determine whether the meaning is located in the text or in the reader. The point here is to

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<sup>113</sup>Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. Rhys Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899), as reprinted in *The Great Critics: An Anthology of Literary Criticism* eds. James H. Smith and Ed Winfield Parks (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1951), 92-93.

<sup>114</sup>Tompkins, "The Reader in History," 203 (emphasis original).

recognize that the location of meaning is only an issue when one assumes that the specification of meaning is the aim of the critical act. Moreover, it seems to bind all modern methodological approaches, in spite of their diversities, over against a long history of critical thought in which the search for meaning supplanted the two most prominent characteristics of ancient criticism: (1) technique, and (2) the text's ethical implications upon society.

This raises another subtle dissimilarity between the ancient-modern view of the use of language.<sup>115</sup> The central activity of today's critics is no longer setting the standards for the moral content of literary works but the elucidation of texts from the past. It must be clarified that this does not mean modern approaches ignore the question of social relevance, they merely suspend it, assuming that until the text is "rightly understood" neither its worth nor its effect can be properly evaluated.<sup>116</sup>

Lest we think that Jane Tompkins and a few other literary critics stand alone voicing their concern of contemporary scholarship's reorientation of ancient literature's focus, allow Hans Frei to enter into the discussion.<sup>117</sup> Frei's primary contribution to this discussion surrounds his chronicling the triumph of the post-enlightenment view that the meaning of narrative is a matter of what it refers to; meaning-as-reference. For example, he describes pre-critical exegetes such as Calvin and Luther as scholars who

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<sup>115</sup>Don H. Compier, *What is Rhetorical Theology: Textual Practice and Public Discourse* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1999). According to Compier, the strength of "Tompkins' argument comes when she contends that recent critical moves of various sorts, with all their self-declared radicality, in fact perpetuate this very unclassical comprehension of the nature and function of language. Thanks to Dr. Compier for an advanced copy of his book while it was awaiting printing.

<sup>116</sup>Cf., also Steven Mailloux's discussion of the New Criticism and reader-response criticism in *Rhetorical Power* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1989, esp. 19-53). Specifically Mailloux alleges that "reader criticism tended to ignore the ideological debates of a wider cultural politics extending beyond the academy, and insofar as most reader-response approaches avoided the issues of race, class, and gender, for example, they supported conservative voices that attempted to cordon off the university in general and literary criticism in particular from directly engaging in any kind of radical politics" (51ff).

<sup>117</sup>*The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) and *The Identity of Jesus Christ: Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

valued the narrative itself. "We moderns tend to value not the narrative, but rather what it is about, its subject matter, what it refers to, whether the referent is thought to be an historical event, an idea, or the consciousness of the age in which the narrative originated."<sup>118</sup> Frei says, "It is not going too far to say that the story is the meaning or, alternately, that the meaning emerges from the story form, rather than being merely illustrated by it, as would be the case in allegory and in a different way by myth."<sup>119</sup> Frei devotes most of his efforts to describing the eclipse of the biblical narrative via the triumph of meaning-as-reference while at same time falls short of describing what meaning meant to pre-critical interpreters. However, he does emphasize that the meaning is always found in which the reader of the text participated intensely.

Fowler picks up this aspect of Frei's theme and continues its forward movement, There is a direct but inverse relationship between a critical focus on the referential meaning of a text and a critical focus on the reader's engagement with the text. As one concern waxes, the other tends to wane correspondingly. To put labels on these competing critical concerns, one is the concern for reference or representation, the other is the concern for pragmatics or rhetorical force. Frei has demonstrated how, historically, critical reading has been aligned with an overriding critical concern for reference. He has not made nearly as clear that pre-critical reading was primarily a matter of experiencing the pragmatic or rhetorical aspects of language. Nor has he grasped that the success of a modern rediscovery of biblical narrative may depend upon a rediscovery of the pragmatic or rhetorical aspects of language.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Robert Fowler, "Reading Matthew Reading Mark: Observing the First Steps toward Meaning-as-Reference in the Synoptic Gospels," *SBLSP* 1986, 3.

<sup>119</sup>*The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative*, 280.

<sup>120</sup>Fowler, "Reading Matthew Reading Mark," 5. This language echoes the words of M. H. Abrams (*Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971]). Abrams proposes that various literary theories tend to focus on one of four areas: Text itself (objective theories), the world reflected in the work (mimetic theories), the author of the work (expressive theories), or the audience of the work (pragmatic theories). "Although any reasonably adequate theory takes some account of all four elements, almost all theories . . . exhibit a discernable orientation toward one only" (6). Abrams points out that "the pragmatic orientation, ordering the aim of the artist and the character of the work to the nature, the needs, and the springs of pleasure in the audience, characterized by far the greatest part of criticism from the time of Horace through the eighteenth century" (20-21).

It is possible to see how the act of writing itself contributes to the objectification of the text. "The metaphor of language as container or conduit, existing in space, which holds meaning within, is hard to avoid. Given this metaphor, the job of the reader or critic is to tap the container and to drain off its contents - its meaning."<sup>121</sup> However, it is here that an oral approach to the text may help minimize the container mentality. The physical text may be a spacial object, but in antiquity the text was only the vehicle through which a reader prepared for its later oral recitation. Walter Ong says, "The message is neither content nor cargo nor projectile. Medium and message are interdependent in ways none of the carton and a carrier metaphors express - indeed, in ways no metaphor can express."<sup>122</sup> The biblical text, more so than most other literary works, may be most guilty of the visual disorientation which it imposes upon its audience via the physical text. The late additions of the numerical chapter and verses, combined with the other various textual apparatus make the appearance of a handy reference tool.<sup>123</sup> Thus, encountering the text through the temporal model of a reading-event might best avoid approaching a text as a container with content.

This is not a call to devalue the modern search for textual meaning.<sup>124</sup> But if the ancients placed a priority on analyzing a text for its affective value on the political and

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<sup>121</sup>Robert Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 44.

<sup>122</sup>Walter Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 290. Moore (*The Literary Criticism and the Gospels*) concisely states, "The aural appropriation of a text (in public speaking, for example) fosters a markedly different way of conceptualizing it than the predominately visual appropriation of a private, silent reading. The utter regularity, completedness, and the compactness of the modern printed text, its portability and the perfect reduplicability, all encourage its conceptualization as an object, artifact, static spatial form" (85-86).

<sup>123</sup>Moore, *The Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 86.

<sup>124</sup>I am deeply impacted by works such as Anthony C. Thiselton's *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) and Kevin J. Vanhoozer's *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan: 1998). Vanhoozer seeks to redeem the author, text, and reader by viewing meaning as something people do - as diverse kinds of communicative action.

moral behavior of its citizenry, in our attempt to hear a text as they did, would we not be better served to attend to their approach?<sup>125</sup>

Once again, Fowler contributes valuable insights to the discussion,

Only in a print-dominated culture do we find the distinctions between - and moreover the fragmentation of . . . author, text, reader, and [world]. The more literate the culture, the more easily they may be split, and their natural union becomes more and more difficult to perceive. In an oral-rhetorical setting, those entities are inseparable. The kind of text-oriented literary criticism that has characterized modern criticism is conceivable only in a print-dominated culture; it would be unimaginable in antiquity.<sup>126</sup>

Two correctives may help clarify our “ancient affect vs. modern content” dilemma. One takes the form of a chart. The other simply a short note regarding the temporal nature of an oral reading event. First, the

chart. Norman Peterson, one of the earliest New Testament scholars to discuss the impact of modern literary criticism,<sup>127</sup> describes the ascent of historical-critical method utilizing a Jakobson communications model.<sup>128</sup> Peterson asserts that the philological-historical paradigm overemphasizes the referential function of language. However, his

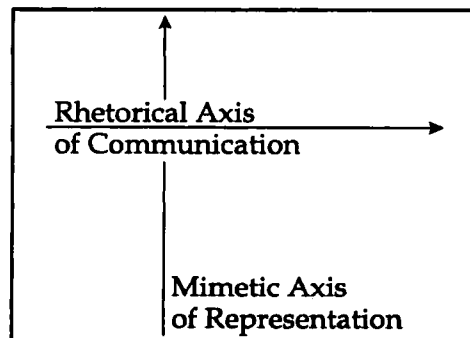


Figure 1: Literary Compass

own work on Mark and Luke still focuses upon the referential function of language. A

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<sup>125</sup>Interestingly, Longinus rather than discussing the effect of poetry with specificity, speaks in terms of intensity or strength of emotion. For him, the sublime is impact, effect, overarching all else. It is “intensity,” “force,” “irresistible might.” “Sublimity flashing forth at the right moment scatters everything before it like a thunderbolt.” *On the Sublime*, I.4. The sublime as a property of the text is described as “intense utterance,” vehement passion,” “speed, power, intensity,” its effects on the hearer are “overpowering.” He is “carried away,” “utterly enthralled.”

<sup>126</sup>Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 51.

<sup>127</sup>Norman Peterson, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). Cf. also his article, “Literary Criticism in Biblical Studies,” in *Orientation by Disorientation: Studies in Literary Criticism and Biblical Literary Criticism. Presented in Honor of W. A. Beardslee*, ed. R. A. Spencer (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980), 25-50.

<sup>128</sup>Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics,” in *Style in Language*, ed. T. A. Sebeok (Cambridge: Technology Press, 1960), 350-377.

helpful corrective in the form of the above chart (Figure 1: Literary Compass) comes from an article written by Paul Hernadi, who expands upon Jakobson's theory.<sup>129</sup> Though Hernadi's insights are rich and complex, I only wish to extract the one simple chart ("map" to Hernadi) which illustrates the general tendency in modern criticism to focus upon the vertical axis of reference to the neglect of the horizontal axis of rhetorical communications. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 3, the language of Mark's Gospel functions more along the rhetorical axis than the referential axis, and I will attempt to orient my criticism accordingly.<sup>130</sup>

A second corrective will supplant the spacial metaphor and its corresponding objectifying implications with a temporal counterpart.<sup>131</sup> When audiences are listeners and not readers, spoken words are events and not things: they are never present all at once but occur syllable after syllable.<sup>132</sup> Further, spoken words do not exist in space but in time. Leitch, though espousing a deconstructionalist position, sums up the situation when he writes, "The form of the text is a belated and recollective construction; it does not exist. Readers do not encounter form. The flow of words, the temporal being of the text, requires from the reader active involvement and interested exploration. Thus, *the text is an event.*"<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>Paul Hernadi, "Literary Theory: A Compass for Critics," *Critical Inquiry* 3 (1976), 369-386.

<sup>130</sup>Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*) is primarily a sustained argument for the rhetorical effect of Mark. However, in an intriguing manner, Fowler ("Reading Matthew Reading Mark") even shows how Matthew is much more referential and Mark more rhetorical utilizing Jesus' baptism and empty tomb narratives as examples (12-16).

<sup>131</sup>I attribute this observation to the reading theory of Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978). The left-to-right reading of a sentence which is the focal point of Iser's phenomenology of reading has correlation to the word by word experience of an oral reading event.

<sup>132</sup>Walter Ong, "Text as Interpretation: Mark and After," *Semeia* 39 (1987), 22.

<sup>133</sup>Vincent Leitch, *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 60-80 (emphasis original).

## 5.6 FALLACY 4: MODERN POTENTIAL PRACTICES VERSES ANCIENT ACTUAL PRACTICES

Before moving towards a definition of literacy, a final observation regarding the depiction of ancient literacy will help us to properly situate it in ancient society. First, we must refrain from dealing with potentials when it comes to literacy. It is natural for a twenty-first century scholar to unknowingly blend ancient facts with a modern epistemological perspective and develop a syncretic potential model which will be unlike anything which existed in antiquity. For example, scholars search the historical records for examples of silent reading in antiquity, as if the possibility of silent reading would alter the cultural milieu.<sup>134</sup> The practice of reading aloud, common among the ancients, "should not be attributed to an inability to read with the eyes alone, but to a cultural convention that powerfully associated text with voice, reading, declamation, and listening."<sup>135</sup> The point is that the potential for one to read silently existed as early as the sixth century before Christ, but oral recitation of texts of all kinds existed into the modern period not because it was the only choice but because it was the cultural choice. It seems that reading aloud "remained the fundamental cement of diverse forms of sociability."<sup>136</sup> George Kennedy elaborates upon this tendency,

The existence of a written text as a basis of literary criticism certainly potentially changed the nature of the critical act. It facilitated comparison of contexts, either in two or more works or within a single work, encouraged re-reading with the knowledge of the text as a whole, allowed a greater accuracy of citation, and helped to ensure a greater integrity of preservation of the original. A written text may have implied a gradual privileging of the visual over the aural . . . *But, it is easy to exaggerate these potentialities.* Throughout antiquity, texts continued to be read aloud, rather than silently. Sounds remained an integral part of the literary

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<sup>134</sup>For example, following the publication of Achtemeier's article "Omne Verbum Sonat" several addendums were printed in the form of critical notes. Michael Slusser, "Reading Silently in Antiquity," *JBL* 111 (1992), 499; Frank Gilliard, "More Silent Reading in Antiquity," *JBL* 112 (1993), 689-696. Additional occurrences of silent reading in antiquity were pointed out yet they in no way undermined Achtemeier's thesis, that reading silently was quite unusual and drew attention because of its unexpectedness.

<sup>135</sup>Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, 16.

<sup>136</sup>Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, 16.

experience. The major goal of formal education remained the ability to speak. Texts written on papyrus scrolls, the usual form of the book until the late Roman empire, were cumbersome to consult, compare, and collate. Like oral speech, they emphasized the linear quality of a work. Throughout antiquity, most literary criticism is either concerned with the rhetorical qualities of particular passages, or takes the form of a running commentary.<sup>137</sup>

Thus, a major step in traversing the ancient-modern epistemological dilemma is to make a clear distinction between all potential literary uses (i.e., what was possible) and the actual practices in first century Palestine. A classic example of "potentiality" arises in the adoption of the new form of book production, the codex. One might assume that the invention of the codex would supplant the use of the scroll, primarily because of its handling ease (one might be able to both read and write simultaneously rather than use both hands to read), its ability to hold more material, its cost effectiveness (write on both sides of page), and the possibility of pagination, indexes, and reference use. However, in actuality, beyond Christian circles, mastery and uses of possibilities of the codex form gained ground slowly. The cultural pressures surrounding reading practices and the functions of writing were more powerful than any potential advance we moderns might envision. Possibilities which in part arise from modern assumptions separated from actual practices can cause conclusions to be potentially anachronistic.

Finally, in our contemporary world, where illiteracy is considered a handicap, it seems implausible to call the ability to read optional. However, in summary fashion there are many reasons why personal literacy did not become a more integral part of ancient living.<sup>138</sup> (1) Practical writing materials were expensive and hard to come by.

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<sup>137</sup>George A. Kennedy, "Language and Meaning in Archaic and Classical Greece," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism Volume I: Classical Criticism*, ed. George A. Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 88-89.

<sup>138</sup>The following list is detailed in Casey Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism: The Influence of the Principle of Orality on the Literary Structure of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, Ph.D. dissertation 1995, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, 22-23. Since published *Oral Biblical Criticism: The Influence of the Principles of Orality on the Literary Structure of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Sheffield, Sheffield Press, 1999).

(2) The unavailability of corrective lenses made detailed work difficult for many with vision problems. (3) There was virtually no public education and private education could be afforded only by the wealthy. Moreover, most people outside of the upper class could not afford the time investment required to learn the skills of literacy. (4) Literacy, for the most part was not necessary for the survival of the masses since the traditional educational process of apprenticeship provided the essentials for social life and economic survival. People learned the skills for life through experience and oral instruction rather than via texts. (5) Finally, literary material was readily available to the illiterate through performances, speeches, recitations in the marketplace, the theater, and in various religious settings. Thus, in this oral/aural environment, most anyone with ears to hear could acquire essential information, though they would be considered functionally illiterate by modern standards.

## 5.7 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF LITERACY

With these preliminaries in mind, a definition for literacy can be formulated which minimizes the possibility of anachronisms. Thus, rather than focusing upon the mere skills of literacy, such as the basic abilities to read and write which are not stable commodities across cultures, a definition will be proposed which describes its function in a first century culture. *Literacy was a means of communication demonstrated in a community's ability to decode, use, reproduce, and compose written materials.*<sup>139</sup> This propels the emphasis in a new direction. In antiquity, all the skills necessary to perform the decoding and reproduction of written texts did not need to be possessed by an individual. In other words, reading and writing were normally seen as community

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<sup>139</sup>In part this definition has been borrowed and altered from Graff, *The Labyrinths of Literacy*, 10. It is important to recognize that each of the terms in the above definition "community, decode, use, reproduce, and compose" progress in the respective skill level required. For example, decoding a written message is not nearly as difficult as original composition. Loveday Alexander ("Ancient Book Production and the Circulation of the Gospels," in *The Gospels for All Christians*, ed. Richard Bauckham [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]) says, "it may be more appropriate to see literacy as a craft that could be owned and controlled by the wealthy elite, but was not necessarily practiced by them in person" (81).

efforts. This is true across most political, economic, and religious strata of ancient society. For example, many readers and writers were slaves trained specifically for their tasks in the marketplace, thereby making it possible for businessmen to communicate with one another who were, in a modern sense, functionally illiterate.<sup>140</sup> Literate family members or friends banded together to function as surrogates when their skills were required.<sup>141</sup> Storytellers helped to preserve and to circulate the history and social values of a community through the oral medium, until at some juncture it was compiled in manuscript form.<sup>142</sup> Pieter Botha sums it up this way, "Greco-Roman literacy remained a kind of imitation talking. It functioned as a subset of a basically oral culture . . . [and] was connected to the physical presence of people and to living speech to an extent that is consistently underestimated today."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>Pieter Botha ("Letter Writing and Oral Communication in Antiquity," *Scriptura* 42 [1992]:17-34) suggests that Paul himself may have been illiterate (22-23). Joanna Dewey ("Textuality in An Oral Culture") without revealing her position on Botha's opinion says, "Whether or not one wishes to pursue Botha's thought this far, Botha is certainly correct that literacy is much less necessary for the creation and reception of Paul's letters than we instinctively assume" (49).

<sup>141</sup>Hanson, "Ancient Illiteracy," 168. Hanson goes on to say, "[S]ince fraud and deception were easy for literates to perpetrate against illiterates and semi-literates, these men and women turned to three main categories of writers in order to afford themselves some degree of protection against the unscrupulous. They turned first to literates among close relatives and family members; next to friends, business associates, and other colleagues; finally to professional scribes in government employ" (164). Cf., Youtie, "ΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΕΥΣ: Social Impact of Illiteracy in Greco-Roman Egypt," 201-221 for citations of primary sources.

<sup>142</sup>Holly Hearon, *Witness and Counter Witness: The Function of the Mary Magdalene Tradition in Early Christian Communities*, Ph.D. dissertation at the Graduate Theological Union, 1998, esp. 71ff under the subheading "Storytelling in the World of Antiquity." Cf. Alex Scobie, "Storytellers, Storytelling, and the Novel in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *Rheinisches Museum Für Philologie* 122 (1979), 229-259.

<sup>143</sup>Botha, "Greco-Roman Literacy," 206-207.

## 6 SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the overall goal of this thesis; to understand the reception of the Gospel of Mark in a manner similar to an ancient audience. The investigation began by documenting that the primary hermeneutical concern is that any methodology which attempts to interpret the text of the Second Gospel without taking into consideration the oral medium through which it was created and transmitted to its early listeners may be introducing anachronistic problems. Further, it was argued that our twenty-first century visual bias may inhibit our ability to experience the text in the oral/aural orientation of antiquity.

Now that we as modern readers have been alerted to some potential epistemological problems, the task of the next chapter will be to document the nature of communication in the New Testament world. For example, how was manuscript information created, stored, and conveyed to its audience? Furthermore, what skills were required by the manuscript's creator, reader, and receiver(s) and were the skills individually possessed or were they held by the community?

# 2

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## A Question of History

With regard to literature . . . in antiquity, they read unusually, not as today, principally with their eyes, but with the lips, pronouncing what they saw, and with the ears, listening to the words pronounced, hearing what is called the "voices of the pages." It is a real acoustical reading, *legere* means at the same time *audire* . . . This results in more than a visual memory of the written words. What results is a muscular memory of the words pronounced and an aural memory of the words heard.

Father Jean Leclercq, *L'áamour des lettres et le désir de Dieu*

The main advantage that we enjoy, the ready availability of a vast apparatus of accurate scholarship in the shape of commentaries, dictionaries, reference books and other secondary literature, can be attributed directly to the invention of printing. . . . If we try to imagine ourselves without these aids to understanding of literature we may begin to comprehend something of the situation of the reader in the world of the hand-written papyrus book.

E. J. Kenny, *Books and Readers in the Roman World*

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

John Miles Foley's words in the opening pages of *The Singer of Tales in Performance* sets the tone for our task ahead,

Even though the field of interpretation is enlarged and deepened, textual heuristics tacitly demands that we privilege the individual document above all else. But what if the familiar grid were to prove at least in part unhelpful? What if, by insisting on a text-centered perspective, it obscured more than illuminated? Questions such as these arise whenever one considers either those forms of verbal art that arise and flourish wholly within an oral tradition or, perhaps less

obviously, those related forms that, although they may survive only as texts, have roots planted firmly in an oral tradition.<sup>144</sup>

A basic question emerges from Foley, what if our modern presuppositions regarding texts and how they function in society create distortion in how the text was meant for public performance? The cornerstone of this thesis assumes that one can not experience the New Testament in a manner analogous to the first century audience while overlooking the oral medium through which it was originally conceived and transmitted. In short, the ancient gospel message was created via dictation, delivered through the oral performance of a reader to a live audience, and applied to the life of the church in a communal/liturgical setting. To the modern biblical scholar who silently reads a printed text in the privacy of his/her office, this "common knowledge" serves as preliminary historical or cultural background. However, the question we are addressing is what impact will result if the oral/aural media consideration is integrated into the overall contemporary reading model? Will it not enhance the gospel's experiential and communal aspects which were inherently present in its original oral form?

In the last chapter, we attempted to point out the extent of the hermeneutical problems which exist for the modern reader. The task of this second chapter will be historical in nature, as we situate the practice of reading firmly in the cultural distinctiveness of the first century. First, we will investigate the tools available for reading and writing, all the while defining the components of an ancient "reading-event." Once we define the "what" of reading, we will then explore the "why" as we discuss the actual function writing had in the ancient world, with a focus on the early church. Overall the goal of this chapter will be to establish a historic baseline from which we can discuss ancient reading and writing practices. Then, we will have data

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<sup>144</sup>John Miles Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xi.

upon which to critique modern reading theories and to avoid introducing anachronisms into our proposed reading methodology to be presented in Chapter 3.

## 2 COMMUNICATION IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Writing was more than merely a record keeper of meaning for its author; it also housed memories of his voice. As quoted earlier, Quintilian said, "The use of letters is to preserve vocal sounds and to return them to the readers as a sacred trust."<sup>145</sup> Thus, it is vital to see that the oral culture controlled the way communication was carried out, especially with reference to the written medium and how it interfaced with its audience. Father Walter Ong builds upon that thought as he describes a culture in transition:

What is put down in writing is in effect oral performance. The first age of writing is the age of scribes, writers of more or less orally conceived discourse. The author addresses himself to imagined listeners at an imagined oral performance of his, which is simply transcribed on a writing surface.<sup>146</sup>

Ong stresses that orality is the primary influence on how a written text is conceived and ultimately shaped. Conversely, Werner Kelber's *The Oral and Written Gospel* postulates that the introduction of writing into an oral world serves as a "disruption of the oral life world [as] the text induced the eclipse of voices and sound."<sup>147</sup> This may be true but only from a print oriented perspective, for it in no way affected the sound of the text(s). As will be shown, all texts were vocalized in both their creation and in their recitation. Kelber has commanding knowledge of the issues. Nevertheless, his conclusion that the emergence of an exclusively textual culture can be condensed into just a few decades following Jesus' death rather than the numerous centuries that historical evidence supports creates a faulty premise. It is this flawed axiom, that the text becomes silent once it is placed in written form, which contradicts historical evidence as well as Kelber's own logic. Near the end of his discussion on

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<sup>145</sup>Quintilian, *Inst Or*, 1,7,31.

<sup>146</sup>Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 281-282. In other places, when Ong speaks of an oral society he often employs a focused definition, meaning an exclusively primitive oral society without a written language. However, his context here assumes one similar to first century Palestine.

<sup>147</sup>Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, 91. Interestingly enough, Kelber was well aware of this fact with his statement "the hearer of the gospel of Mark" (209) yet discounts its existence in his interpretation.

Mark's oral legacy, Kelber outlines a hypothetical storytelling situation where he concludes that

the context in which oral communication transpires is not purely linguistic, but physical and social as well. The speaker seeks to reach his or her audience by the instinctive use of physiognomic characteristics, the inflection of tone and pitch of voice, the phrasing of words, and the tonal manipulation of narrative variables. The hearers may respond during and/or after the narration. Their questions, interjections, applause, and expressions of doubt reflect back on the speaker and sway his or her formulation of the message. Even if the audience is totally silent, the very expressions on their faces are reflex mechanisms that will not fail to make an impact on the speaker.<sup>148</sup>

In the very next paragraph, following the vivid description of the interaction between the reader and the audience, Kelber writes, "The *reader* of parabolic *texts* lacks this very physical, social contextuality without which hearers are not inclined to find meaning. . . . The reader, however, abstracts parabolic speech and is forced to treat it in a purely linguistic context."<sup>149</sup> In one respect he is correct. We no longer are able to hear Jesus speak his own words nor can we view his gestures and body language. However, this does not take the presentation of the gospel out of the oral realm and place it in an exclusively literary context, as Kelber would have one believe.<sup>150</sup> The written gospel is most certainly being read aloud by an animated reader and experienced by a listening community. Text and sound were united in antiquity and a separation of them opens the modern interpreter to distortions. To this false assumption we now turn our attention.

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<sup>148</sup>Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 75.

<sup>149</sup>Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 75 (emphasis original).

<sup>150</sup>Kelber is well aware of this, when he deals briefly (*Oral and Written Gospel*, 217-218) with the oral performance of written texts in antiquity. He calls this phenomenon, secondary orality. It is a shame that secondary orality is not treated more fully, but not surprising for it would severely undermine his thesis of the radical difference between orality and textuality (Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Markan World in Literary-Historical Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989], 44-45, n36).

## 2.1 ORALITY AND TEXTUALITY: PARTNERS OR COMPETITORS

Kelber's description of the disruptive effect writing had on orality appears to be based in part of his theological premise that the written text of Mark did not serve to record the words and acts of Jesus but took the form of a polemic against the oral traditionalists of an opposing Christian group. This assumption forced him to take a historically unsupportable position when asking the question, how rapidly did writing silence an oral world? In honesty, the question itself is misleading, for it bifurcates ancient reading into either/or categories. In the first century, the written word did not supplant the oral.<sup>151</sup> Rather, it played a supportive role to the spoken word, a necessary and amicable partnership in an ever expanding commercial, political, and religious environment. The bulk of empirical evidence lies on the side of a slow evolutionary progress consistently until the late seventeenth century.

The transformation from a primarily oral to a literary society can be substantiated but should never be considered rapid. For example, in antiquity the entire educational process was essentially oral. Pupils were taught to read aloud, almost to the exclusion of other subjects.<sup>152</sup> Long into the Middle Ages, education remained oral in principle.<sup>153</sup> Though texts were foundational in teaching, basic instruction and examinations remained dialogical in nature.<sup>154</sup> Textuality never usurped orality until long after Gutenberg invented the printing press. One medieval

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<sup>151</sup>In a later article discussing the a-historical contrast he creates between the oral world and the written text, Kelber admits that in the *Oral and Written Gospel*, "emphasis fell on that division (chasm), it was because a novel approach requires a strong thesis" ("Jesus and Tradition," 159).

<sup>152</sup>H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1956), (as quoted by M. A. Beavis, "The Trial Before the Sanhedrin," *CBQ* 49 [1987], 593. Cf. especially M. A. Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 7-68, for detailed account of Greco-Roman education and its impact upon a Markan reading.

<sup>153</sup>Cf. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* for a detailed description of the complicated interdependencies between writing and the underlying oralities, particularly in the church of the Middle Ages.

<sup>154</sup>Thomas (*Literacy and Orality*) points out that until the Middle Ages, literacy tests would be given with a text familiar to the reader, such as a Bible passage. Overall, the vast majority of reading would be devoted not to new texts but to familiar ones for the explicit purpose of memorization (9).

copyist's words confirm the innately oral nature of scribal labor, "Three fingers write, two eyes look, one tongue speaks, the whole body works..."<sup>155</sup> Extensive evidence indicates that far into the middle ages books were written more for the ears than for the eyes.<sup>156</sup>

The oral and the written cultural worlds should not be viewed as mutually exclusive competitors, as if the textual world in some fashion dealt a death blow to the oral.<sup>157</sup> Written texts of antiquity should not be understood as standing in opposition to oral traditions but as partners in a dynamic relationship. For example, no longer was the author's memory the sole means of preservation nor was the transmission of a story limited by the distance the author could travel. The story could now be permanently stored in written form and transported widely. However, the oral-written partnership usually culminated with a text's re-vocalization in the sound of a storyteller's voice.<sup>158</sup>

One reason for the slow transition to textuality can be categorized as the community's cultural bias against the written text.<sup>159</sup> In part the ancients doubted that

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<sup>155</sup>H. J. Chaytor, *From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1945), 14 n1.

<sup>156</sup>Examples can be found in Chaytor, *Script to Print*, 11-13; Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, 216-217. Clanchy discusses punctuation systems designed for the ear and not for silent readers. Nelson, "From 'Listen, Lordings' to 'Dear Reader,'" 112; Roger Walker, "Oral Delivery or Private Delivery?," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 7 (1971), 39-42; Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, 38-39. Graham cites numerous references where book dedications expressly state that they are meant to be read aloud.

<sup>157</sup>Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 160. A. B. Lord cites in *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), "oral and literary techniques [are] contradictory and mutually exclusive" and he holds the idea that once the idea of a set 'correct' text arrived, 'the death knell of the oral process had been sounded'" (129,137). However, Lord was referring specifically to the fluidity of the oral presentation in a primitive oral culture; how it changed with each successive performance; not to the possibility that textuality can complement orality.

<sup>158</sup>This concept is fully developed by Samuel Byrskog in *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994), 341-349 and further applied in *Story as History - History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2000), 141-143, n253.

<sup>159</sup>For information regarding the Greek aversion to books and writing, cf., Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History - History as Story*, 109-144; Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship From the Beginning to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 16-32, esp. 31-32 and L. Alexander, "The Living

the text had the ability to produce the same effects as the spoken word. Seneca, who was active while the gospel tradition was emerging, says, "the living voice and the sharing of someone's daily life will be of more help than a treatise" (*Ep. Mor.* 6:5). Lawyers in Greece and Rome hesitated to produce written legal code and some of the early church fathers expressed anxiety concerning their own writing.<sup>160</sup> Papias' often quoted statement, found in Eusebius [*H.E.* 3.39.3-4], supports this underlying mistrust, "I do not suppose that things from books would benefit me so much as things from a living and abiding source." The phrase "living and abiding source" is not unique to him and frequently appears in literature of antiquity as almost a *topos* in certain contexts.<sup>161</sup>

It is clear that the above discussion seems to group all ancient texts into an homogeneous genre; as if philosophical, religious, poetic, and dramatic works functioned the same in ancient society. No claim could be farther from the truth. However, there is one certain generalization, virtually no text in antiquity was

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Voice: Skepticism Toward the Written Word in Early Christian and in Greco-Roman Texts," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of 40 Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. David Clines, Stephen Fowl, Stanley Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1990), 221-47. A major exception is Plato, with his desire to expel oral poets from his *Republic*. However, this is a complex and often convoluted issue. Cf. Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel* and E. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), for a discussion of the issues. Havelock argues persuasively that Plato's censure of poetry (*mimesis*) in the *Republic* was in fact an attack on the oral mind set in fourth century Athens. See also an interesting footnote on the issue in Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 259, n 111. Gamble identifies another well-known statement in which Plato states his opposition to writing (*Phaedrus* 274b-277a). The argument there is not against writing books, but against "the idea that manuals are an adequate substitute for dialogical personal teaching." Furthermore, the situation is different in the Platonic *Seventh Letter*. There, we read that Plato has never written nor will write anything regarding his true center of philosophy, "There is no writing of mine of these subjects, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued discourse between teacher and pupil" (341c-d). It is worth commenting on that as Plato used the new logical (abstract thinking) methods which literary media afforded, his teaching style was primarily oral, dependent upon dialectic. Cf. W. Greene, "The Spoken and Written Word," *Harvard Studies of Classical Philology* 60 (1951), 47-48 and George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition*, 52-60, for an ironical reading of Socrates' speeches (oral) in *Phaedrus* as documented by Plato (writing).

<sup>160</sup>Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 157-58.

<sup>161</sup>Alexander, "The Living Voice," 221-47. It should be pointed out that it was not oral tradition that Papias esteemed nearly as much as first-hand information.

communicated without being verbalized. Regarding the different genres, philosophical writings might be considered the most inaccessible to orality, since we moderns might assume that the dense argumentation of Greco-Roman philosophy needs to be carefully analyzed, according to modern literary norms. However, Pierre Hadot argues just the opposite,

More than any other literature, philosophical works are linked to oral transmission because ancient philosophy itself is oral in character. . . . In matters of philosophical teaching, writing is only an aid to memory, a last resort that will never replace the living word. True education is always oral because only the spoken word . . . makes it possible for the disciple to discover the truth himself amid the interplay of questions and answers. Some of the works, moreover, are directly related to the situation of the teaching, . . . either a summary of the teacher drafted in preparing his course or notes taken by students during the course.<sup>162</sup>

## 2.2 DEFINING THE COMMUNICATION CONTEXT

For the sake of future discussion, it will be useful to label the communication context of the first century, in a descriptive way.<sup>163</sup> A good starting point will be Walter Ong's analysis of the development of culture, who divides it into three stages: oral, alphabetic/print, and electronic.<sup>164</sup> In refining the variations of orality which occur within the above categories, Ong says,

Of course, long after the invention of script and even print, distinctively oral forms of thought and expression linger, competing with the forms introduced with script and print. Cultures in which this is the case can be referred to as

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<sup>162</sup> "Forms of life and Forms of Discourse in Ancient Philosophy," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1990), 497-498. However, that does not fully address the individual "performative" idiosyncracies of each text-type. For example, was a philosophical text communicated in the same manner as a drama? Furthermore, what about biblical commentaries, such as those by Philo or from the Qumran community, which were specifically created as written documents based upon other written documents? See below in this chapter, *Function of Writing in Second-Temple Judaism* for a full discussion.

<sup>163</sup>The most current summary discussion is found in John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 36-40. This section is dependent upon his insights.

<sup>164</sup>Ong, "Presence," 22.

radically oral, largely oral, residually oral, and so on through various degrees... of orality.<sup>165</sup>

Even with this refinement, Ong's taxonomy is too broad in scope. For the purpose of this thesis, it compresses several shifts in media (e.g., oral to chirographic; chirographic to print) and the breadth of the category encompasses every conceivable use of writing<sup>166</sup> in the category of alphabetic/print.

Building upon Ong's foundation, Boomershine approaches the issue in a more user friendly manner as he breaks down the categories into the primary communication medium operative in a given culture.<sup>167</sup> Boomershine creates four types of cultures<sup>168</sup>: (1) In the oral culture, the medium is sound, transmitted by memory. (2) In manuscript culture, writing becomes the dominant communication system; traditions are collected and preserved in manuscripts; public reading of the written manuscripts is the primary means of distribution. (3) In print culture, movable type makes possible widespread duplication and distribution of documents; private study and interpretation becomes common. (4) In silent print culture, texts are entirely dissociated from sound and in the case of biblical studies, serve as "documentary sources for the establishment of either historical facticity . . . or theological truths."<sup>169</sup> The specific cultural designate that is

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<sup>165</sup>Ong, "Presence," 22.

<sup>166</sup>V. Robbins lists five writing activities which existed in Mediterranean antiquity alone. (1) scribal reproduction, (2) progymnastic composition, (3) narrative composition, (4) discursive composition, (5) poetic composition ("Writing as a Rhetorical act in Plutarch and the Gospels" in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in NT Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, JSNT Sup 50, ed. D. F. Watson [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991], 145 n3.)

<sup>167</sup>Boomershine's work has been instrumental, primarily in the area of how biblical interpretation must adapt to a shift in media. Cf., "Peter's Denial as Polemic or Confession," 47-68; "Biblical Megatrends: Towards a Paradigm for the Interpretation of the Bible in Electronic Media. *SBLSP* (1987), 144-157; "Doing Theology in the Electronic Age: The Meeting of Orality and Electricity," *Journal of Theology* 95 (1991), 4-14.

<sup>168</sup>Boomershine assumes the existence of an emerging fifth culture: electronic or hyper-text culture. Cf., references in previous footnote. Cf., also, Robert Fowler, "How the Secondary Orality of the Electronic Age Can Awaken Us to the Primary Orality of Antiquity," presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Great Lakes Bible Society, April 14-15, 1994.

<sup>169</sup>Boomershine, "Biblical Megatrends," 144-157.

relevant to this thesis is Boomershine's "manuscript culture" which describes a culture at the time of the composition of the New Testament.<sup>170</sup> However, the problem with using "manuscript" to describe the first century culture is two fold. First, it focuses upon the literary impact of the time while subtly submerging the influence which oral communication played in the culture. Second, as an extension of the first problem, the term concentrates more on the preservation of the words than on the impact they made on a listening audience.

Pieter Botha, a South African scholar, has written extensively on the subject of orality. He offers a corrective which might help to eliminate misunderstanding by introducing the term, "scribal culture."<sup>171</sup> Implicit within that term is a "culture familiar with writing but in essence still significantly, even predominantly oral."<sup>172</sup> In further describing the culture, Botha says, "reading is largely vocal and illiteracy the rule rather than the exception."<sup>173</sup> Vernon Robbins enters into this search for terms as he raises his concern regarding the use of "scribal" to describe the culture.

Only during the last half of the second century did a scribal culture that resisted rhetorical composition as it re-performed the gospel tradition begin to dominate

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<sup>170</sup>Dewey, "Oral Methods," 33 also identifies the period as a manuscript culture. Dewey has established another hypothesis for understanding oral cultures of the first century. "Christianity began as an oral phenomenon in a predominately oral culture within which a dominant elite were literate and made extensive use of writing to maintain hegemony and control. Only gradually did Christianity come to depend upon the written word." ("Textuality in An Oral Culture," 38.) I agree in part with Dewey's description. However, as she elaborates on her hypothesis, she places negative connotations upon the literate elite and the "hierarchical authority" which they exercise, especially over women, through their control of the writing of the biblical texts. Conversely, she applies positive and somewhat egalitarian overtones to what she calls the "spirit-led oral leadership" and spoken word of the first century culture. Thus, she tends to interject value judgments when she should remain value-neutral. This problem causes her definition of terms such as "literate" and "oral" cultures to fall into moral and prescriptive categories rather than descriptive ones.

<sup>171</sup>"Mute Manuscript: Analyzing a Neglected Aspect of Ancient Communication." *Theologia Evangelica* 23 (1990), 35-47; "Greco-Roman Literacy as Setting for New Testament Writings," 195-215. Kelber also subscribes to the term, scribal culture, in his essay, "From Aphorism to Saying Gospel and from Parable to Narrative Gospel," *Foundations and Facets Forum* 1 (1985), 23-30.

<sup>172</sup>Botha, "Mute Manuscripts," 42.

<sup>173</sup>Botha, "Mute Manuscripts," 42.

the transmission of early Christian literature. For this stage of transmission the prevailing literary-historical methods of analysis are highly informative. To impose such a scribal environment on the context in which the New Testament gospels initially were written and re-written is a fundamental error.<sup>174</sup>

Robbins goes on to describe the differences between oral, rhetorical and scribal cultures.

The phrase "oral culture" should be used for those environments where written literature is not in view. The phrase "rhetorical culture," in contrast, should refer to environments where oral and written speech interact closely with one another. It would be best to limit "scribal culture" to those environments where a primary goal is to "copy" either oral statements or written texts.<sup>175</sup>

Robbins' views evolve even further in a later publication as he presents a taxonomy that distinguishes between different kinds of cultures in more of a functional than descriptive manner: (1) oral culture (2) rhetorical culture (3) scribal (4) reading (5) literary (6) print (7) hypertext.<sup>176</sup> The term "rhetorical" seems to present an option which is the best of both worlds. First, it allows for the tension which existed within a culture in transition. Yet at the same time it "features comprehensive interaction between spoken and written statements."<sup>177</sup> Further, it makes room for the performative side of the material in a culture which assumed texts would be orally recited to an audience. This is further substantiated by David Cartlidge, "The evidence from late antiquity is that oral operations (presentation and hearing) and the literary operations (reading and writing) were (1) inescapably interlocked, and (2) they were communal activities."<sup>178</sup> Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, I will refer to the first century culture as "rhetorical" rather than a somewhat nondescript "literate with a high

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<sup>174</sup>Vernon Robbins, "Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and the Pre-Gospel Traditions: A New Approach," in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism*, BETL 110, ed. C. Focant (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 116.

<sup>175</sup>Robbins, "Writing as a Rhetorical act in Plutarch and the Gospels," 157-186.

<sup>176</sup>For detailed definitions of the terms, cf., Vernon Robbins, "Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response," *Semeia* 65 (1994), 75-91.

<sup>177</sup>Robbins, "Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response," 80.

<sup>178</sup>David Cartlidge, "Combien d'unités avez-vous de trois à quatre? What Do We Mean by Intertextuality in Early Church Studies?" *SBLSP* (1990), 407.

residual orality."<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, it was a dynamic period characterized by the interaction of oral, rhetorical, and even scribal environments; often overlapping in indistinguishable ways.

### 2.3 DEFINING THE ANCIENT READING-EVENT

Scholars agree that reading in the first century was primarily oral, both public and private. The most notable exception does not arise until several centuries later, with Augustine's surprise at Ambrose's reading style. Augustine's *Confession* in VI.3 reads,

When [Ambrose] was not with [crowds of busy men] . . . he either refreshed his body with needed food or his mind with reading. When he read his eyes moved down the pages and his heart sought out their meaning, *while his voice and tongue remained silent*. . . . However, need to save his voice, which easily grew hoarse, was perhaps the correct reason why he read to himself. But whatever intention he did it, that man did it for a good purpose.<sup>180</sup>

Henri Marrou confirms this when he says, "The child read aloud, of course: throughout antiquity, until the late empire, silent reading was exceptional. People read aloud to themselves, or if they could, got a servant to read to them."<sup>181</sup>

It is not enough to say that texts were merely read aloud, but it must be emphasized that they were read with expression. Mary Ann Beavis confirms this axiom with her investigation into the four stages of the analysis of classical texts in secondary education.<sup>182</sup> The first stage merely involves the comparison of a pupil's own copy with

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<sup>179</sup>Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 158.

<sup>180</sup>This comment in Augustine's *Confessions* is more than a passing event. For Ambrose's reading style was not just a cultural novelty to Augustine but a sort of a spiritual discipline. (Cf. Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* [London: Harvard University Press, 1996]), 62-63.

<sup>181</sup>Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 154.

<sup>182</sup>Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 23ff. Dionysius the Thracian who taught at Rhodes from 140 to 90 B.C. divided the subject into six headings, found in his standard textbook, *Techne*. (1) Reading aloud, (2) the explanation of rhetorical figures, (3) explanation of archaisms (4) the findings of etymologies, (5) elucidation of analogy, (6) the "noblest part of the critic's business, judgement of the poetry." Cicero

his master's text. It is the second stage, which is called, ἀναγινώσις or expressive reading which is important for our task. Expressive reading was a complex process

beginning with the marking of the unpunctuated manuscript into lines, words, and syllables for the sake of scansion. Pupils were expected to understand the texts they read, and teachers equipped them with summaries and explanations of the poems and plays being studied, even using visual aids. The expressive reading followed. The pupil was expected to take into account the sense of the text, the rhythm of the verse and the general tone of the work. Finally, the pupil memorized and recited the text.<sup>183</sup>

From an interpretative perspective, an "expressive reader" can easily alter an audience's understanding of a fixed text's meaning by portraying it in a matter-of-fact manner or by reading it with heavy ironic overtones which can be communicated with silent winks. Dionysius, in his textbook on criticism, equated reading with performance when he said,

reading is the correct performance of poetic and prose texts. The reader must assume the appropriate persona, take account of the metre, and adopt the appropriate speaking voice. The first of these enables us to appreciate the quality of the text which is being read; the second, the craftsmanship; the third, the thought behind the text.<sup>184</sup>

Thus, in antiquity the reading event was the end result of a lengthy process and was seen as an act of interpretation.<sup>185</sup> During the actual performance, the reader would

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echoed the same divisions (*De Orat.* 1.187). Quintilian (1.8.1-18) limits himself to the first four categories of Dionysius.

<sup>183</sup>Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 23. Her work primarily comes from Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 153-156.

<sup>184</sup>Dionysius, *Thrax De. Gram.* 2.

<sup>185</sup>Quinn, "The Poet and his Audience" 30.1. "The fact was, where literary texts were concerned, performance was not merely a matter of technical skills, it was a matter of interpretation. . . . [A]nd we can understand that the Romans came to depend upon a performance which was authenticated by the author himself (sic), or by a professional reader or critic who was, or had been trained by, a recognized interpreter of the author" (90).

employ gestures, body language, and elocutionary aspects of speech.<sup>186</sup> Then, during or at the conclusion of the reading, in accordance with ancient practice, the reader would be prepared to answer questions from the audience.<sup>187</sup> In Plutarch's words, "The hearer is a participant in the discourse, a fellow worker with the speaker."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup>For details of the affective influence of orators on their audience in ancient primary sources, cf. Martin Cobin, "An Oral Interpreter's Index to Quintilian," *QJS* 44 (1958), 61-66. For another example, cf. Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History*, trans. W. H. Carruth (New York: Schocken, 1964). The father of form criticism says, "But even when the story-teller said nothing of the soul-life of his heroes, his hearer did not entirely fail to catch the impression of it. We must recall . . . that they are dealing with orally recited stories. Between the narrator and the hearer there is another link than that of words; the tone of voice talks, the expression of the face or the gestures of the narrator. Joy and grief, love, anger, jealousy, hatred, emotion, and all the moods of the heroes, shared by the narrator, were thus imparted to his hearers without the utterance of a word" (62).

<sup>187</sup>Plutarch, *On Listening to Lectures*, 42-48. According to Plutarch, the listener may even interrupt the lecture with questions, not simply wait until the end. The explanation of the text which might follow the textual reading may be a parallel to a Jewish-like Midrash.

<sup>188</sup>Plutarch, *On Listening to Lectures*, 45.14. A Markan parallel exists with the disciples questioning of Jesus, 4:10; 10:10; 13:3. Beavis (*Mark's Audience*) postulates that like a Greco-Roman schoolmaster, the lecturers may have been prepared to give explanations to the hearers as to the meaning of the texts, structures, and their meanings (124). Cf. also Nehemiah 8:8, "And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." It seems likely that the text that was read was Hebrew and the interpretation was in Aramaic.

### 3 TOOLS AND METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

In our modern modern-based communication systems with instant access to an unlimited hypertext data, it seems incongruous to discuss the technology associated with manuscripts. Yet, without a detailed understanding of how they were created and utilized, we will continually be prone to anachronism.

#### 3.1 MODE OF COMPOSITION

It is upon the completion of the actual writing process that scholars such as Kelber insist that the unique collaboration between readers and their audiences terminates.<sup>189</sup> The formality of writing supposedly changed all this. Instead of memory and sound, the stories and traditions were forevermore confined within the "silent text."<sup>190</sup> However, sociological practices regarding composition in the first century contradict that thesis and this has caused Kelber to reconsider some of the underlying factors. "In ancient and medieval history, manuscripts functioned in an oral contextuality. . . . Dictated to a scribe and read aloud to audiences, most manuscripts were, therefore, meant to be heard and processed in memory. . . . [A manuscript] must have entailed in varying degrees memorial apperception and *composition in dictation*."<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup>Ong, "Text as Interpretation: Mark and After," 8-9. Ong sharply disagrees with Kelber. He says, "One of the most widespread errors of the past few generations of literary critics has been the assumption that to put an utterance in writing is to remove it from the state of oral discourse and thus to 'fix' it. A text does certainly separate an utterance from its author . . . but removing an utterance from its author does not remove it from discourse. No utterance can exist outside of discourse, outside of a transactional setting" (9).

<sup>190</sup>Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 95.

<sup>191</sup>Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, xxii, emphasis original. (The 1997 reprint of the book contains a new introduction by the author). Kelber takes the implication of *composition by dictation* one step farther as he says, "Contrary to the assumptions of historical criticism, a text's substantial and multifaceted investment in the tradition does not suggest intertextuality in the sense of scanning through multiple, physically accessible scrolls but, more likely, accessibility to a shared *cultural memory*" (xxiii, emphasis original).

Thus, the common method of authorship was via dictation to a scribe.<sup>192</sup> Paul Achtemeier lists numerous ancient documents which recommend dictation over writing with one's own hand.<sup>193</sup> Authors verbalized their texts as they were composed. In the final analysis, dictation was the means of composition; it was only a question of whether one dictated to oneself as they wrote or to another.<sup>194</sup>

### 3.2 PHYSICAL FORM OF MANUSCRIPTS

Our earlier description of the cultural context as rhetorical almost demands us to discuss the physical characteristics of the manuscripts as we begin to connect the issues of form and function. Once Mark was composed and written, there existed a story housed in the format of the manuscript. Therefore, prior to entering into a discussion of how it was presented in an actual "reading-event," it would behoove us to acknowledge how it was stored and how that very storage, specifically, *scriptio continua* may have contributed to the text's oral nature.

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<sup>192</sup>Cf. Skeat, "The Use of Dictation in Ancient Book Production," 179-208. However, this assumes that the author is intentionally putting his work into written form, via dictation. Production of books also came from other sources. Many of our extant documents are the notes of individuals who witnessed and recorded oral events, such as a philosopher teaching his students in a dialogical forum. Many early writers complained bitterly about the poor quality of someone else's work which was credited to them because it was penned and released without their knowledge or approval.

<sup>193</sup>Achtemeier, "Omne Verbum Sonat," 13. The only prominent dissenting voice was Quintilian who believes that an author should write for himself (sic). Yet, it must be emphasized that Quintilian's position was not out of contempt for the oral form but for quite practical reasons. First, a person who dictates would not take the proper amount of time to think before writing. Also, an incompetent scribe would cause one to lose one's train of thought. [*Inst. Or.* 10.3.18-20]. Second, Quintilian believed it was much easier to memorize things written in one's own hand [*Inst. Or.* 11.2.33] so the material could be presented orally at a later date. He was not against orality, only the use of a secretary who might negatively impact the orator's future presentation.

<sup>194</sup>Achtemeier, "Omne Verbum Sonat," 15. He points to an insightful text, Luke 1:63, where the restoration of Zechariah's speech is connected with the act of writing (ἔγραψεν λέγων). Joseph Balogh, in the earliest work on the subject argues that in the ancient world, no matter the type of written material, all readers pronounced aloud the words as they read them. In fact, the scribe, while copying a manuscript visually, pronounces aloud each word as he read it from his exemplar. This process may be called self-dictation ("Voces Paginarum," *Philologus* 82 [1926], 84-109, 202-40).

### 3.2.1 *SCRIPTIO CONTINUA*: WAS THIS PRACTICE ARCHAIC OR AURAL?

The actual physical form of the manuscript has much to say regarding its functional use. The Greek language was the phonetic vehicle for assembling the text but we will limit our investigation to the physical characteristics of the actual manuscript, specifically, *scriptio continua*, which was the common practice in antiquity of writing a manuscript without spaces between words or sentences, and with little or no punctuation. To modern readers who take their clues from visual markers, this writing practice may appear archaic or certainly technologically crude. Unless of course, the possibility exists that the text's physical make-up is linked to its function as an aural instrument for the reader.

An examination of ancient writing which utilized consonantal script (e.g., Phoenician or Akkadian) reveals the need to separate words for the purpose of reading a text aloud.<sup>195</sup> James Février, in connection with the Phoenician script, says,

It is the perfect type of the consonantal script - of abstract writing, if you prefer. It is also and in a certain sense a script of words since every word, with the exception of a few extremely brief particles, is separated from the others by a vertical bar. If Phoenician writing, even more than Egyptian and above all more than Sumero-Akkadian, rigorously separated words, it was because the abstract nature [and] the very impression of that written notation necessitated the distinction of words in order to vocalize them. Consonantal scripts were to remain faithful to this need during their entire existence. Doubtless in most Phoenician epigraphic texts, once the epoch of archaic Phoenician had passed (and in great part under the influence of Greek epigraphy), the separative signs tended to disappear, but they subsisted sporadically and we find them again in Neo-Punic and especially in Paleo-Hebraic until the second century B.C. Furthermore, when writing cursively, the Armaeans were apt to separate words with a small space; they even went a good deal farther and for certain letters

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<sup>195</sup>One of the earliest example can found in the Stele of Mesha, King of Moab. It is noteworthy that the words and sentences are divided; the words by dots and the sentences by strokes. Cf. Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, Fourth Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), plate 2, 124. An important work for its tabulation of ancient texts chronologically is A. R. Millard, "Scriptio Continua in Early Hebrew Practice: Ancient Practice or Modern Surmise," *JSS* 15 (1970), 2-15. Millard argues (contrary to long-standing scholarship e.g., B. J. Roberts), Hebrew script and its precursors usually employed word division, by spaces, dots, or short vertical strokes. This was true for both formal (inscriptional) writing as well as graffiti.

created special forms for final letters to warn the reader that he was at the end of a word.<sup>196</sup>

The Greeks, who adopted the Phoenician script as the model for their alphabet, first separated words in their inscriptions with a bar or with one or more points. "They then stopped doing so, as if it seemed to them unnecessary."<sup>197</sup> For a modern reader who visually scans a page for clues to expedite reading, this statement demands an explanation. Why employ a method for writing which apparently makes reading more difficult?

The prevailing explanation for the Greek culture's<sup>198</sup> longstanding tradition for *scriptio continua* is often established on economic grounds; the desire to save costly writing materials. However, incongruities surface when one assumes that saving space was a chief priority of the ancients. For example, copyists could have narrowed the large margins or reduced the size of the script, which would have provided ample room to leave spaces between the words. Yet this never became common practice. Spaces were not added to the text on a standard basis until well into the Middle Ages. Even more surprisingly, Latin, which up to the second A.D. had separated its words by periods, adopted *scriptio continua* into the general practice of writing, a contradiction to our expected advancement of writing technology.<sup>199</sup> If saving space was the primary

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<sup>196</sup>James Février, "Les Sémites et l'alphabet," in *L'écriture et la psychologie des peuples*, 122. Quoted in Martin, *History and Power of Writing*, 54-55.

<sup>197</sup>Martin, *History and Power of Writing*, 55. However, though I believe Martin to be correct in his conclusion, he leaves this statement dangling above the heads of his readers, with no supporting arguments.

<sup>198</sup>It should be stated that continuous script was the norm for most writing systems until the twelfth century, when silent reading moved to the forefront. It still remains standard fare for most oriental writing. Cf. Martin, *History and Power of Writing*, 53-54. Cf. Also Paul Saenger, "The Separation of Words and the Physiology of Reading in *Literacy and Orality*, ed. David Olson and Nancy Torrance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, for a helpful corrective to the practice of reading and comprehension utilizing different systems of writing in different cultures.

<sup>199</sup>Martin, *History and Power of Writing*, 57. Gamble (*Books and Readers*) says that "The Romans, who were accustomed to dividing words in writing Latin, gave up the habit in literary texts in order to conform to the Greek custom" (48). However, he seems to attribute their adoption of continuous script as passive in nature, as if conformity was the pressure which instituted the change rather than the

concern, with the advent of the codex, both sides of the page could be utilized.<sup>200</sup> However, with the exception of Christian circles, scrolls continued to be the standard format for several hundred years while the less economical scroll remained the mainstay of the Greco-Roman literary guild.<sup>201</sup> During the first three centuries A.D., the codex remained of modest size, equivalent to that of a standard scroll. It was not until the beginning of the fourth or fifth centuries that the codex expanded to incorporate the content of several scrolls.<sup>202</sup>

In addition, with the birth of the codex, one would assume that enhancements such as pagination<sup>203</sup>, indexes, and tables of contents would quickly follow. Yet these cosmetic changes, which would have greatly advanced the reference ability of readers

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functionality of the text in actual use.

The eminent papyrologist E. G. Turner reveals his anachronistic prejudice when he writes, "This convention was eventually adopted also by the Romans, who in the imperial period discarded their intelligent system of dividing words from each other by spaces and points in favour of *scriptio continua*" (*Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, Second Edition [London: University of London, 1987], 7). To date, the best discussion of the issue comes from Paul Saenger (*Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997]) who argues that the "answer to our query lies rather in an analysis of the unique features of ancient reading habits, as well as in the social context in which ancient reading and writing took place" (11).

<sup>200</sup>This probability is more likely if the material was parchment. Papyrus scrolls were almost exclusively inscribed on one side, the side on which the fibers ran horizontally, offering the least resistance to the scribe's pen. There are exceptions, yet in most cases the writing on the back of these opisthographs (literally, "written behind") is from the hand of a different scribe than the text on the front.

<sup>201</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 49. Of the remains of Greek books that can be dated before the third century AD., more than 98% are scrolls, whereas in the same period the surviving Christian books are almost all codices. T. C. Skeat, "Length of the Standard Papyrus Roll," 175, based upon several factors, such as more extensive margins, additional manufacturing costs (cutting sheets, stacking, binding) there is a 26% saving of a codex over a scroll.

<sup>202</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 55.

<sup>203</sup>One must remember that pagination in books written by hand varied from copy to copy of the same text. E. G. Turner (*The Typology of the Early Codex* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977]) notes that "pagination would not seem to have been integral with the invention of the codex, otherwise one would have expected to find it as part of every codex." Furthermore he argues that in many codices where pagination is present, it has been secondarily added. M. McCormick adds ("Typology, Codicology, and Papyrology," *Scriptorium* 35 [1981]) that pagination originated in book consultation rather than in book production" (334). Cf. also, idem, "The Birth of the Codex and the Apostolic Life-style," *Scriptorium* 39 (1985), 150-158.

with texts, did not come about for several centuries.<sup>204</sup> Finally, with the appearance of diacritical marks by the text editors at the library of Alexandria, there was a movement towards standardization of punctuation. However, it should be noted that these marks assisted the readers to separate sentences and paragraphs and to pronounce and accentuate the words correctly. Thus, it may be fair to say that ancient punctuation was for ease and accuracy in reading aloud, as opposed to modern punctuation, where it reflects logical analysis.<sup>205</sup>

Furthermore, it would be easy to fall prey to the presupposition that *scriptio continua* was merely a primitive form of writing which would be corrected as advancements in reading and writing technology developed.<sup>206</sup> From a modern perspective, it makes logical sense that reading would be simpler and more expeditious if spaces were inserted between words and punctuation was added.<sup>207</sup> It seems fair to

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<sup>204</sup>This proposition may arise from our modern disposition about exact quotations. For an excellent introduction to the dissimilarity of principles between the modern and ancient study of "intertextuality" cf. Cartlidge, "Combien d'unités avez-vous de trois à quatre:?" 400-411.

<sup>205</sup>Martin, *History and Power of Writing*, 56-57. Frederic G. Kenyon, (*Book and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951]) says, "The lack of assistance to readers, or of aids to facilitate reference, in ancient books is very remarkable. Punctuation is often wholly absent, and never full and systematic" (65). See also Marshall McLuhan, "The Effect of the Printed Book on the Language of the Sixteenth Century," *Explorations in Communication* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960). As McLuhan comments on Kenyon, he says, "Full and systematic would be for the eye, whereas punctuation even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries continued to be for the ear and not for the eye" (125-35); M. B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), "If authors supplied punctuation to a text it was as readers not writers" (9).

<sup>206</sup>Saenger, *Space Between Words*, 10.

<sup>207</sup>Kenyon (*Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 66) says, "It is extraordinary that so simple a device as the separation of words should never have become general until after the invention of the printing press." Gamble makes an interesting argument, albeit from silence, that there is no record of an ancient reader experiencing any great frustration with the scroll. Gamble quotes T. C. Skeat, "Two Notes on Papyrus: Was Rerolling a Papyrus Roll an Irsome and Time-Consuming Task?" in *Scritti in onore di Orsolina Montevicchi* (Bologna: Clueb, 1981), 373-76, with the answer being, "No."

The transformation of texts for silent reading took place during the Middle Ages, as silent reading, initially restricted (between seventh and ninth centuries) to monastic scriptoria, spread to the world of schools and universities (by the twelfth century) and then to lay aristocrats (two centuries later). Its precondition was the separation of words by Irish and Anglo-Saxon scribes. (cf. Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13 (1982), 367-414; idem, "The Separation of Words and the Order of Words: The Genesis of Medieval

conclude that if an ancient manuscript was found to be unmanageable, obvious enhancements could have been made. Even a standard style of handwriting would ease the chore of manuscript reading.<sup>208</sup> Yet, these options appear to be modern observations based upon our own visual difficulty of mastering an ancient manuscript. Besides, it resounds with an implication of cultural superiority, as saying, "If only the ancients were as skilled with texts as we are, they would have devised a more advanced method for writing." This conclusion can only be drawn when the visual analysis of a text is elevated above the oral/aural acquisition of its sounds. In actuality, words and phrases were seen<sup>209</sup>, said<sup>210</sup>, and heard<sup>211</sup> in sequence by the reader. The need for

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Reading," *Scrittura e Civiltà* 14 (1990), 49-74; Parkes, *Pause and Effect*, 23-29.

<sup>208</sup>Not until the fourth century did a style of handwriting develop called biblical majuscule or biblical uncial, a clear and economic hand that was used for most Greek biblical manuscripts during the ensuing centuries. Cf., D. C. Parker, *The Living Texts of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 24.

<sup>209</sup>Quintilian says, "For to look to the right, which is regularly taught, and to look ahead depends not so much on precept as on practice; since it is necessary to keep the eyes on what follows while reading out what precedes, with the resulting difficulty that the attention of the mind must be divided, the eyes and the voice being differently engaged" (*Inst. Or.* 1.1.33-34).

<sup>210</sup>Therefore, reading would also include the sense of touch, since sounds create vibrations. Stanford, *Sound of Greek*, "[A]n ancient Greek or Roman had to pronounce each syllable before he could understand the written word. The written letters informed his voice; then his voice informed his ear; finally his ear, together with the muscular movements of his voice organs, conveyed the message to his brain" (1). Bozarth (*The Word's Body: An Incarnational Aesthetic of Interpretation*) says in her introductory comments, "Even the private reader engages in a physical act in taking in the words from the external page . . . We have medical evidence of this phenomenon, for patients following certain kinds of throat surgery are told to refrain from any type of reading, since even during supposedly 'silent' reading the throat muscles move along with those of the eye, perhaps in atavistic memory of the time when words were only uttered and never plastered in print" (1). Martin (*The History and Power of Writing*) says, "we know that physicians in antiquity recommended to their patients who needed exercise that they read, just as they recommended walking, running, or playing ball games"(72).

<sup>211</sup>Saenger (*Space Between Words*) details the complicated procedure of a reader. "In many intellectually difficult *scriptura continua* texts that have survived ancient Greece and Rome . . . ambiguity was increased [beyond the text itself] by ancient grammatical structures relying on parataxis and inflection that lacked and even purposely avoided conventional word order. In these circumstances, the ancient reader in his initial preparation normally had to read orally, aloud, or in a muffled voice, because overt physical pronunciation aided the reader to retain phonemes of ambiguous meaning" (8).

spaces or punctuation was diminished since sight was only one of many senses used in understanding a text.<sup>212</sup>

The above observations point toward several conclusions. First, the format of the manuscripts was a matter of choice.<sup>213</sup> Spaces were eliminated intentionally from both early Greek and later from Latin manuscripts.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, the extensive literary talents of the Greco-Roman writers indicate that visual pointers to assist a reader could have been devised, if needed. The early Greek and Roman writers were masters of rhetorical persuasion as they actively guided the art of rhetoric through its evolution from its early function as a tool of the political and legal systems to its ultimate place in the first century where it served as a social practice of the literary guild.<sup>215</sup> Thus, specifically regarding the physical makeup of texts, it seems likely that these early artisans of rhetoric could have adopted any new method of writing which would have been advantageous to their cause. But the ancillary material was not added to biblical texts until the fourth century, with the bulk of it waiting until the sixth or seventh centuries. Even here it can be argued that the changes were not so much an acquiescence to the needs of silent visual reading as it was required by early Christian scholarship to handle texts in a systematic fashion.<sup>216</sup> Early readers may have

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<sup>212</sup>Cf. Jesper Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1993), *passim*. Throughout, Svenbro presents ancient reading and writing as being phonetic in nature. Therefore “only by using his voice does [the reader] succeed in recognizing what is opaque to his eyes” (166).

<sup>213</sup>Saenger, *Space Between Words*, 11.

<sup>214</sup>Turner draws a similar conclusion, “Whatever the reason for it, it seems that the practice of writing without word division was adopted deliberately” (*Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, 7).

<sup>215</sup>Burton L. Mack (*Rhetoric and the New Testament* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990]) says, “[T]he rules of rhetoric were learned by trial and error, and inventiveness” (25). Mack later says, “Eventually, rhetoric was shorn of the critical thrust and political nuance characteristic of its origins. Rhetoric was now in the service of culture” (29).

<sup>216</sup>Many sources discuss the evolutionary changes to the biblical texts. For a recent concise study, cf. Parker, *The Living Texts of the Gospels*, 8-30. For details regarding the physical changes to the texts, cf. esp., 17-30.

recognized that the form, as it already existed, contributed greatly to their presentation of an oral rhetorical style.

Our own cultural biases may be the basis for labeling *scriptio continua* as a primitive form of writing or as a practice designed primarily for economic savings. Words from Rosalind Thomas may be a helpful guide,

We should be very wary indeed of assuming that our difficulties in reading ancient texts were shared by the Greeks and Romans, but I would tentatively suggest that it is no coincidence that such techniques to help the reader were developed in the highly scholarly milieu of the Alexandrian library and very little before; and that the comparatively unhelpful<sup>217</sup> features of earlier written texts were closely related to the fact that they had rather different functions, [for example] as . . . aids for works which it was assumed would be heard and read aloud rather than read silently.<sup>218</sup>

Thomas provides an ideal segue from our first conclusion, that the use of continuous script was deliberate to our second conclusion; that the use of *scriptio continua* only makes sense when analyzing reading and writing techniques in society then, not now. In other words, the solution to the question, why did the ancients employ continuous script? will be found in the assumptions which the ancients took for granted as they read their manuscripts aloud and educated future generations with the same skills.<sup>219</sup> We must be careful not to project our own ease in reading unfamiliar material back upon the ancients. For example, in antiquity, contact with new or unfamiliar manuscripts was not a routine experience. The first-time reading of a manuscript was considered difficult. A single, virginal encounter with a text was extremely rare and was normally just the first of many passes over the text.<sup>220</sup> For a

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<sup>217</sup>As I will raise below, “unhelpful” to whom?

<sup>218</sup>Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 93.

<sup>219</sup>Saenger (*Space Between Words*), “The ancient did not possess the desire, characteristic of the modern age, to make reading easier and swifter because the advantages that modern readers perceive as accruing from ease of reading were seldom viewed as advantages by the ancients” (11).

<sup>220</sup>There is the rare praise for an individual who can read a book at sight (cf. Petronius *Satyricon*, 75) where Trimalchio praises “that excellent boy” because among other things, “he can do division and

reader to do a superior job with an ancient manuscript, s/he must be quite familiar with the text. Thus, any approach to the biblical text which assumes a virginal reading should be cautiously considered.<sup>221</sup> As Gamble states,

The initial reading of any text was inevitably experimental because it had to be decided, partly in retrospect, which of the possible construals of *scriptio continua* best rendered the sense. If public reading were not to be halting, tentative, or misleading, those decoding judgments had to be made in advance through rehearsals of the text.<sup>222</sup>

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read books at sight." The norm falls more into the range of the following. A second century writer, Aulus Gellius, tells how, when asked to read in public a passage he did not know, he exclaimed, "How can I read what I do not understand? What I shall read will be confused and not properly phrased (*indistincta*)" (Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, xiii31,5). Cf., also Quintilian who gives advice on teaching one to read, "Reading must, therefore, first be sure, then connected, while it must be kept slow for a considerable time, until practice brings speed unaccompanied by error" (*Inst. Or.* 1.1.33-34).

<sup>221</sup>It has been suggested that the Markan reader was a "re-reader" of the material. Cf. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Echoes and Foreshadows in Mark 4-8: Reading and Rereading," *JBL* 112 (1993), 212. Beavis ("The Trial Before the Sanhedrin") says, "The concrete historical circumstances of ancient readers and literary critics are well-known and should be taken into account in gospel interpretation. Such a historical awareness would tend to invalidate the idea that a Gospel should be interpreted in a 'first reading' because no first century lector would have read a gospel only once before reading it publicly" (594-595, *contra* Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 145-47).

<sup>222</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 205.

As an interesting aside, in the New Testament, there are several passages in which continuous script (and lack of punctuation) might raise an interpretative problem. But not as many as one might think, since most native Greek words end in a vowel (or diphthong) or with the consonants  $\nu$ ,  $\rho$ , or  $\varsigma$ . (When a non-Greek word is written, such as non-Greek name, scribes would sometimes use a marked shape like a grave accent, e.g.,  $\lambda\omega\grave{\tau}$  or  $\Gamma\alpha\lambda\gamma\alpha\lambda$ )

Matt 19:18	$\alpha\rho\chi\omega\nu \epsilon\iota\varsigma \epsilon\lambda\theta\omega\nu$	(ruling one came)
	$\alpha\rho\chi\omega\nu \epsilon\iota\sigma\epsilon\lambda\theta\omega\nu$	(ruler came into)
Mark 10:40	$\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda' \omicron\iota\varsigma \eta\tau\omicron\iota\mu\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$	(but it is for those whom it has been prepared)
	$\grave{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota\varsigma \eta\tau\omicron\iota\mu\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$	(It has been prepared for others)
Rom 7:14	$\iota\delta\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu \gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho \omicron\tau\iota \omicron \nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma \pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\nu$	(For we know. . .)
	$\iota\delta\alpha \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu \gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho \omicron\tau\iota \omicron \nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma \pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\nu$	(On the one hand, I know. . .)
1 Tim 3:16	$\kappa\alpha\iota \omicron\mu\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\upsilon\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega\varsigma \mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\nu$	(And by common confession)
	$\kappa\alpha\iota \omicron\mu\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu \acute{\omega}\varsigma \mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\nu$	(We confess)

This verse is especially troubling since it also contains a variant reading. The words "Ος  $\acute{\epsilon}\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\acute{\omega}\theta\eta$ . The relative pronoun "Ος, written without accents could easily be mistaken for the *nomina sacra* for θεός. The figures of OC could be misread as ΘC.

There were rules usually followed in dividing words at the end of a line: (1) all consonants go with the following vowel and begin the next line, except that  $\lambda$ ,  $\mu$ ,  $\nu$ , and  $\rho$  are joined to the preceding vowel when there is a following consonant; (2) double consonants are separated; and (3) compound words are generally divided into their component parts (cf. Bruce Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991], 31).

Rolf Engelsing creates a contrast between ancient and modern reading patterns in order to illuminate their practical difference. The modern pattern, which he calls "extensive reading", surfaced in the second half of the eighteenth century as it replaced the ancient "intensive reading" which dominated up to that point.<sup>223</sup> Throughout most of history, the intensive reader faced a narrow and finite body of texts, which were read and re-read, memorized and recited, heard and known by heart, and transmitted from generation to generation.<sup>224</sup> The more modern extensive reader is one who encounters numerous and diverse texts, consuming each one rapidly, then on to the next.

A brief examination into ancient educational practices will piggyback upon the this discussion to help us understand how *scriptio continua* was culturally linked to the reading and writing practices of antiquity. The Greco-Roman educational process (*paideia*) was lengthy, rigorous, traditional, and culminated in reading and rhetorical competence.<sup>225</sup> Over the course of several years, it was designed to take students from a mere recognition of letters, sounds, and syllables to a full exposition of the text and the context from which it arises.<sup>226</sup> Precise attention to detail was demanded of the students by their teachers, with the expectation that the reader would be in command of the entirety of the material. Rosalind Thomas cites an example from rhetorical speeches, which often were written prior to presentation yet

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<sup>223</sup>"Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte in der Neuzeit," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 10 [1970], 945-1002. Cf. Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, 17 and Darnton, "History of Reading," 148, for cautions in assimilating this unilinear theory in its entirety; for reading does not simply evolve in one direction, towards extensiveness. As we will argue below, the function which reading and writing serve in a culture is directly tied to different social groups in different eras.

<sup>224</sup> Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, 17; Darnton, "History of Reading," 11. Saenger, (*Space Between Words*), "We know that the reading habits of the ancient world . . . were focused on an limited and intensely scrutinized canon of literature" (11).

<sup>225</sup>Cf. Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 20-31 for details of the educational process, with primary and secondary sources.

<sup>226</sup>Beavis uses the word *content* rather than *context*. She describes the ancient's use of the word content as referring to the background material of the texts, such as the persons, places, times and the events of the work. Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 23 (Quoted from Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 167-169).

were meant to be learnt by heart: orators . . . wished to give the appearance of speaking extempore, and the written text was therefore only an aid to recollection and memorization. If certain kinds of written texts really were thought of as mnemonic aids for what the people concerned already knew or were going to learn by heart, that might explain why written literary texts were so unhelpful to the reader right down to the Hellenistic period.<sup>227</sup>

I fully agree with Thomas' first assessment that written texts functioned as an aid to recollection. However, I firmly disagree with her analysis that the text was "unhelpful." Though Thomas is a careful scholar, several times in her work she calls the ancient texts "unhelpful to the reader." The implication leads one to believe that a helpful text would permit an ancient reader to consume written material in a manner analogous to modern readers, as if quantity and speed was the primary concern for the ancients. She implies that if only they would have added spaces . . . punctuation . . . if only they would have adopted the codex. . . . Thomas overlooks the notion that the manuscript itself might have had specific functions, not transferable to the modern world's insatiable desire for information.<sup>228</sup>

As previously established, ancient readers rarely recited a text in public without careful preparation familiarizing themselves with the manuscript. Moreover, the educational process of mastering classical manuscripts depicts a reader laboriously scrutinizing a text, often re-writing it in its entirety with the help of a master-teacher.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup>Thomas, *Orality and Literacy*, 92. Ong notes that not until the middle of the second century CE do verbatim quotes from the Synoptic Gospels begin to supersede oral forms ("Text as Interpretation," 18.) Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, "A book is not necessarily the same thing as a text. 'Texts' are the material out of which human beings make 'literature.' For us, texts only come in books, and so the distinction between the two is blurred or even lost. But, in a memorial culture, a 'book' is only one way among several to remember a 'text,' to provision and cue one's memory with 'dicta et facta' memorabilia. So a book is itself a mnemonic, among many other functions it can have" (8); Edgar Conrad, "Heard but Not Seen: The Representation of 'Books' in the Old Testament," *JSOT* 54 (1992), who argues that the written works were perceived not as ends in themselves but as the basis for oral presentation.

<sup>228</sup>Saenger, "The Separation of Words," "It was the very absence of word boundaries that made the technique of the identification and memorization of those sequence of letters that represented licit syllables a fundamental aspect of both ancient and medieval pedagogy" (205).

<sup>229</sup>E.G. Turner discerned the tendency in early Christian manuscripts, that scribes made fewer lines to a page and fewer letters to the line than usual. Turner thought that this was aimed to facilitate the

The role of the instructor in helping a student achieve competency with a text should not be underestimated. Quintilian says that an essential feature of reading was the demonstration of the teacher himself, even before the student made his own attempt, "for to do all these things [pausing, voice modulation, speed], he must understand what he reads."<sup>230</sup> Class size permitting, personal guidance was given to each student in turn.

Quintilian speaks of the teacher "going ahead of the individuals as they read" and it is clear that one after another, boys left their seats and came and stood before the master (*Or. Ins.* 2.5.3-5). . . . Above all, it was essential that each boy should understand not only the general sense of what he read, but the meaning of each word and phrase. He needed his teacher not only to "go ahead" of him, but also to interpret (*Or. Ins.* 1.2.12), and he both asked questions and was questioned in turn, to ensure that he fully understood. When he found the order of the words or the exact sense, obscure, the master patiently recast and paraphrased, saying, "the order is this" or "the sense is this" - expressions which occur again and again in the ancient commentators and *scholiasts*, at points where they felt that even adult readers might need help.<sup>231</sup>

The role of the teacher was more than to bequeath the "sense" of the text.<sup>232</sup> This was accomplished as instructors from other disciplines were called upon to augment a reader's skill. Comedy actors (*comoedus*) were often accepted as the equivalent of a vocal instructor,<sup>233</sup> since various kinds of voice modulations (*flexus*) were the basis of an

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public reading of Christian texts. Moreover, he posited the relative frequency which accents, punctuation, and breathing marks occurred in comparison with other ancient literary texts corroborates a special interest in public reading (*Typology*, 84-87; *Greek Manuscripts*, 144).

<sup>230</sup>*Ins. Or.*, 1.8.1.

<sup>231</sup>Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 225.

<sup>232</sup>This passing on the sense of the text was not only true in Greco-Roman educational process but also in the Jewish system. Byrskog (*Story as History - History as Story*) points out "An ideal teacher should teach with both words and deeds, and the latter, by matter of course, had to be observed and imitated by the students. The rabbis drew this ideal to its extreme in the important duty of the student to minister to the teacher. . . . The teacher's actions were torah, they were normative teaching, no matter how private, how idiosyncratic and exceptional they might have appeared. The student did not learn merely by listening, but also by observing and witnessing his actions. He was to see as well as to hear" (101).

<sup>233</sup>Pliny, *Ep.* 5.19.3. In another section, Pliny makes a differentiation between reading and acting, but clearly states that a reader's acting ability makes him a better reader (*Ep.* 9.36.4). Aristotle uses the word ὑπόκρισις or acting for the delivery of rhetoric (*Rhetoric* 3.1.3, 14003b). Demosthenes had studied

accurate reading. In Donatus' commentary on Terence, there are numerous notes which indicate the proper speaking voice, "softly or loudly, calmly or excitedly, slowly or quickly, ironically, indignantly, wearily, sympathetically, or with an air of surprise."<sup>234</sup> Thus, the master-pupil relationship was not merely to pass on grammatical observations made regarding an ambiguous text. Teachers were also imparting a longstanding tradition<sup>235</sup> which prepared the student to stand before an audience and recite, often from memory, a text exhibiting the same voice patterns and gestures as previous generations.<sup>236</sup> Thus, the next logical conclusion which we can draw from the ancient's use of continuous script is that after constant reading, re-reading, and teacher training, the physical document functioned more as a mnemonic device, reminding the reader of what he already knew.<sup>237</sup>

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with a famous actor (Quintilian, *Or. Ins.* 11.3.7; Cicero, *de Or.* 3.56.213).

<sup>234</sup>Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 224-225. For extensive discussion of tonal quality and gestures, cf. *Or. Ins.* 2.10.13; 11.3.4, or the exhaustive list found in Martin T. Cobin, "An Oral Interpreter's Index to Quintilian," 61-66.

<sup>235</sup>This "tradition" can take on many forms. Extant records express in great detail the painstaking effort in which a *grammaticus* worked with his students. Dionysius Thrax set forth three aspects; punctuation, accentuation, and expression which culminated in the reading and exposition of a specific text. An instructor not only discussed the grammatical and literary techniques at work in a text but also lectured on its historical setting (practice called *historia*, cf. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 237), all which contributed to a more accurate recitation. Thus, a reading-event may end in performance but it begins with the relationship of a teacher and pupil.

<sup>236</sup>This "advice-giving" to readers seems to extend beyond the early educational process. Some readers requested help from other more learned readers. Marcus Cornelius Fronto, a well-established orator in the second century, replied to a request from Volumnius Quadratus by promising him, "You shall have the works of Cicero corrected (*emendatos*) and punctuated (*distinctos*) [Fronto, *Epistolae ad amici*, ii,2]. The context indicates that he is making the copies himself.

<sup>237</sup>A Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:11-9:8 (Oxford Ms. Heb e 30, fol. 48b.) illustrates this principle perfectly. This manuscript presents the Hebrew text in an abbreviated form. Only the first word from each verse is written in full, and each of the following words is represented by a single letter. "These texts may have been designed as memory aids for synagogue lectors or school students." (Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 158.) Socrates (*Phaedrus*) says "The person errs who thinks that the written words are there for anything more but to remind the one who indeed knows the matter about which they are written" (275c-d). Quintilian states that the only effective method for memorizing material is repeated reading or hearing if another reads the text (*Ins. Or.* 11.2.32-35).

### 3.2.2 EFFECT OF *SCRIPTIO CONTINUA* UPON A READING-EVENT

In antiquity, words were recognized as they were vocalized rather than according to a modern visualization technique.<sup>238</sup> The format of *scriptio continua*, coupled with the pedagogical relationship of master-pupil, prevents a reader from approaching a text expeditiously. Furthermore, it sanctioned a meticulous sounding out of each syllable, word, and sentence. A practiced reader of continuous script would develop eye patterns of certain character combinations, syllables,<sup>239</sup> words,<sup>240</sup> and sentences.<sup>241</sup> By sounding these patterns, a reader would grasp words by ear before distinguishing them by sight.<sup>242</sup> As improbable as this might seem to a modern reader, texts without word divisions may have aided the reader in not only sounding out the text but also in discerning its meaning. If, as we have argued, the texts of antiquity were indeed written to be heard, a reader would be able to arrange its contents aurally into a pattern of meaning.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>238</sup>Bruce Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 31; Yaghjian, "Ancient Reading," 217. Ancient authors often wrote about the process of learning to read because it reduced a set of complex operations into something which could be taught "first recognizing the letters by shape and by sound, then learning to vocalize syllables and words, and finally reading without hesitation five or seven lines in a breath" (*Polybuis* 10.47.6-10).

<sup>239</sup>According to Hermas (*Vision*, 2.1.4) sounding words out by syllables seems to be the norm. For he says he copied a scroll of heavenly origin "letter by letter, for I could not make out the syllables." Quote found in Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 13 n.4.

<sup>240</sup>School house fragments used in the education of novice readers attest to the fact that words were syllabically divided and punctuated as texts were being learned. Cf. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 165-188 (esp. 170-171 for pictures of manuscripts and writing tablets); Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 150-157.

<sup>241</sup>Metzger, *Text of New Testament*, lists several "helps for readers" found in NT texts (21ff). The primary aid for public readers would be to transcribe a text *per cola et commata*, that is in sense lines (colometric method) with each separate line containing a semantic unit rather than the stichometric method of full lines based on space. However, the earliest extant text with this transcription method is fourth century. Moreover, these still continued to use *scriptio continua*.

<sup>242</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 204.

<sup>243</sup>The best current monographs on oral patterning in biblical narratives can be found in Victor M. Wilson, *Divine Symmetries: The Art of Biblical Rhetoric* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997); Harvey, *Listening to the Text*; Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism*.

Furthermore, throughly acquainted with the text, the reader would not be surprised by turns in the narrative and could convey the allusive meaning housed in the text's foreshadowing and acoustical echoes. A practical example from the Gospel of Mark will place this in perspective. With the reader having knowledge of the text as a whole, using elements from the end of the gospel to interpret earlier passages would be appropriate since the readers would be aware of the echoes. For example, reading back the Eucharistic words of 14:22-26 into the similar language in the feeding narratives in 6:41 and 8:6 would be a familiar form of ancient "hearing."<sup>244</sup> Additionally, events told early in the story, such as the unique description of John's arrest (1:14, Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην) or King Herod's identification of Jesus as the resurrected John (6:16, "Ὁν ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην, οὗτος ἠγέρθη) are foreshadowings of future events in the life of Jesus; his betrayal and resurrection.

In closing this section, I must admit that the conclusions drawn above are based upon secondary historical documents alone. I have not uncovered any extant records which link a causal connection between the format of *scriptio continua* with an enhanced oral performance. However, Kenneth Bailey makes a similar observation regarding the shortage of documentation concerning the transmission of Rabbinic material,

The pedagogy of Rabbinic schools was a well known formal method of tradition transmission and its methodology is reflected in Rabbinic literature. No other alternative is *described* in the writing of the period. The reason for this is that anthropologically speaking, what 'everyone knows' cannot be described; it functions unconsciously. Given this reality the modern Western researcher can posit the tradition transmission of the Rabbinic schools or project some other

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<sup>244</sup>Malbon, "Echoes and Foreshadows in Mark 4-8"; Beavis, "The Trial Before the Sanhedrin."

Note below the similarity in words.

14:23 λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλόγησας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς.

6:41 λαβὼν τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εὐλόγησεν καὶ κατέκλασεν τοὺς ἄρτους καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς [αὐτοῦ].

8:6 λαβὼν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἄρτους εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ.

tradition transmission method modeled after the researcher's own inherited Western experience.<sup>245</sup>

Nevertheless, I have tried to keep observations of how the physical manuscript was utilized firmly entrenched in its first century world. Several points will be repeated for emphasis. First, the Greeks and Romans were not technologically deficient. Placing spaces between words was a custom of early Greek and Latin writing yet was rejected in the vast majority of our extant documents. Second, if the resistance to change the universal custom which *scriptio continua* achieved in the Greco-Roman world was for more than mere traditional reasons<sup>246</sup>, it should be attributed to the following functional reasons: (1) It contributed to the careful analysis of the text, from the initial sounding out of the words to its final exposition in an oral recitation, incorporating not just the words but voice intonations and gestures. (2) Following the reader's careful textual preparation, a manuscript functioned from that point forward as a mnemonic aid, assisting the reader to recall what he already knew. (3) Finally, the ancient manuscript was never intended to be easily accessed by a casual reader. The format itself precluded that possibility. Rather, the manuscript served as a reader's tool which only released its hold on the story as a relationship was forged between the reader, the text, and the audience when the phonetic symbols were re-vocalized in the reading-event.

Now would be a perfect time to apply our findings to a passage which on the surface appears to contradict the oral nature we have ascribed to manuscripts in antiquity. In Luke 4, after Jesus is handed the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue, he unrolls the scroll and seemingly begins to read 61:1-2. A close examination of several features of the passage will be revealing. First, the passage never states that Jesus

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<sup>245</sup>Kenneth E. Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and The Synoptic Gospel," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991), 34 (emphasis original).

<sup>246</sup>Gamble (*Books and Readers*) says, "It is uncertain whether this practice [*scriptio continua*] was owing to the persistence of antique (inscriptional?) practice or was devised by scribes for ease of writing or uniformity of appearance" (48).

“read” in what we would consider a word-for-word rendering of the Isaiah text. For Luke says,

and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day and he stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He opened the book and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

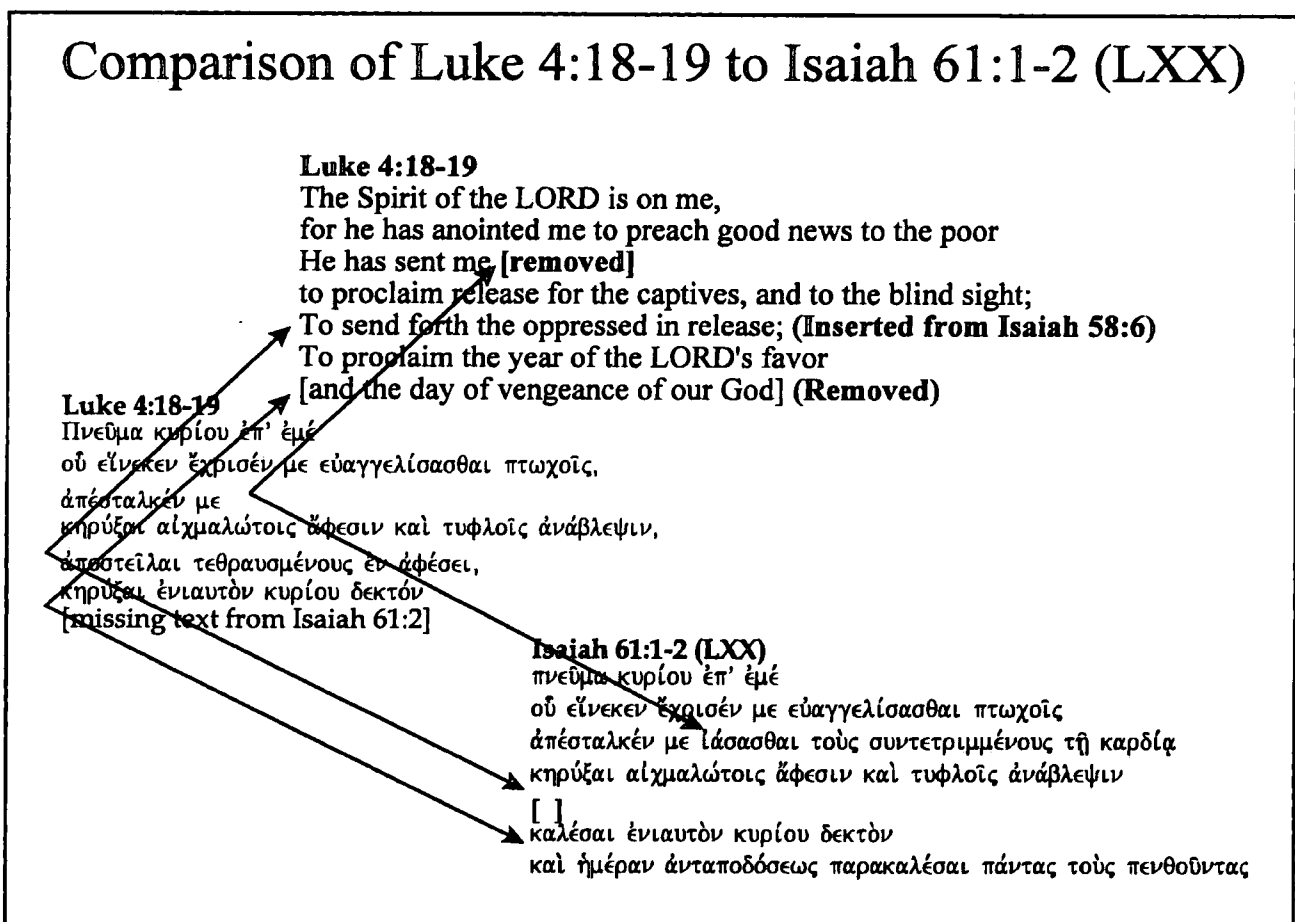


Figure 2: Luke’s Use of Isaiah 61

Now, if we take the text literally, it says that Jesus stood up to read (ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι), unrolled the scroll<sup>247</sup>, and found the place where Isaiah 61 was written. Then Luke follows with a quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2, Jesus rolls up the scroll, gives it back to the attendant, and sits down. Luke's description of the event never says that Jesus read the passage from the scroll. But an argument from silence would be inadequate if it were not for the fact that historically, manuscripts functioned as mnemonic devices.

Second, following on the heels of the previous observation, a close examination of the quotation inserted by Luke reveals that it is not a straight reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 (LXX).<sup>248</sup> Rather, it is a conflation of two texts from Isaiah 61 and 58 with several minor alterations (see above Figure 2: Luke's Use of Isaiah 61). The phrases "to bind up the brokenhearted" (Isaiah 61:1b) and "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2b) have been eliminated.<sup>249</sup> Further, the quotation "to release the oppressed" from Isaiah 58:6 is inserted at the end of Luke 4:18. Thus, unless we are dealing with a textual variant of Isaiah, Jesus apparently did not read the passage as we might expect in a modern scripture lesson, but gave his own midrash of the text as it applied to the situation in Nazareth. It seems that Jesus turned to Isaiah 61, but with intimate

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<sup>247</sup>Luke says that Jesus unrolled (ἀναπτύξας) the scroll. The word ἀναπτύσσω is usually equated with unrolling a scroll and not opening a codex. Its usage is attested in κ D Θ et al. Other well attested sources read ἀνοίξας (A B L W E et al.) According to Metzger (*Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition* [London: UBS, 1994]) "since the synagogue copies of the Old Testament were in scroll form, the use of the verb 'to unroll' is highly appropriate." Furthermore, since the later scribes were more accustomed to the codex form of the book, it is "highly probable that they introduced the frequently used verb ἀνοίγω as an explanatory substitution for ἀναπτύσσω which occurs only here in the New Testament" (114).

<sup>248</sup>It must be stated up front that my exegesis of the Lukan passage makes an assumption regarding the scroll which Jesus is handed; that it contains a text close to our MT text for Isaiah. For it is possible that the scroll contained selected portions of Isaiah, as in the extant Dead Sea Scroll examples.

<sup>249</sup>For a discussion of the text form, cf. Darrell Brock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*. JSNTSup 12 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 105-111; Rainer Albertz "Die 'Antrittspredigt' Jesu im Lukasevangelium auf ihrem alttestamentlichen Hintergrund," ZNW 74 (1983), 182-184. For a discussion of the structure of the text and its related theological implications, cf., Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 208-215.

knowledge of the text, he reworked it to declare his own missionary thrust.<sup>250</sup> I would further argue that the scroll of Isaiah served as a mnemonic device for Jesus, for apparently he knew the immediate and surrounding text by heart. Jesus did not need the scroll to remember the words but possibly it served to authenticate his claim for the hearers.<sup>251</sup>

### 3.3 THE ROLE OF THE READER IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The public reading of texts is prominently displayed by the New Testament writers. The apostle Paul sends letters with the assumption that they will be read aloud to their addressees, possibly by the individual with whom he sent the communication (Eph 3:4, 1 Thes 5:27). Moreover, the reading expectation may encompass the exchange of manuscripts by churches (Col 4:16). However, it is the Gospels and Acts which portray a picture of the scriptures being read as a formal part of synagogue worship (Luke 4:16; Acts 13:15, 27; 15:21, 31) as well as an overall familiarity with the practice of reading itself.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>250</sup>This argument makes the assumption that Luke is reporting the event as it happened and not as a redactor who reshaped the Isaiah quotation for his own purposes. This is a real possibility. Cf. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, where he comments that "our discussion of 4:18-19 has been from an insider's vantage point, dealing in part with how the material from the birth narrative and later ministry of Jesus sheds light on the meaning of his inaugural address" (213).

<sup>251</sup>A review of Catherine Hezser's new book *Jewish Literacy In Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2001) was just published in the Fall 2002 *JBL*. Though I have not been able to incorporate Hezser's work into this thesis, the review has Hezser saying, "It is striking that a written script was felt to be necessary for an acceptable performance of a scriptural passage, even if it was simply reproduced what a rabbi might have said had he skipped the written stage and produced it straight from memory. Historical or not, this text says something about the importance accorded to the physical presence of a written text in such reading environments."

<sup>252</sup>Throughout the Synoptics, when Jesus encounters his opponents, he asks them a question in the form of a formulaic interrogative regarding their knowledge of scripture. Though the phrase literally means, "have you not read," the phrase could just as well be stated, "are you not aware of the scripture."

Matt. 12:3	Οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε
Matt. 12:5	οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε
Matt. 19:4	Οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε
Matt. 21:16	οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε
Matt. 21:42	Οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε

### 3.3.1 THE READER AND NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

The role and status of the reader in the early church can be reconstructed from biblical and extra-biblical sources. An illustrative New Testament passage comes from the last book in the canon. Revelation 1:3 is the first of seven beatitudes in the book<sup>253</sup> and this initial blessing is bestowed upon the reader of the words of prophecy and the listeners, without partiality.<sup>254</sup>

The reader (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων) functions in a quasi-official role as the voice of prophecy<sup>255</sup> and the larger context of Revelation 1 gives rise to further observations regarding the vital nature of the reader. For example, 1:1-2 establishes God Himself as the origin of the revelation (ἀποκάλυψις) but also details its progressive transmission as

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Matt. 22:31	οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε	
Mk. 2:25	Οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε	(Matt 12:3; Luke 6:3)
Mk. 12:10	οὐδὲ τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην ἀνέγνωτε	(Matt 21:42)
Mk. 12:26	οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε	(Matt 22:31)
Luke. 6:3	Οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀνέγνωτε	

<sup>253</sup>The others are found in 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7 (parallel emphasis with 1:3); 22:14.

<sup>254</sup>μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς. English translations, with slight variation, translate the first portion of the verse as follows: Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it (e.g., RSV, NRS, NIV, NJB). This translation can lead one to believe there is a separation (status or function?) of the reader from the listeners. It is possible to imply that the reader receives a different blessing from the listener (i.e., as if the reader's blessing is dependent upon his skills while the listeners' blessing is directly dependent upon their obedience to the words of prophecy). Two points of contention. (1) The sentence structure wants to closely link the blessing to both readers and listeners as well as to link their corporate response; obedience. The reader, since he reads aloud, is also a listener and is not excluded from the call to obedience, as the translation could imply. Additionally, the definite article in the phrase οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες goes with both substantival participles, indicating that both refer to a single group (David Aune, *Revelation 1-5* [Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997], 7, 21). Thus, a more natural flow to the sentence would be: Blessed is the one who reads and those who *both* hear the words of prophecy, and who keep what is written in it. There is one blessing and one community of recipients and the only contingency is obedience not one's official function. (2) Rev 22:7 restates a blessing upon those who keep (ὁ τηρῶν) the words of prophecy in the book, an all inclusive statement. Also, 22:7 appears as a mirror image of 1:3, with the blessing following a declaration of the time; whereas 1:3 has the blessing first, followed with the temporal statement, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς.

<sup>255</sup>Contra Gamble (*Books and Readers*), who says "This reader has no official capacity for the participle *anaginoskon*, 'the one who reads' rather than the noun *anagnotes* 'the reader' is used" (219). Gamble may be able to argue this on pure philological grounds. However, the context, as I will demonstrate, makes it clear that the reader proclaims the words of Jesus Himself, as dictated to John.

follows: God → Jesus → Angel → John → God's servants. Later, in 1:10-11, 19 the means of how John will transmit this vision to the church is revealed when a voice (φωνήν μεγάλην) commands him to write the revelation in a book.<sup>256</sup> Therefore, implicit in the revelational process which began with God and ends with His servants being shown what will take place (1:1) is the assumption that a reader will render his voice to the text.<sup>257</sup> Thus, the transmission can be enlarged:

God → Jesus → Angel → John → Text → Reader → Listener.

Revelation chapter 1 tells us that (1) this revelation of Jesus Christ was intended from its inception to be in written form. John may have heard and seen the theophany, nevertheless, his role was that of an *amanuensis*, transcribing what he saw and heard in book form. (2) Though 1:1-2 indicates that an angel would be the mediator of the revelation to John, the voice who dictates the contents of the book is clearly that of Jesus.<sup>258</sup> (3) Though the vision was originally experienced by John, the voice of prophecy was ultimately found in the reader. Moreover, at times it becomes impossible to distinguish whose voice is actually speaking. For example, in the closing verses of

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<sup>256</sup>Two points of interest. (1) The process of transmission in 1:1-2 seems to indicate that John will receive his vision through a mediating angel, yet the theophany is clearly one of the Son of Man (1:13), the one who was dead (1:18, ἐγενόμην νεκρός) but now lives forever (1:18, ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). However, 22:16 once again reiterates that it is an angel and not Jesus who brings this testimony to the churches. (2) The phrase φωνήν μεγάλην occurs in Mark 15:34 and 15:37, from the lips of Jesus

<sup>257</sup>Revelation is shaped overtly as a written document for the blessing of its audience which comes through reading, hearing and the obedience which will follow. Yet, that may be the nature of Johannine literature (cf. John 20:30; 1 John 1:4; 2:1, 7, 8, 12, 26; 5:13; 2 John 12; 3 John 9).

<sup>258</sup>Though 1:11 says, write what you see (Ὁ βλέπεις γράψον εἰς βιβλίον) which might limit the contents of the book to John's eyewitness account, 1:19 expands upon the contents when Christ says, γράψον οὖν ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσὶν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα. Then, in 2:1ff, Jesus clearly dictates to John what he is to write to the angels of each of the seven churches. Finally, as a closing remark to each of the churches, the phrase ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. We now hear a third person credited with dictating the message, the Spirit.

There are several first person interjections throughout the book which appear to be directed to the reader/listeners and are not the voice of John: (1) 1:8, the voice of the Lord God (κύριος ὁ θεός); (2) 22:16 are closing words of Jesus, "I have sent my angel to you (ὑμῖν, plural) with this testimony for the churches" which gives the impression that this certainly is not a vision directed to John alone but for the wider listening audience.

chapter 22, a first person warning is given to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book (22:18-19). The similarity to the introductory words in 1:3 is striking, with one noticeable absence. No reference is made to the reader. This would make sense if we are to understand this warning as coming from the reader himself, and not John or Jesus. The lines of clarity become convoluted if one is concerned solely with determining the speaking voices. On the other hand, it accomplishes something altogether different on behalf of the reader: the authority of speaking for God, Jesus, the angel, and John are passed to the voice of the reader. Their voices become indistinguishable from his. All warnings, as well as blessings, emanating from the reader, carry the same authority as if they echoed from the realms of heaven.<sup>259</sup>

A second New Testament passage which illuminates the role of the reader in the early church is 1 Timothy 4:13. This text directly connects reading with two other spiritually significant functions of the young leader Timothy, "Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching" (ἕως ἔρχομαι πρόσεχε τῇ ἀναγνώσει<sup>260</sup>, τῇ παρακλήσει, τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ). Even more revealing, the next several verses stress the personal and corporate benefit which will be a direct result of Timothy practicing these gifts. Moreover, just as a blessing is bestowed upon both the reader and hearers through their obedience to the word in Revelation 1:3, so also 1 Timothy 4:16 makes a similar reference to the oral aspect of ministry as it says to Paul's young protégée, "Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." The act of public reading is held in high regard by the early church both as an official position and for its efficacious results.

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<sup>259</sup>Robert Funk has argued ("The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, R. R. Niebuhr, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967]) that private correspondence was written or dictated for the purpose of being read to the recipient, with the reader representing the very presence, voice, and authority of the author.

<sup>260</sup>Acts 13:15 and 2 Corinthians 3:14 are the only other New Testament uses of the noun, ἀνάγνωσις.

There is a third New Testament passage which contributes to our overall concept of the reader. Acts 15:31 is the report of the initial Gentile response to the letter from the Jerusalem Council. The letter-carriers are carefully chosen: Paul, Barnabas, Judas (called Barsabbas), and Silas. When they arrive in Antioch, they gather the congregation together (συναγαγόντες τὸ πλῆθος) and deliver the letter. Acts 15:31 then describes the letter's reading-event and the congregational response in only six words: ἀναγνόντες δὲ ἐχάρησαν ἐπὶ τῇ παρακλήσει. Ambiguity abounds when we attempt to resolve the following questions on purely syntactical grounds: Who did the reading? Who was encouraged? What is the connection between the reading and the result?

One can take a straightforward approach, proposing that the men from Jerusalem delivered the letter, the leaders in Antioch then read it to their church, and the congregation was encouraged.<sup>261</sup> Though this scenario is plausible, it subtly individualizes the roles of each participant, diminishing the communal aspect of a reading-event in antiquity. Furthermore, it overlooks several oral aspects inherent in a letter reading-event. For example, historical studies demonstrate that often the ancient letter-carrier did not serve as a mere postal agent but also as an official ambassador of the sender, representing him in both presence and authority.<sup>262</sup> The carrier was usually aware of the content of the communication, possibly being the *amanuensis* who may have played an active role in the letter's actual composition.<sup>263</sup> Thus, following the

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<sup>261</sup>L. T. Johnson, *Acts*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 278; Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 565.

<sup>262</sup>The best material on ancient letter-writing can be found in R. Randolph Richards, *Secretary in the Letters to Paul* (Wissenschaft zum Testament 2 Reihe Series, 1991); R. Longenecker, "Ancient Amanuenses and the Pauline Epistles," in *New Dimensions in NT Study*, 281-297; Botha, "Letter Writing and Oral Communications in Antiquity," 17-34; Martin McGuire, "Letters and Letter Carriers in Christian Antiquity," *The Classical World* 53 (1960), 148-153; S. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*; W. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); David Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1987).

<sup>263</sup>This is a complex argument which includes debates about (1) how the letter was actually written, e.g., dictated syllable by syllable or word by word. The former would demand the author to speak slowly and the latter would assume the secretary would record the *viva voce* in shorthand and later transcribe the letter from a wax tablet to papyrus/parchment. (2) This leads to a second question, how

letter's reading, his role may have been expanded to elaborate upon and clarify any obscure matters which the letter raised, including background information about the sender which stands behind the words themselves.<sup>264</sup> Finally, because the unwieldy physical nature of first century documents militated against an easy first time reading, the letter-carrier was probably the one who read it aloud, not the letter's recipient(s).

This cultural background will assist us to answer our question in resolving the ambiguity in Acts 15:31. Though the reader and the ones encouraged are not identified explicitly, ambiguity is fine because the reading-event was not to be looked at individually. Rather, it was a community-building effort, uniting the Jerusalem church, via its representatives, with her sister church in Antioch. Second, no matter who read the letter, all were participating in the reading-event and all shared in the resulting encouragement (ἐχάρησαν ἐπὶ τῇ παρακλήσει).

In what way was the reading of the letter connected to the encouragement of the listeners? The context of the passage provides a hint at resolving the question as 15:32 tells us that "Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged the brothers with many words and strengthened them." This indicates that following the letter's

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much of the editing process should be attributed to the amanuensis. To list the roles in increasing levels of influence: recorder, editor, co-author, composer. Richards (*Secretary in Paul's Letters*) in his definitive study concludes "Even if Paul exercised much control over his secretary, there was more influence possible from a secretary than many modern exegetes have allowed" (201).

<sup>264</sup>This was common practice in antiquity. Cf. Cicero (*Fam* 11:20.4) "Please write me a reply to this letter at once, and send one of your own men with it, if there is anything somewhat confidential which you think it necessary for me to know." Also, (PCol/Zen I, 6) "The rest, please learn from the man who brings you the letter, for he is no stranger to us."

This argument can also be clearly demonstrated from the New Testament epistles. In Colossians, in 1:7, Epaphras is elaborating upon Paul's teachings and in 4:7-9, Tychicus "will tell you all about my affairs" and he and Onesimus "will tell you of everything that has taken place here." Paul's letter's assume there is both a community standing beside him as he writes (the multiple senders which Paul lists) and numerous well-respected agents who will deliver and help interpret his work to the receiving community. For more detailed arguments, cf. Richards, *Secretary in Letters of Paul*, 8, 70-72; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His Words, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995, 16-41; Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 45-46. Finally, the letter simply may serve as an introduction of the carrier, who was to function in the capacity of transportation, delivery, and interpretation of the message. Cf. Acts 18:27, referring to an introductory letter written on behalf of Apollos, οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἔγραψαν τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἀποδέξασθαι αὐτόν

reading, Judas and Silas, as commissioned by the Jerusalem Council<sup>265</sup>, continued to encourage the Gentile church by filling in the gaps as they confirmed the writers' attitudes and elaborated upon the letter's contents, possibly reporting to them James' impassioned speech to the council members (15:13-21) or the words shared by Paul and Barnabas on their behalf (15:12). Nevertheless, Judas and Silas only added to the joy which was initiated by the reading-event. According to 15:31, it was the reading-event itself which "resulted in the encouragement."

We can summarize the following about readers in the church from these New Testament passages: (1) Their reading functioned in an official and authoritative manner, whether they were commissioned by God (Rev 1:3), by position in the church (1 Tim 3:15), or as the ambassador of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:31). (2) The reading-event was for the community life of the church, with a clear expectation of conformity to the message. Though it may have been prescriptive in a behavioral sense, that did not prevent the hearers from a ratifying response. There is a direct correlation between the reading-event and the joy of the listener. (3) As will be elaborated upon later, the reading-event did not end with the final words from the text being read aloud. An exchange of information continued almost in the sense of a de-briefing which played a role in the corporate understanding of the text and overall community shaping.

### 3.3.2 THE READER AND EXTRA-BIBLICAL TEXTS

The *Shepherd of Hermas* was widely popular in the post-apostolic period. The text even enjoyed scriptural status for several of the early church fathers. The story expresses Jewish-Christian theology via imagery, visions, and analogy as it addresses real life questions such as post-baptismal sin and the behavior of the rich towards the

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<sup>265</sup>In the body of the letter, the encouraging words of Judas and Silas to the Gentile church are forecast, ἀπεστάλακμεν οὖν Ἰούδαν καὶ Σιλᾶν καὶ αὐτοὺς διὰ λόγου ἀπαγγέλλοντας τὰ αὐτά.

poor within the church.<sup>266</sup> For our limited purposes, however, the *Shepherd* provides a clear understanding of the role of a reader and a text in the early church. In spite of its length (114 chapters), the narrative setting is almost exclusively oral communication or dictation.

Early in the story, a mystifying female figure (later identified as the church) reads aloud to Hermas (1.3.3). He listens carefully but when she has finished, he can only remember the end of the reading-event “because the words were terrifying, words which a human cannot endure” (1.3.4). A year later, when quizzed by the female apparition if he can report the truth he heard to God’s elect, he claims ignorance, and asks for the book (βιβλίδιον, little book), “so I can make a copy of it” (2.1.3, μεταγράψωμαι αὐτό). After copying the text, it takes him 15 days of prayer and fasting to understand the meaning of the writing (2.1.3-4; 2.2.1).<sup>267</sup> Hermas is then instructed to make two additional copies of the manuscript. The first, for dissemination to other churches by means of Clement and the second, to the widows and orphans by Grapte (2.4.3). Hermas’ role is then formalized as “you yourself will read it (σὺ δὲ ἀναγνώσῃ) to this city, along with the elders who preside (τῶν προισταμένων) over the church” (2.4.3).

Carolyn Osiek summarizes the oral tenor which pervades the manuscript as a whole,

All of the Visions 3-4 are to consist of visual revelation and oral explanation by the woman church, with no command to write. Only in 5.5, under the direction of the newly appeared shepherd, does writing reenter the narrative, this time as oral dictation, for the purpose not of private reading but of oral proclamation: “I command you [sing.] first to write the commandments and the parables, so that you [sing.] can at once read them aloud (ἵνα χεῖρα ἀναγινώσῃς αὐτάς) and keep them” (5.6; cf. *Sim.*9.1.1), followed immediately by the author’s exhortation to the hearers in the plural, to listen and to keep the commandments (5.7).<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup>Cf., Carolyn Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the Shepherd of Hermas: An Exegetical-Social Investigation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1983).

<sup>267</sup>The brief text of the written document is given in 2.2.2-3.4.

<sup>268</sup>Carolyn Osiek, “The Oral World of Early Christianity in Rome: The Case of Hermas,” in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome*, ed. Karl Donfried and Peter Richardson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

Let's attempt to extract some of the particulars from the *Shepherd* and import the principles into our understanding of the reader in the early church. First, the narrative framework falls under the heading of dictation to be written and then communicated to the community by reading aloud.<sup>269</sup> In this case the reader, Hermas, plays the dual roles of both the recipient of the revelation and the public proclaimer. Second, as witnessed by the difficulty in understanding the text as given to Hermas (2.1.3-4), a reader must carefully work over new material prior to a public reading-event. In Hermas' case, he must integrate prayer and fasting into his interpretative repertoire. According to the *Shepherd*, the role of reader is more than simply applying hermeneutical skills to a text but it carries a grave spiritual responsibility which is impossible to fulfill apart from revelation from the Lord. Third, after giving copies of the book to Clement and Grapte, Hermas was to read the text to the city along with the elders of the church. This reading-event should not be limited exclusively to the written text which Hermas copied but should be enlarged to include an interpretation to the listening community.<sup>270</sup> For joined to Hermas' mission to read the book to the city, his female revelator further particularized his call when she said to him, "When I finish [dictating] all the words, they will be made known (γνωρισθήσεται) to all the elect through you"(2.4.2). It seems there is a connection with God revealing the meaning (γνώσις) of the words to Hermas and his role in making known their meaning to the elect. He will perform more than a mere word-for-word reading but the implication is a reading with an interpretation, which as we will see below according to Justin Martyr, was the role of those presiding over a worship service. Nehemiah 8:2-3 is a comparable parallel, as Nehemiah reads from the Law, accompanied by Levites who "helped the

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1998).

<sup>269</sup>Not unusual in revelatory material, as we observed above in Rev 1.11, 19; 2:1. Cf. also 4 Ezra 15:2; 2 Bar 50:1.

<sup>270</sup>From a narratological perspective, the rest of the *Shepherd of Hermas* may be understood as an expansion and an interpretation of the written text delivered by Hermas himself.

people to understand the law. . . . So they read from the book, from the law of God with interpretation (ἐδίδασκεν, LXX). They gave sense, so that the people understood the reading (διέστελλον ἐν ἐπιστήμῃ κυρίου καὶ συνῆκεν ὁ λαὸς ἐν τῇ ἀναγνώσει, LXX).” In short, the *Shepherd of Hermas* portrays for us a reader, standing prophetically before a congregation, delivering not simply words but an inspired interpretation essential for their well-being.

Justin Martyr (*Apol* 1.67) is the first extra-biblical text which directly gives insight into the role of the reader in worship<sup>271</sup>,

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen.

The role of reader was to present the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets to the congregation during worship. Clearly from our earlier historical study, few in the congregation could read publicly so the congregation depended greatly upon the literate. Yet the question remains, was this reading talent viewed merely as a learned skill or did it assume a more spiritual and official designation in the church?<sup>272</sup>

2 Clement 19:1 (mid-second century) begins to show the role of the reader as one of prestige in the church; “Therefore, brothers and sisters, following the God of truth I

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<sup>271</sup>Few secondary sources deal specifically with this subject. Much of what follows is gleaned from Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 203-241.

<sup>272</sup>Though his quotations come from later sources, A. von Harnack (*Sources of the Apostolic Canons* [London: Norgate, 1895]) argues that the role of reader could be equated with the charismatic gifts of the early church. Though I withhold full agreement with Harnack regarding the first century reader simply because of lack of evidence, it is certain from Pauline references that spiritual gifts need not be ecstatic (1 Cor 12-14, Eph 4:11-12) but for the edification of the church.

am reading (ἀναγινώσκω) you an exhortation (ἐντευξιν)<sup>273</sup> to pay attention to what is written, in order that you may save both yourselves and your reader" (ἵνα καὶ ἑαυτοὺς σώσητε καὶ τὸν ἀναγινώσκοντα ἐν ὑμῖν). Though the second clause may be difficult to situate accurately, the first refers to a reading from scripture ("what is written") which is followed by an exhortation.<sup>274</sup> It is possible that in some worship settings, the reader would not only read the text but also bring the homily or exhortation which Justin Martyr, in the above quotation, concedes was the function of the president.

As fixed offices in the church developed in the late second century, the emergence of the formal office of reader followed suit. The earliest reference can be found in Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* where the reader is set apart yet not on equal footing with the clergy proper. "The reader is ordained when the bishop gives him the book, for hands are not laid on him" (1.12)<sup>275</sup> At this point in the highly dynamic process of church organization there appears to be a "distinction between major and minor orders: in the major orders spiritual endowment occurs with the laying on of hands, whereas in the minor orders persons are formally acknowledged for the exercise of the gifts they already possess."<sup>276</sup>

Conversely, in the Eastern church's *Apostolic Constitutions* (8:22), we find the laying on of hands connected with a powerful prayer of consecration,

Concerning readers, I Matthew, also called Levi, who was once a tax-gatherer, make a constitution: Ordain a reader by laying thy hands upon him, and pray unto God, and say: O Eternal God, who art plenteous in mercy and compassions, who hast made manifest the constitution of the world by Thy operations therein,

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<sup>273</sup>The word ἐντευξιν is also the description Clement gives to his first letter in 1 Clement 63:2. It may be more accurate to label it as an intercession or a petition.

<sup>274</sup>Gamble (*Books and Readers*, 327, n50) cites only one commentator who takes the passage differently. Cf. K.P. Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity* NovTSup 38; Leiden: Brill, 1974), who thinks that "what is written" refers not to scripture but to 2 Clement (14-15).

<sup>275</sup>The ordination without hands consist of widows, virgins, subdeacons, and healers while the clergy proper consist of bishops, presbyters, and deacons.

<sup>276</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 221.

and keepest the number of Thine elect, do Thou also now look down upon Thy servant, who is to be entrusted to read Thy Holy Scriptures to Thy people, and give him Thy Holy Spirit, the prophetic Spirit. Thou who didst instruct Esdras Thy servant to read Thy laws to the people, do Thou now also at our prayers instruct Thy servant, and grant that he may without blame perfect the work committed to him, and thereby be declared worthy of an higher degree, through Christ, with whom glory and worship be to Thee and to the Holy Ghost for ever. Amen.

The reader in this passage is certainly placed in a position of authority in the early church. Further, the reader was not only ordained as clergy, "do now look down upon your servant," but equated with the prophetic work of Ezra (cf. Nehemiah 8) and reading is seen to be accomplished through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not as a mere skill.<sup>277</sup>

Several additional passages reflect that the reader's ability to communicate are directly connected to his moral character. The first comes from the *Apostolic Church Order* (3),

For reader, one should be appointed after he has been carefully proved: no babbler, nor drunkard, nor jester; of good morals, submissive, of benevolent intentions, first in the assembly at the meetings on the Lord's Day, of plain utterance, skillful in exposition, mindful that he functions in the place of an evangelist.

Cyprian, as well, in the third century, connects the moral life of his appointed readers with their effectiveness to read and communicate the gospel.

It seemed right for [Aurelius] to start with the office of lector since nothing was more becoming to the voice which confessed God with glorious praise than also to sound him forth through the celebration of the divine readings, after the sublime words which bespoke martyrdom for Christ: to read the Gospel of Christ whence martyrs are made, to come to the pulpit after the scaffold; to have been conspicuous there to a multitude of Gentiles, to be conspicuous here to the

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<sup>277</sup>Once again, Gamble (*Books and Readers*, 221-222) provides further insight. "[O]ne of the main sources of the *Apostolic Constitutions* [is] the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a church order of the third century preserved entirely in Syriac. In treating the portions of the offerings that are allotted to the clergy, the Greek text specifies that "if there is also a reader, let him receive with the presbyters [a double portion] in honor of the prophets" (2.28).

brothers; to have been heard there to the marvel of the people standing around, to be heard here to the joy of the brotherhood. (*Ep.* 39.2)

Just a few lines later, Cyprian expresses his admiration for Celerinus, a confessor just like Aurelius, "There is nothing in which a confessor may be a greater help to his brothers than that, while the evangelical reading of the gospel is heard from his lips, whoever hears may imitate the faith of the reader" (*Ep.* 39.5).<sup>278</sup> The early church's linking of effective reading with the moral character of the lector is directly connected not only to the claims of Christ but also to the basic tenets of rhetorical persuasion. For Aristotle said,

The orator persuades by moral character (ἠθος) when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of confidence; for we trust (πίστις) such persons to a greater degree, and more readily [than we do others] on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt . . . It is not the case, as some writers of rhetorical treatises hold, that the worth (ἐπιείκεια)<sup>279</sup> of the orator in no way contributes to the power of his persuasion; on the contrary, moral character may almost be called the most potent means of persuasion. (*Rhetoric* 1356a4)

Thus far, New Testament and extra-biblical records indicate that the reader was an integral factor in the liturgical service. To the eastern church he was ordained as an equal to the bishops, presbyters, and deacons and "his capacity to read was appreciated as one of the manifold gifts of the spirit - a charisma."<sup>280</sup> It may also be worthy of note that the western and eastern traditions seem to develop different concepts of the readers. Succinctly, the western church saw them as a functional part of the liturgy (human competence) while the eastern church understood readers to be exercising spiritual gifts as they read.

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<sup>278</sup>Cyprian also mentions readers in *Ep.* 29, 38.2, 39.1-4.

<sup>279</sup>George Kennedy (*Aristotle, On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]) translated the word fair-mindedness. In a footnote, Kennedy says, "Aristotle's point is that an appearance of fair-mindedness gives the speaker an initial advantage" (38). He translates the final clause of the above quote, "Character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuasion."

<sup>280</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 220.

One final question regarding our investigation into the role of the reader: did the early church recognize that reading is both an act of interpretation and exposition?<sup>281</sup> We will base our conclusions on two early extant records which will be supported with inferences from historical practices.<sup>282</sup> The most revealing source comes from Irenaeus, whose attack upon a reader's incompetence gives us further insight into interpretative skills a reader must possess to present a text correctly for his listeners,

[W]e may discover that the apostle [Paul] frequently uses a transposed order in his sentences, due to the rapidity of his discourses, and the impetus of the Spirit which is in him. An example occurs in the [Epistle] to the Galatians, where he expresses himself as follows: "Wherefore then the law of works? It was added, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator." For the order of the words runs thus: "Wherefore then the law of works? Ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator, it was added until the seed should come to whom the promise was made," — man thus asking the question, and the Spirit making answer. And again, in the Second to the Thessalonians, speaking of Antichrist, [Paul] says, "And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus Christ shall slay with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy him with the presence of his coming; [even him] whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power,

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<sup>281</sup>We have already seen this question partially answered in the affirmative from evidence found in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. However, what follows is a more straightforward historical rendering, without the imagery and visions of the *Shepherd*.

<sup>282</sup>A later record comes from the writing of Augustine. Augustine was well aware of the dangers which could arise if a reader were to introduce a pause in the wrong place. His works contain several instances where he discusses interpretations of the Bible text, which depend upon the location of pauses or the separation of words (Cf. especially *De doctrina Christiana*, Book III for his discussion of reading John 1:1 and Philemon 22-24).

In the seventh century, Isidore laid down the essential qualifications for those who were to hold the office as lector:

[W]hoever is to be promoted to a rank of this kind shall be deeply versed in doctrine and books, and thoroughly adorned with the knowledge of meanings and words, so that in the analysis of *sententiae* he may understand where the grammatical boundaries occur; where the utterances continues, where the *sententia* concludes. In this way he will control the technique of oral delivery (*vim provocationis*) without impediment, in order that he may move the minds and feelings (*sensus*) of all to understand by distinguishing between the kinds of delivery, and by expressing the feelings (*affectus*) of the *sententiae*: now by the tone of one expounding, now in the manner of one who is suffering, now in the manner of one who is chiding, now in the manner of one who is exhorting, or by those according to the kinds of appropriate delivery. (Isidore, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, II, xi, 2, in *Patrologia cursus completus*, series latina, J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844-55), 1xxxiii, 791. (Reference found in Parkes, *Pause and Effect*, 35.)

and signs, and lying wonders." Now in these [sentences] the order of the words is this: "And then shall be revealed that wicked, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the presence of His coming." For he does not mean that the coming of the Lord is after the working of Satan; but the coming of the wicked one, whom we also call Antichrist. If, then, one does not attend to the [proper] reading [of the passage], and if he do not exhibit the intervals of breathing as they occur, there shall be not only incongruities, but also, when reading, he will utter blasphemy, as if the advent of the Lord could take place according to the working of Satan. So therefore, in such passages, the hyperbaton must be exhibited by the reading, and the apostle's meaning following on, preserved; and thus we do not read in that passage, "the God of this world," but, "God," whom we do truly call God; and we hear [it declared of] the unbelieving and the blinded of this world, that they shall not inherit the world of life which is to come.<sup>283</sup>

Regardless of the forum for the reading to which Irenaeus alludes (public or private), this early church father is arguing that the manner in which a text is read, including such rhetorical matters as pauses and proper transposition of word order (hyperbaton), dictates its meaning to the recipients. For Irenaeus, the role of the reader is far more than verbalizing signs written on a manuscript. The recovery of the meaning from the manuscript and its correct interpretation to the audience requires the reader to be a student of the text.

This can be further illustrated as the role of the reader is subtly portrayed in the detailed chronicle of the events which describe the persecution of Christians under Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century.<sup>284</sup> One aspect of the persecution was an edict for Christian texts to be confiscated and burned by Roman soldiers. *Gesta apud Zenophilum* depicts these efforts in the town of Cirta, the capital of Numidia in North Africa.<sup>285</sup> Several interesting facts emerge from the document. First, thirty-seven texts

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<sup>283</sup>A.H. 3.7.2.

<sup>284</sup>Cf. Eusebius, *H.E.* 8.2.4-5; W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 351-92.

<sup>285</sup>A text with notes is found in O. R. Vassall-Phillips, *The Work of St. Optatus, Bishop of Milevis, Against the Donatists* (London: Longmans, 1917), 349-81.

(*codicem*) are mentioned, which appears to be a large number for a Christian congregation in a rural district. Second, when the soldiers arrive to confiscate the manuscripts from the house church where the Christians meet, the bishop informs them, "the readers (*lectores*) have the scriptures." This is stated in spite of the fact that the meeting house has a room specifically named the library (*bibliothecis*). Under duress, the names of seven readers are divulged and when confronted, each produce the books in their possession. Third, the readers are portrayed as the custodians of the books, not just for the manuscript's protection,<sup>286</sup> but more so as a normal course of practice. A house church keeping manuscripts on its property may have symbolic significance but from a functional standpoint it makes perfect sense for the readers to maintain the manuscripts since public recitation requires readers to study the texts in advance. Moreover, the spreading out of the texts among seven readers and the diversity of the types of texts each possessed may indicate that "each reader was practiced only in certain texts."<sup>287</sup>

In summary, the role of the reader is strategic in the life of the early church. He<sup>288</sup> brings the "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets" before the worshipping community as a member of the clergy, empowered by the Holy Spirit. His readings are viewed as an interpretation and his efforts may even be classified as an inspired exposition or a homily of the text. He speaks with the authority of the church

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<sup>286</sup>One may assume that leaders of the church may spread out the texts to leaders for their safe-keeping. However, during the interrogation, after the subdeacons Marcucius and Catullinus turn over one volume, they state, "We have no more [books] because we are subdeacons; the readers have the books [*codices*]."

<sup>287</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 147.

<sup>288</sup>There is no record of female readers, although this can not be ruled out. Tertullian (*Praescr* 41) in the same context where he assails the heretics for their rapid turnover of office holders, including readers, also takes offense at their heretical use of females: "Those heretic women! How impudent they are! They dare to teach, debate, perform exorcisms, undertake cures, and perhaps even to baptize."

and his personal conduct is seen as a compelling element in the faith building of the community.<sup>289</sup>

### 3.4 CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE READING-EVENT

Poets read in the marketplace. Dramas, which were performed in the theater before up to 40,000 spectators, were a major part of the cultural milieu of the first century Greco-Roman world. Prose was spoken for all to hear and the practice of orality certainly affected its composition.<sup>290</sup> Private correspondence was written or dictated for the purpose of being read to the recipient, with the reader representing the presence, voice, and authority of the author.<sup>291</sup> Even epigrams, carved in stones, represent a vocal address to the passer-by, such as "Go, stranger."<sup>292</sup> One epitaph on a grave marker actually salutes the traveler in thanks for lending his voice to the name of the deceased.<sup>293</sup> Thus, a society which rapidly accumulated vast resources of manuscripts in all categories remained tenaciously devoted to its oral heritage.<sup>294</sup>

This background material can be summarized. (1) Texts of antiquity were most certainly vocalized. An early silent reading of Mark would be considered a rarity if not an outright anomaly. (2) Due to the nature of an ancient manuscript, the reader would be intimately familiar with the text, often to the point of memorization. (3) This preparation prior to the reading-event would be understood by rhetorical teachers and

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<sup>289</sup>Cyprian (*Ep.* 38.2) alludes to the reader standing in the *pulpitum*. Gamble (*Books and Readers*, 225) states that earlier, when Christians met in house churches the reader may read from the *bema* (βῆμα).

<sup>290</sup>Moses Hadas, *Ancilla to Classical Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 51.

<sup>291</sup>Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance," *passim*; Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 37; Stanley K. Stowers, "Social Typification and Classification of Ancient Letters," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute of Howard Clark Kee* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988), 79.

<sup>292</sup>Hadas, *Ancilla to Classical Reading*, 50.

<sup>293</sup>Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 64.

<sup>294</sup>Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 115-16, for his use of the adverb, *tenaciously*.

the early church as an act of interpretation. (4) The oral presentation of the gospel cannot be analyzed solely by the words recorded in the surviving texts available. Rather, the ancients were trained to read a text expressively, meaning that the performer's elocution and gestures must not be ignored if we are to understand the reception of the text by the original audience. (5) Readings in a public forum were commonplace, with Christian texts probably being read in a worship assembly.<sup>295</sup> Furthermore, to properly recreate a reading-event from the early church, the commanding position which the readers held as they read and interpreted the scriptures must be factored in. Sanctioned by the church and inspired by God's Spirit, their voice and gestures were a primary means for bringing life to the gospel stories in a predominantly illiterate society.

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<sup>295</sup>Beavis, "The Trial Before the Sanhedrin," 593. Cf. Col 4:16; 1 Thes 5:27; 1 Tim 4:13; Rev 1:3.

#### 4 TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF WRITING

As stated previously, this work argues that writing is not functionally constant throughout history or across cultural boundaries.<sup>296</sup> Thus, it is inappropriate to discuss a manuscript of antiquity with the same assumptions as a modern printed text. The mere observation that a text was preserved or has survived does not address the question of what purpose it served in the original community.

In an enlightening study, Rosalind Thomas demonstrated that assumptions why people wrote in antiquity and their attitudes toward the written media must be based on careful research and criticism.<sup>297</sup> She suggests that the issue involves the degree to which the documents were consulted and why. For example, record keeping in the ancient world was not like practices in modern times. M. T. Clanchy, referring to medieval England, states, "Records had not originally been made for utilitarian purposes measurable in cost-benefit terms. Rather, they had been pledges to posterity and an assurance of the continuity of institutions under God's providence . . . *a monument for posterity.*"<sup>298</sup> What remains unstated by Clanchy is that ancient records were not easily accessible, not public, nor kept for the purpose of archival consultation.<sup>299</sup> Rather, they served as a family's or society's legacy, proof of their status and history in a symbolic fashion. Thomas then concludes, "In ancient Greece, inscriptions were often thought of primarily as symbolic memorials of a decision rather than simply documents intended to record important details for administrative

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<sup>296</sup> Botha, "Mute Manuscripts," 39. Cf. Baumann, *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, 12, where he describes this action as "imputing to literacy a set of supposedly inherent and unchanging qualities."

<sup>297</sup> Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record*, esp. 34-94. Cf. Also Graff, *The Labyrinths of Literacy*, 3-31; Botha, "Greco-Roman Setting for New Testament Writings," 198; Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, esp. 1-16, 185-196.

<sup>298</sup> Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 147.

<sup>299</sup> Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, 42.

purposes."<sup>300</sup> Thomas and other scholars argue that writing in antiquity seems to have fulfilled functions beyond what modern literates would call practical (i.e., to communicate explicit information).<sup>301</sup> This theory explains the seemingly paradoxical historical evidence which couples vast amounts of ancient written records with a scholarly consensus which asserts a limited literacy in the first century. There appears to have been a respect which the first century world had for the written word. It covered a spectrum from something official, to a reverence for the sacred and hallowed, even though the vast majority of the population could not read the material for themselves.<sup>302</sup> This may be clearly demonstrated with the respect given to Homeric poems or that sacred texts were at the center of their lives for illiterate Christians.

Thomas points out that modern assumptions placed on writing, such as an original document being more accurate than a copy, or that the written word is authoritative and fixed are simply anachronistic.<sup>303</sup> She goes on to say, "Precise differentiation between original versions and 'inferior' copies (ἀντίγραφα) or insistence on absolute verbatim accuracy would seem to be the product of a highly developed literate mentality."<sup>304</sup> Furthermore, one may wonder if a concept of accuracy that demands exact repetition can exist without the printed (not just manuscript) word.<sup>305</sup> A tangential issue worthy of note surrounds the inconsistency of spelling in antiquity.

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<sup>300</sup>Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 83-84.

<sup>301</sup>Among others, Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 207, 325 and Mary Beard, "Writing & Religion: Ancient Literacy and the Function of the Written Word in Roman Religion," in *Literacy in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press, 1991), 38-39.

<sup>302</sup>Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 325.

<sup>303</sup>Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record*, 47.

<sup>304</sup>Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record*, 47. By "literate mentality," Thomas means a customary way of functioning with a reliance upon a printed text.

<sup>305</sup>Cf. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record*, 47 n109 for references.



Bad spelling in graffiti, for example, has been attributed to a lack of education.<sup>306</sup> A misspelling in a copy of a text can be ascribed by text critics to any number of errors. However, in a culture where language is heard rather than seen, and recognizing that lexicons are a modern tool, the phrase “correct spelling” being used in connection with the ancients may be an anachronism.

If writing did not function in antiquity as it does today, what were the pragmatic reasons for writing and how were the texts utilized by the ancients?

#### 4.1 THE FUNCTION OF ANCIENT WRITING

As a preface to this complex issue, a thorough discussion must cover an enormous geographic region with varying degrees of urbanization, each with its own distinct economic pressures and unique political influences. Additionally, it may be appropriate to note the huge area of silence from the extant documents. Cultural interpretation of the first century is limited to the writing available to us and may not present an accurate picture of the society as a whole. Modern practitioners of “oral history” working from extensive interviewing, remind us that even now, the views and the experiences of the lower reaches of society are often not well represented in written documents. Many oral historians see their task as preserving what these people have to say, otherwise it would not become a part of any written record.<sup>307</sup> In the orally based social context of antiquity, even more was simply never recorded in writing or never thought to be valuable enough to be preserved. Nevertheless, a functional understanding of first century writing must be laid to dispense with any modern expectations placed upon writing which might hinder the hearing of an ancient text.

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<sup>306</sup>In support of Thomas’ thesis, Havelock (*The Literate Revolution*, 199) states that in antiquity misspellings are frequent, but this of itself proves nothing. Shakespeare varied the spelling of his own name. Rutherford (*A Chapter in the History of Annotation*) writes an entire chapter on the issue of spelling in manuscripts.

<sup>307</sup>Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 105ff.

## 4.2 THE FUNCTION OF WRITING IN TRADE/BUSINESS

There is every indication that writing in the ancient Greek world initially was utilized to document and enhance trade opportunities with Mediterranean neighbors. In the much later Roman empire, a household of the elite could hardly function without the use of writing. Extant documents from all corners of the realm show records of legal contracts, loans, leases, and purchases of land. Among upper-class Roman citizens, written contracts were so much the norm, that in 44 B.C. Cicero lists, *stipulationes*, together with laws and wills among the "things which are done in writing."<sup>308</sup> It was commonplace for merchants engaged in long-distance trade to send and receive letters and to deal in amphorae and other containers whose contents were described in writing.<sup>309</sup>

## 4.3 THE FUNCTION OF WRITING IN POLITICS

Though the utilization of writing may have arisen through business and trade, in the first century the overriding function was in the administration of the Roman Empire. It is no coincidence that the centers of literacy, Egypt, Greece, and Rome were also the centers of military, economic, and political power. Without the wide dissemination of writing, political and administrative control would have been difficult to manage. The emperor exercised power over his dispersed subordinates largely through correspondence.<sup>310</sup> Return information from the provinces regarding military issues, taxation reports, and other governmental matters took place via written medium. Specifically, with the exception of his inner circle, any request of the emperor

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<sup>308</sup>Cic. Top. 96, as cited in Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 198. An interesting case of P. Annius Seleucus arises in the papyrus roll *P. Mich.* xi.620 (d.239-240 A.D.). Seleucus was a wealthy but illiterate businessman in first century Pompeii. Yet illiteracy did not exempt him from dealing in documents.

<sup>309</sup>M. H. Callender, *Roman Amphorae* (London, 1965). For painted texts on amphorae as a form of advertising, cf., R. I. Curtis, "Product Identification and Advertising on Roman Commercial Amphorae," *Ancient Society* xv-xvii (1984-1986), 209-228.

<sup>310</sup>F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London, 1977), 313-341.

or a provincial governor was normally put into writing, which limited access to imperial favors to those who could express their desires in written form.<sup>311</sup> Historical records document that written activity taking place in the provinces exceeded that of the imperial level. This took the form of correspondence with armies in the field, birth/death registers, marriage/divorce decrees, tax records, and provincial censuses.

How did this world of bureaucratic writing affect the people in the street and more importantly how did writing function in their lives? Succinctly, the forces at work in the economic, political, and social environment indicate that the upper classes of the Greco-Roman world relied heavily on writing and the rest of the population was affected by it. The power of the Roman Empire was based upon an expanded economy and on sophisticated measures for maintaining and communicating within the vast network. Regarding the expanded economy, Rome was quick to transport successful procedures from an advanced province to a relatively backward one. Keith Hopkins details how superior agricultural practices were communicated to Britain, which not only improved the British diet but also caused productivity to dramatically increase, a greater division of labor, and more and bigger towns. As Hopkins concludes, "the growth in literacy was both a consumption good - a way of integrating more people within a larger society - and a necessity. For a larger-scale economy needed (or operated better with) more writing."<sup>312</sup> Concerning the means for maintaining control, the Roman government monitored a vast and regionally dispersed provincial system made up of laws, courts of justice, bureaucratic administration, taxation, and the army primarily by means of written communication. One reason for a moderate growth in literacy was the encounter of new Roman subjects with the Roman mechanism for

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<sup>311</sup>Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, 242, 491-507.

<sup>312</sup>Hopkins, "Conquest by Book," 136.

control; writing. Predictably, the conquered people learned the language of power brokering, written Greek, which helped minimize excess exploitation.<sup>313</sup>

However, Harris' study demonstrates that mass literacy could not become a major cultural factor until

writing ceases to be the arcane accomplishment of a small professional or religious or social elite *only* when certain preconditions are fulfilled and *only* when strong positive forces are present to bring the change about. Such forces may be economic, social, or ideological or any combination of these things. . . . But without these preconditions and without such positive forces, literacy remains a restrictive possession - a state of affairs which may seem perfectly acceptable even in a culture which is in a sense penetrated through and through by the written word.<sup>314</sup>

Not until the post-Gutenberg era did these social forces exist to bring about such a mass societal change regarding literacy. In the Greco-Roman world the positive forces which needed to be in place were technological, economic and social, intimately interwoven. Ancient mass literacy was always limited by a technology which was not capable of producing vast numbers of texts at a low cost. Without the printing press, this precondition was not possible. Economically speaking, the traditional classical education was out of the question for the vast majority of the population. Publicly funded schools were centuries from development.<sup>315</sup> Few young males, who did not come from elite families, could devote years of time to acquiring literacy skills without the help of a benefactor. There simply was not an incentive for those who controlled the allocation of resources to aim for mass literacy. Claude Lévi-Strauss observed,

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<sup>313</sup>For example, all petitions to Roman provincial governors must be in writing. According to P. Yale I 61, in a 2 ½ day tour of his region, a governor received 1804 petitions. If the records are accurate, the governor read and answered all 1804 petitions and publicly posted the replies, as law required in two months (P. Oxy. XVII 2131). Cf., Hopkins, "Conquest by Book," 137, n9.

<sup>314</sup>Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 11-12, emphasis original.

<sup>315</sup>Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 17, 116-146, cites evidence that schools in large cities flourished in the Hellenistic era and in some regions citizens attempted to subsidize education. Yet, these plans faded under the Roman empire and nowhere are there records of an elaborate network of schools.

The primary function of written communication, as a means of communication, is to facilitate slavery. The use of writing for disinterested purposes, and as a source of intellectual and aesthetic pleasure, is a secondary result, and more often than not it may even be turned into a means of strengthening, justifying or concealing the other.<sup>316</sup>

While the levels of literacy remained 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 to literacy.<sup>317</sup>

Though the observations of scholars such as Harris and Lévi-Strauss are supportable by the historical data, one must be cautious not to draw extreme conclusions. For example, domination by the literate elite should not be attributed to the illiteracy of the masses, thereby attributing a causal appearance to the benign practice of writing. Illiteracy does not appear to be a burdensome problem for the common man. Nor is it historically accurate to assume that illiteracy cut the common man off from the ability to avoid exploitation at the hands of those who could employ this medium. The average man or woman could live their life and make a living without extensive knowledge of writing. Substitute readers and writers were not only available but were assumed to be an integral part of society by the Roman leaders.<sup>318</sup> Though mass illiteracy was never eradicated in the ancient world, a timely exchange of pertinent information took place through town criers (*praetor*) who proclaimed the edicts of the rulers and via literate family members, friends, or professional scribes who were readily available. In summary, the growth of the Roman Empire can, in part, be

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<sup>316</sup>Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, Trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Atheneum: 1973), 299. In his discussion, Lévi-Strauss is referring to political and economic domination rather than chattel slavery.

<sup>317</sup>Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 95-100.

<sup>318</sup>Hanson, "Ancient Illiteracy," 180. It would be incredulous to assume that the Romans would enact laws and edicts and then go to the expense to post them throughout the empire if they did not assume a communication process through which the information would be disseminated to the populace. "This system of communication envisions potential readers, even in settlements too small for their own government bureaux" (180).

attributed to the communications network predicated upon the written word. However, it is invalid to assume that not possessing reading or writing skills caused them to suffer hardships. It may be more accurate to say illiteracy simply caused personal inconvenience; requiring them to utilize surrogate literates, which was already part of the communication process in the ancient culture.<sup>319</sup>

#### 4.4 THE FUNCTION OF WRITING IN SECOND-TEMPLE JUDAISM

It will be important to answer the question, what was the purpose of writing in the first century Christian community(s). We will begin, however, with an investigation into the functional role of writing during the time of second-temple Judaism. We must be careful, however, not to overemphasize the role of literacy in Palestine. Though most studies of early Christianity concede the extremely low levels of literacy throughout the Roman Empire, ironically, these same works have an underlying assumption of high literacy rates in Judean or diaspora Judaism which is based upon outdated studies of antiquity.<sup>320</sup> Along that line, Gamble writes, "According to Josephus, in first century Judaism, it was a duty, indeed a religious commandment, that Jewish children be taught to read. . . . [R]abbinic sources suggest . . . there is little question that by the first century C. E. Judaism had developed a strong interest in basic literacy and that even small communities had elementary schools."<sup>321</sup> However, the rabbinic sources are not only much later than the period in question but the texts which have been cited previously describing the plethora of schools refer almost exclusively to

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<sup>319</sup>Regarding the issue of inconvenience in the ancient communication process, this is no different than for one generation to ask another, "Dad, how did you ever survive without the telephone...radio...TV...Xerox machines...computers...e-mail...?"

<sup>320</sup>For example, two older works often cited are Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1:78-83 and S. Safrai, "Education and the Study of the Torah," in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, sec 1.2, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 2:945-70, esp. 952, 954.

<sup>321</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 7.

a limited segment of the population, mainly rabbinic circles themselves.<sup>322</sup> Furthermore, rabbinic texts which claim people reading (e.g., *m. Ber.* 4:3; *m. Bik.* 3:7; *m. Sukk.* 3:10), in fact refer to them reciting from memory.<sup>323</sup> In response to Gamble's quotation of Josephus, Horsley interjects, "In fact, the Josephus passages cited indicate not that children were taught to read but that the teaching and learning of scripture/the laws were carried out by public oral recitation (at Sabbath assemblies), suggesting both that the general public was illiterate and that communication of the most important matters was oral."<sup>324</sup>

As we have seen, Judaism is not exempt from the oral environment from which it emerged and which it inhabited. Furthermore, the extra-biblical literature bears witness to the history of the times and demonstrates that Jewish cultural traditions were appropriated and cultivated by oral communications. First, the Dead Sea Scrolls, though coming from a society rich in scribal history and sacred texts, can be shown in practice, to point to a highly disciplined oral community. Horsley argues that the documents which originated in the community,

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<sup>322</sup>Richard Horsley, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 127. Catherine Hezser (*Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*) argues that depicting education among Palestine Jews accurately is generally difficult. Her overall conclusion of Jewish literacy, once the data is compiled, is "taken together, the results must lead to a new assessment of our understanding of ancient Judaism as a 'book religion' and a greater emphasis [must be placed] on other non-textual forms of religious expression" (503).

<sup>323</sup>Horsley, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, 127. A recent study places the literacy rate of Roman Palestine as low as 3 percent. Cf. Meir Bar-Ilan, "Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C. E.," in *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*, ed. Simcha Fishbane and Stuart Schoenfeld (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1992), 46-61.

<sup>324</sup>Horsley, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, 127. Cf. Josephus passages *Ant.* 4.210; 16.43; *Apion* 2.175, 178. Cf. also Philo, *ad Gaium* 115, 210. Horsley points out that "to learn *grammata*" as found in *Apion* 2.204 is often translated "learning to read" (Thackeray in Loeb edition). However, just as appropriate philologically and even more so culturally, would be to translate it "learning scripture" (as it is translated in 2.175) which is often done through oral instruction.

Most recent studies discount the possibility for a "general literacy" in ancient Israel. Cf. David Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Sociological-Archaeological Approach* JSOTSup 109 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1991); James Crenshaw, "Education in Ancient Israel," *JBL* 104 (1985) Crenshaw's thesis was expanded in *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (New York: Doubleday, 1998); Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*.

whether in composing and reciting blessings at communal meals and meetings (e.g., 1QSa 2:21-23), composing and reciting hymns (e.g., 1QH), reciting prayers and blessings (e.g., 1QSb = 1Q28b; 4Q408; 4Q503; 4Q507-9), delivering sapiential exhortation (e.g., 4QS184-85), or rehearsing holy war (1QM) attest to the intense oral life of the community.<sup>325</sup>

Many of these scrolls or fragments either describe or are written copies of oral performance or rituals.

Moreover, the manuscripts at Qumran show a "textual plurality"<sup>326</sup> or what might be called extensive textual traditions, evidenced by the variants of Biblical texts. Though it may be accurate to regard these works as exegesis on one particular variant of the text, regarded as the "actual text,"<sup>327</sup> one wonders if the "actual text" may be more fluid than earlier scholars allowed. "At the present state of research, practitioners of textual criticism and defenders of the authorized text should probably operate on a broader concept of what constitutes an original text."<sup>328</sup> Thus, if scholars at a cradle of scribal activity such as Qumran find it difficult to make distinctions of "original text", perhaps the pertinent question should focus on the way in which textual versions developed in an oral environment.<sup>329</sup>

A synthesis of this discussion may be accomplished by examining one document, the Community Rule manuscript (1QS). Its actual use in community life may be hypothesized from its form and content. First, it may be vital to point out that the

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<sup>325</sup>Horsley, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, 138.

<sup>326</sup>Julio Trebolle Barrera, "The Authoritative Functions of Scriptural Works at Qumran," in *The Community of the Renewed Covenant: The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Eugene Ulrich and James VanderKam (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1993), 108.

<sup>327</sup>Emanuel Tov, "Biblical Texts as Reworked in Some Qumran Manuscripts with Special Attention to 4QRP and 4QPara Gen-Exod," in *The Community of the Renewed Covenant: The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Eugene Ulrich and James VanderKam (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1993), 111-134.

<sup>328</sup>Trebolle Barrera, "The Authoritative Functions of Scriptural Works at Qumran," 110.

<sup>329</sup>For recent discussion of textual plurality by scribes in an oral environment, cf., Person, "The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer," 601-609.

textual tradition of the Community Rule comes in several variants. The text from cave 1 (1QS) appears to have corrections and additions, none of which appear on the manuscripts from cave 4. Further, the portion of the Rule in columns 8-9 of 1QS is far shorter in 4Q259. Only 4QS256 contains parallels to all sections of 1QS, while the significantly different texts of 4QS258 and 4QS259 contain only parts and differing parts of the rule in 1QS.<sup>330</sup> The numerous variants may imply that there was no original or canonical version of the Rule but what might be called actual working copies.

Regarding the contents of 1QS, it appears overall as a handbook or manual for the leaders of the Qumran community. Possibly, the covenant renewal ceremony described in 1QS 1-3 would be enacted orally as new members were inducted. The doctrinal instruction of 1QS 3-4 might as well be spoken by the leader. Also, 1QS 10-11 appear to be a textual transcription of an oral performance. Furthermore, there is no parallel to the Rule in Jewish literature. But a "similar type of literature flourished among Christians between the second and fourth centuries, the so-called 'Church Orders' represented by the works such as the Didache, the Didascalia, [and] the Apostolic Constitution."<sup>331</sup> Therefore, by way of analogy, the members of the community would not need to consult the manual regularly, since "there is nothing in the [manual] that the reader does not already know."<sup>332</sup> From a functional standpoint, the scrolls may have memorialized the practices which took place on a regular basis and later served as a reminder of basic community knowledge.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are not the only extra-biblical texts which point to Judaism being an orally conformed culture. Josephus' *Antiquities* implies that the Pharisaic application of the Mosaic Torah was accomplished via oral transmission. Josephus records, "The Pharisees had handed down to the people regulations (*nomina*) from the

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<sup>330</sup>Observation from Horsley, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, 139.

<sup>331</sup>Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 1962), 98.

<sup>332</sup>Ian Henderson, "Didache and the Oral Synoptic Comparison," *JBL* 111 (1992), 292.

teaching of the fathers which were not written in the Laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them and say we are to esteem [only] those regulations to be obligatory which are written in the word but not those from the tradition of the forefathers" (*Ant.* 13.297).<sup>333</sup> Recent studies of Rabbinic traditions further supports Josephus' supposition that the Pharisees cultivated an oral Torah as opposed to simply consulting written scrolls. "Biblical citation in Rabbinic literature - no less than quotation from analogous classics among other literary cultures in the Greco-Roman world - testifies to the commission of the text to memory."<sup>334</sup> Jaffee goes on to say, "Scripture was at least as 'oral' a phenomenon among the Sages as a 'written' one. . . . And Sages' scriptural quotations are, no less than Paul's, quotations from memory in service of more ambitious rhetorical constructions."<sup>335</sup>

#### 4.5 THE FUNCTION OF WRITING IN CHRISTIANITY

The transition from the function of writing in Judaism to Christianity can begin with the simple yet surprising observation; the early church placed little or no emphasis upon formal education until the fourth century A.D.

The modern preoccupation with the relation between religion and schooling results from the establishment of Christendom in the fourth century, and has no direct roots in the gospel. Throughout the first three centuries there was no suggestion of any needs of church schools, except in the peculiar case of orphans in the care of churches, when the standard Hellenic education was simply provided for them.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>333</sup>Though later than Josephus, the opening of the Mishnah tractate *Abot* documents that the rabbis believed that the tradition of the Torah was oral from the beginning, as Moses handed it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, in the "chain of the tradition."

<sup>334</sup>Martin S. Jaffee, "Writing and Rabbinic Oral Tradition: On Mishnaic Narrative, Lists, and Mnemonics," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1994), 126.

<sup>335</sup>Jaffee, "Figuring Early Rabbinic Literary Culture," *Semeia* 65 (1994), 70-71. Jaffee states, "Neither Paul nor the Sages had writings before them as they composed their discourses."

<sup>336</sup>E. A. Judge, "The Conflict of Educational Aims in New Testament Thought," *JCE* 9 (1966), 33.

Moreover, the push to establish Christian education within the burgeoning church was not an internally motivated principle of mission, i.e., literacy training so the scriptures could be read for oneself or the church.<sup>337</sup> Rather, the Church's initial crusade to educate its members did not come about until the fourth century, as a reaction to Emperor Julian (reigned for 16 months, 361-363).<sup>338</sup> Julian, who was determined to undo Constantine's institution of Christianity as the State religion, began a two stage salvo. First, he decreed that all who taught Hellenistic education must also subscribe to its basic ideology.<sup>339</sup> Certainly, forced compliance to pagan religion by teachers was unacceptable to the church.<sup>340</sup> Second, a few months later, Julian the Apostate as he was known, excluded "Galileans" (the name he used for Christians) from traditional educational institutions and challenged them to train their youth in the churches themselves on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke rather than with the classical texts.<sup>341</sup> The Church's response was to develop its own educational system, at least on an interim basis.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>337</sup>Judge, "The Conflict of Educational Aims," 33. Education, as a means of evangelism did not become a part of the Church's thrust until after the fourth century.

<sup>338</sup>For a helpful summary, cf. Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), esp. chapter VII: Julian the Apostate.

<sup>339</sup>The text of Julian's "The Rescript of Christian Teachers," can be found in English in Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 173 or in the original in *Codex Theodosianus* 13.3.5.

<sup>340</sup>Besides the rebuke by Bishop Gregory Nazianus (*Or.* 4.5) and Cyril's rebuttal, *Contra Iulianum*, composed approximately eighty years after Julian's *Against the Galileans*, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus called the law, "inhumane" and said it "ought to be buried in eternal silence" (22.10.7).

Robert Browning (*The Emperor Julian* [London: 1975]) makes an interesting distinction which will nuance this discussion. Christian parents, belonging to the upper class, had always insisted that their sons receive rhetorical education. "It was a mark of social distinction, the sign of belonging to a class. . . . Christian parents belonging to this class would either have to deny their sons the education traditionally associated with their station and so make them 'outsiders,' or to expose them during some of the most formative years of their life to the influence of a teacher concerned to combat Christianity" (172-173).

<sup>341</sup>Wilmer Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1959-62), *Ep.* 36.

<sup>342</sup>Wilken (*The Christians As The Romans Saw Them*, 175-176) relates an interesting incident that Christians saw their situation surrounding Julian so grave that they would not be able to insure their children would be properly educated. Two men, both named Apollinarius, came up with the ingenious

The historical significance of this event provides us with a backdoor entry in assessing the role which writing played in the early church. Rather than addressing the question of functionality directly, for which we have little historical evidence, the indirect approach would ask the question, "Why did the church for the first three centuries resist implementing a formal educational process which would train its own leaders, utilizing its own written material in the process?"<sup>343</sup> The question demands an explanation since many of the characteristic activities of the early church, such as the heavy apologetic demands of the church's leaders, were in actuality creating the need for formal education.

First, education (*paideia*) in the formal sense, had been fixed in its classical shape for centuries, and of course, the churches functioned within this established system.<sup>344</sup> Their acquiescence in the secular educational system should not be viewed any differently from the early church's acceptance of the classical systems of slavery or of the authority of the state. Though the apostles launched challenges against these culturally established practices, the changes took centuries in coming to fruition. For the intervening years, it simply was the situation in which they lived and it was accepted as such.

The Pauline epistles provide an obvious starting point as they portray the ideological differences between Judeo-Christian and Hellenistic educational concerns.

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idea of rendering the scriptures in the style and form of Greek literature. "Set about the task of writing an epic poem on the antiquities of the Hebrews up to the reign of Saul to take the place of Homer. . . . Their aim was to take themes from the Scriptures and produce a 'set of works which in manner, expression, character, and arrangement are well approved as similar to the Greek literatures and which were equal in number and force'" (Sozomen *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.18).

<sup>343</sup>The ideas which follow originated with Judge, "The Conflict of Educational Aims."

<sup>344</sup>In the fourth century, Augustine depicts his own Latin educational process with almost no change from the first century Greco-Roman programs. See Brian Stock, (*Augustine the Reader*) where he summarizes Augustine's education utilizing primary sources. "In his recollection of *grammatica*, that is instruction in grammar and literature, he speaks of practices which remained unchanged for generations: reading set texts in class, teaching by dialogue with a master, memorization and recitation of 'classics', intensive study of pronunciation, exercises in composition, scrutiny of commentaries, fabrication of stories based upon exemplars" (4).

Paul specifically rejects the art of rhetoric as a prime test of human cultivation, based upon the indignities which the system inflicts upon other people.<sup>345</sup> However, it is not simply Christianity's conflict with the Greco-Roman educational system which caused the church's neglect of formal literacy training. It was the fact that every facet of Roman art, politics, and especially literature was inseparable from pagan religion.<sup>346</sup> It would be more accurate to describe education in antiquity as cultural discipleship than simply literacy training in an antiseptic classroom situation.<sup>347</sup> A student became the follower of his/her teacher's "school." It was in these educational and philosophical settings that the issue of "conversion" in antiquity was addressed, not in the realm of pagan religion.<sup>348</sup> Thus, as a corrective, the church focused on a whole new order of personal formation which was spiritual not rhetorical in origin. E. A. Judge calls this the "education of the new man in Christ."<sup>349</sup> This ideological and cultural conflict examines one side of this educational equation; Christianity's negative reaction to the "man of culture" created by being steeped in the classic tradition. The other side of the equation is to propose what might constitute the Christian ideal of a positive pedagogical

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<sup>345</sup>Cf., 1 Cor 1:17, 20; 2:4, 6; 10:5; 11:6; Romans 14:17-18; Col 4:5, 2 Tim 2:14, 23. Regarding the indignities: 1 Cor 3:3; 4:6; 2 Cor 9:20; Gal 5:26.

<sup>346</sup>An interesting study would be to discuss how and if Christianity differed from their pagan counterparts in reference to the role written texts played in their respective cultures. This is an enormous task. However, to lump all pagan religions into a homogeneous unit for the purpose of uncovering a common reason for writing would be inappropriate. How writing functioned within pagan religions is addressed in Mary Beard, "Writing and Religion"; Richard Gordon, "From Republic to Principate: Priesthood, Religion and Ideology," in M. Beard and J. North (eds.) *Pagan Priests* (London, 1990); M. Beard, J. North, S. Price, *Religions of Rome: A Source book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>347</sup>This is just as true in modern times as it was in the Greco-Roman days. Cf. Graff, *The Labyrinths of Literacy*, 21-22 for a discussion of the underlying governmental/nationalistic agenda for mass literacy training in Sweden in the nineteenth century.

<sup>348</sup>Alexander ("Paul and the Hellenistic Schools: The Evidence of Galen," in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995]) paraphrases A. D. Nock (*Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* [London: Oxford University Press, 1933], chapter 11) when she says, "Moreover, as Nock argues, the whole idea of 'conversion' from one set of beliefs to another is at home among the philosophical schools of antiquity in a way that it is not in the pluralistic, polytheistic world of ancient religion" (61).

<sup>349</sup>Judge, "The Conflict of Educational Aims," 40.

alternative. Simply put, they adopted a program to train a disciple in the writings of Paul and the gospels.<sup>350</sup>

Second, explaining the ideological differences between Hellenistic and Christian education only partially addresses the question of why the early church did not have a sense of urgency to increase the level of literacy among its members through formal education. The crux of the answer can be found in the church's actual use and understanding of their own texts. From a pragmatic perspective, there was no more pressure on the early church to create additional readers through classical education than the Romans experienced to make certain their written communications would have an adequate supply of readers to disseminate their edicts and laws to the general populace. Practically speaking, there seemed to be an adequate number of literates to cover the reading and writing demands of ancient society.<sup>351</sup>

From a literary critical perspective, there seemed to be a distinct contrast between the quality of the gospels over against that of traditional classical Greek literature. Early church commentators, themselves well-schooled in classical rhetoric, made assertions that New Testament writers must have lacked παιδεία.<sup>352</sup> Christianity's opponents, from Celsus onwards, commonly scoffed at the literary shortcomings reflected in the church's writings.<sup>353</sup> The New Testament's writing style was so well accepted that even the Church Fathers made no attempt to refute these charges.<sup>354</sup> Their

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<sup>350</sup>Judge, "The Conflict of Educational Aims," 40-42.

<sup>351</sup>To date, I find no extant records which indicate that people could not acquire literate surrogates when they needed them. This also seems true for the assumptions of Paul as he instructed his letters to be read and passed from church to church Cf., 2 Cor 1:13; 2 Cor 3:2; Eph 3:4; Col 4:16; 1 Thes 5:27. Availability of readers appears as a given in every society including Paul's small house churches.

<sup>352</sup>Alexander (*The Preface to Luke's Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993]) notes that Celsus complains that the church was composed of "vulgar and illiterate persons" and its writings are the work of "sailors" (*nautae*). Others echoed that the apostles are *rudes et indoctos*, their writings "barbarous" and full of unacceptable neologisms, solecisms and grammatical faults (180-181).

<sup>353</sup>Alexander (*The Preface to Luke's Gospel*, 180) makes it clear that this was not simply a reflection of social prejudice because of Origen's reply (*Contra Celsum* I 62).

<sup>354</sup>Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel*, 181.

arguments, similar to Paul's in 1 Corinthians 2:1ff, made a case for the New Testament's practical function rather than claiming classical rhetorical form for their texts. Thus, it is fair to say that the church indeed did educate their own people but not according to the secular *paideia* model. Nevertheless, Christian education was so unmistakable that the argument has been made that "to the casual pagan observer, the activities of the average synagogue or church would look more like the activities of a school than anything else."<sup>355</sup> It seems fair, therefore to propose that from the church's perspective, classical education as an upper class prerequisite and as a social class distinction was downplayed (or left up to the elite Christians for their children) while what might be categorized as discipleship or catechism instruction was their distinguishing educational mission.<sup>356</sup>

Now, this leads us to a follow-up question linking the rhetorical style of Christian literature with its physical form. Since the ancients, both inside and outside the church, clearly perceived the rhetorical differences between classical and Christian writing, was it possible that one of the reasons the early church adopted the codex form for their texts was for the functional reasons society associated with it?<sup>357</sup> The codex in

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<sup>355</sup>Loveday Alexander, "Paul and the Hellenistic Schools," 60. Judge ("The Conflict of Educational Aims") presented a similar idea when he said, "In their concern with authoritative information and ideas, and with arguments about their ethical consequences, they [the early church] resembled a philosophical school rather than a religion, by the standards of the day" (34). Judge's quote is dependent upon information found in his article, "The Early Christians As A Scholastic Community," *JRH* 1 (1961), esp. 135.

<sup>356</sup>R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 33-34. MacMullen documents that the early church was diligent in educating their people *after* their conversion. MacMullen's argument focuses upon the point that evangelism, in a public manner was not the method of the early church. Yet, though there is little evidence for public evangelism, that does not mean that the church was inward and private. In referring to MacMullen, Alexander ("Paul and the Hellenistic Schools") summarizes the early church's situation, "Thus, I believe that MacMullen is correct in saying that formally speaking all Christian discourse in the first century, and much of it in the second century, is 'instruction' rather than 'evangelism' addressed directly to outsiders" (81).

<sup>357</sup>For the classical discussion of this issue, cf. C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987). For a survey of contemporary literature, cf. Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 49-66.

the first century was essentially a notebook<sup>358</sup> used to record texts of an ephemeral nature, such as classroom notes or first drafts of manuscripts,<sup>359</sup> somewhat of an intermediate state in book production. Furthermore, it seems plausible to argue that there was a close tie between the scroll, which for centuries had been the traditional standard for books, and the issue of status in literary society. Throughout extant literature and pictorial representations of reading-events, scrolls were associated with the culturally elite while the codex-form was linked to the working classes.<sup>360</sup> In other words, it may have been social customs and status which prohibited traditional literature from employing the codex. On the other hand, since the Christians already accepted their writings as “vulgar,” nothing hindered them from using this ignoble form. The Christians may have viewed their texts more pragmatically and less bound by tradition.<sup>361</sup> Thus, it might be fair to assert that Christian texts served the church in the role of a “handbook” for Christian life.<sup>362</sup>

The above data invites one to draw some conclusions regarding the role writing played in the expansion of the emerging church. It is well established that the early church was focused upon the word, both oral and written, something uncharacteristic

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<sup>358</sup>The word *caudex* originally referred to a block of wood, reflecting the use of binding waxed boards together which could be used and reused to store notes written with a wood stylus.

<sup>359</sup>Quintilian, *Or. Ins.* 11.2.32. Cf. Also 10.3.31, where he recommends transferring to parchment for those with bad eyesight. Cf. Alexander, “Ancient Book Production,” 82-84 for additional citations.

<sup>360</sup>Cf. Alexander, “Ancient Book Production,” 79-81. She uses the term, “middle-class” which I find to be somewhat anachronistic. One would be hard pressed to argue that a middle-class existed in antiquity. However, if I could substitute another designation, craft or tradesman class, I would agree with her assessment that “the codex-form belongs to the world of work and commerce on which the householder’s wealth is based, not the leisured, aristocratic lifestyle evoked” by the pictorial references to scrolls (80).

<sup>361</sup>Alexander, “Ancient Book Production,” 84.

<sup>362</sup>Alexander (“Ancient Book Production,” in part quoting Gamble, *Book and Readers*) says, “Christian books adopted the ‘utilitarian’ format of the codex ‘not because they enjoyed a special status as aesthetic or cult objects, but because they were practical books for everyday use: the handbooks, as it were, of the Christian community’” (85).

of ancient religion.<sup>363</sup> Furthermore, in this word-centered community, it seems fair to conclude that the soon-to-be-sacred texts functioned in a practical, utilitarian sense; a means to an ends. For example, a common assumption that the church spread throughout the Roman Empire by means of the written word may be generally accurate, however it lacks the specificity which might properly nuance the culturally specific communications system employed by the early church. The first century church relied upon written texts for preservation and circulation but in the end it was the human voice that was the chief medium of gospel delivery.<sup>364</sup> The work of Justin Martyr, writing about 155 A.D., helps to show the areas of gradation in defining the function of writing in the early church. He states that the written gospels were used in Christian worship in Rome (*First Apology* 66-67) yet not only were these texts dependent upon a reader, but Justin, in his own written communication, characteristically cited not just the written text of his day but some sort of oral gospel tradition. It may be fair to surmise that while the Gospels and an early Pauline collection circulated among the churches, functionally they may have served as witnesses to Christian preaching rather than as the fixed and sole authority of the church.<sup>365</sup>

Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, the general assumption will be that writing, as understood in the cultural context of antiquity, functioned primarily to preserve human speech which generally returned to its oral form as it was communicated to its recipients. This is not meant to ignore the fact that essentially all New Testament literature makes explicit claims to be in written form.<sup>366</sup> Nor should we neglect the

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<sup>363</sup>Alexander, "Ancient Book Production," 79.

<sup>364</sup>Iren. *Contra haeres.* ii.27.2; Orig. *Contra Cels.* iii.50.

<sup>365</sup>James Kugel and Rowan Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 115. Tatian's *Diatesseron* may be an excellent example of this phenomenon. As a pupil of Justin Martyr, Tatian composed his Gospel harmony and this document became the standard Gospel of Syriac-speaking Christians until the fifth century. At least for this segment of the church, the gospel texts did not appear fixed.

<sup>366</sup>Matt 1:1 (though βίβλος probably only refers to the first 17 verses); Mark 13:14; Luke 1:1-4; John 20:30-31, 21:24-25; Acts 1:1. The epistles by their very nature lay claim to being written; Hebrews

caution of Larry Hurtado who reminds us that Christianity was a society founded upon texts; its past rooted in the writings of the Old Testament and its future being shaped by the emerging apostolic teachings medium.<sup>367</sup> Moreover, the New Testament was written to bring about faith and edification throughout a vast geographic region in a post-apostolic age and that the manuscript form allowed for its transportation throughout the Roman Empire. However, its physical form should not unduly influence conclusions regarding how it functioned in society. In the Greco-Roman world, writing, for the most part, was a storage container awaiting re-vocalization by the reader.

As a final disclaimer, this corrective is not meant to underrate the intrinsic value ancient society placed on the text itself. The symbolic worth imputed to the written text can be well documented.<sup>368</sup> But there also developed within Christian circles a respect towards the written texts that “even an outsider might know that they [Christians] were

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13:22; Revelation 1:3 (important text for defining ἀναγινώσκω). The context clearly defines the word to mean “reading aloud” since there are hearers in the presence of the readers: μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα.); 22:7, 9, 10, 18, 19. For reading references in the epistles, cf., 2 Cor 1:13; 2 Cor 3:2; Eph 3:4; Col 4:16; 1 Thes 5:27. Regarding the writer of an epistle to his audience, Rom 15:15; 16:22; 1 Cor 4:14; 5:9, 11; 7:1 (Corinthian church writing to Paul); 9:15; 14:37; 2 Cor 1:13; 2:3, 4, 9; 7:12; 9:1; 13:10; Gal 1:20; 6:11; Phil 3:1; 1 Thes 4:9; 5:1 (οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι); 2 Thes 3:17; 1 Tim 3:14; Philemon 1:19, 21; 1 Peter 5:12; 2 Peter 3:1, 15; 1 John 1:4; 2:1, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 21, 26; 5:13; 2 John 1:5, 12; 3 John 1:9, 13; Jude 1:3; Rev. 1:3, 11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 10:4; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5; 22:18, 19.

<sup>367</sup>Larry W. Hurtado, “The Gospel of Mark: Evolutionary or Revolutionary Document?,” *JSNT* 40 (1990), 17.

<sup>368</sup>Writing functioned as more than the simple transference of information in antiquity. A book’s mystique (I hesitate to use the word, magic) was undeniable. This is not just a primitive or pagan notion but one widely held by church leaders such as Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine. Origen suggested that as a Christian struggles to understand obscure passages, even when there is no comprehension of the sense, the very sound of the sacred words in the ear is somehow beneficial (*Hom. in Nave Iesu*, 20.1). Chrysostom, on more than one occasion, describes the scriptures as “divine charms” (*theiai epodai*) in which he states that “the devil will not dare approach a house where a gospel-book is lying” (*Hom. in Joh.* 32). Elsewhere, he alludes to the practice to “suspend [extracts from] Gospels from their necks as a powerful amulet” (*anti phulakes meyales*) (*Hom. in Cor* 43.7). Augustine commented that putting a copy of the Gospel of John under one’s pillow prior to sleep would cure a headache (*Joh. tr.* 7.12).

devoted to sacred books.<sup>369</sup> It should be underscored that the scope of hallowed books was not be limited to scriptural texts themselves.<sup>370</sup> Sacred treatment was also accorded to the acts of the martyrs<sup>371</sup>, biblical commentaries<sup>372</sup>, and letters from leaders in the early Christian movement.<sup>373</sup> Nonetheless, based upon current understanding of the communication practice in antiquity, it would be a glaring generalization to think of writing as the primary means of Christian propagation in the first three centuries. In point of fact, the oral delivery of sacred texts, to a vast array of audiences, was the final link in the communication chain. Byrskog reminds us that “[the gospel tradition] has no life of its own; the written texts, whether on a scroll or on a codex, were mostly ‘transitional’ in the sense that they presupposed and supplemented oral modes of communication, regularly returning to oral modalities.”<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>369</sup>Lucian *Peregr.* 11-12 (with comments on reading aloud), as found in Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 300. This aspect of Christianity may be, in part, an inheritance from Judaism (Cf., J. Leipoldt and S. Morenz, *Heilige Schriften* [Leipzig, 1953], 116 through 117.)

<sup>370</sup>The New Testament material was early on referred to as “scripture” (e.g., Barnabas 4.14; 2 Clement 2.4; 14.1). Yet at this point it would be more accurate to call the texts in question “what will eventually be canonized as scripture.” This category may also need to be expanded to include New Testament apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature or instructional documents such as Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas.

<sup>371</sup>From the time of the death of Polycarp (160 A.D.), the persecution and death of Christians were recounted. Cf., Euseb. *HE* iv.15; Cypr. *Ep.* 27.1.

<sup>372</sup>Euseb. *HE* vi.22-23.

<sup>373</sup>1 & 2 Clement; Ignatius; Polycarp to the Philippians, etc.

<sup>374</sup>Byrskog, *Story as History - History as Story*, 127.

## 5 SUMMARY

This chapter answers the question, "What was communication like in the first century and how did writing actually function in the process?" The initial emphasis was to describe the performative aspect of an ancient reading-event. Specifically, the ancient reading-event was the end result of a lengthy interpretive process and during the actual performance, the reader would employ gestures, body language, and elocutionary aspects of speech to reveal the story's message to the audience. Next, we delved into the physical manuscripts and how their chirographic form may have impacted a reader's practice. Our conclusion was that the manuscript served as a reader's tool which revealed the story's message as a relationship was forged between the reader, the text.

One could not answer the question, what was communication like in the first century? without describing the role of the ancient reader in the early church. The first significant finding was that the reader of the "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets" was a highly influential figure in the church's infancy. His interpretation and rendering of the text was viewed as a spiritual gift. Second, in the presentation of the gospel, the church-sanctioned reader functioned as the voice of the apostle, applying a tone of authority to the reading-event.

The last major section of the chapter pointed towards understanding the function of writing in antiquity. It began with a broad sweep, finally concentrating upon how writing functioned in the educational process of the early church as contrasted with her pagan counterparts. Summarily, the first century church relied upon written materials for preservation and circulation of their texts but in the end it was the human voice that was the chief medium of gospel delivery.

Chapter 1 introduced us to the epistemological divide which exists between ancient and contemporary readers and the hermeneutical problems which must be bridged in order to "hear as the ancients heard." In chapter 2, we oriented ourselves to the nature of communication in antiquity; how it was written, how it was read, how it

was heard, and how writing as a whole functioned in an ancient culture. With that in mind, we are now able to describe an oral/aural reading model which will minimize anachronistic tendencies. It is to this goal which we turn our attention in chapter 3.

# 3

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## A Question of Method

It is perfectly legitimate for us to approach the [Second] Gospel with all our sophisticated tools and theories of literary analysis, provided we remember that these are our interpretations, not first-century understandings of the Gospel.

Joanna Dewey, *Mark as Interwoven Tapestry*

What has not been considered is the fact that both the writing and the reading of this [New Testament] material involved the oral performance of words.

Paul Achtemeier, *Omne Verbum Sonat*

While most members of the [biblical] guild have offered tacit acknowledgment . . . to the fact that the Gospel narratives were almost certainly intended to be received aurally rather than visually, . . . few have known what to do about it. The general mood seems to have been puzzlement as to the possibility and necessity of developing an oral hermeneutic for exegesis.

David Bauer and Mark Allan Powell, *Treasures New and Old*

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### 1 CALL FOR A SOLUTION

To capture the blend of the fixed and the flexible, the interaction of the oral and the written, the inter-dependence of individual "performer" and the attentive audience within the gospel tradition, in a way which truly represents the process of living tradition, is one of the great challenges still confronting researches in this field.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>375</sup>James D. G. Dunn, "Testing the Foundations: Current Trends in New Testament Studies" An Inaugural Lecture. University of Durham, 9 Feb 1984, 21. Since his induction as professor at Durham, Dunn's published work has taken him in other methodological directions. It is the desire of this study to

The interaction of the reader and audience to which Dunn alludes, so common in Jesus' oral culture, has been overshadowed by our print-oriented custom of silent reading. Yet in recent days, Dunn has re-donned the mantle to which he called the world of Biblical scholarship. The recent on-line publication of his article, *Jesus in Oral Memory*, kindled lively discussion and reminded the onlookers just how print-oriented Twenty-first century scholarship remains. Relating to the sources which stand behind the gospel tradition, Dunn calls the standard approach (referring to Bultmann) "wrong-headed."<sup>376</sup> If we take the oral nature of the gospels seriously,

an oral retelling of a tradition is not at all like a new literary edition. It has not worked on or from a previous retelling. How could it? The previous retelling was not 'there' as a text to be consulted. And in the retelling in turn the retold tradition did not come into existence as a kind of artefact, to be examined as by an editor and re-edited for the next retelling. In oral transmission a tradition is performed, not edited.<sup>377</sup>

Thus, Dunn is admonishing the scholarly community not to examine layers of tradition but performances themselves.

A basic question emerges from Dunn, what method would be appropriate for interpreting an ancient text that was meant for public performance? And Dunn is not alone as he addresses our guild's partiality to print-centered methodologies.

Method is expected to yield objective knowledge by filtering out experiential "noise" thought to impinge on the quality of information. But what makes a

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follow the call outlined above. Dunn's contribution to *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. H. Wansbrough JSNTSup 64 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) and the article which serves as its precursor, "Let John Be John: A Gospel for Its Time," in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. P Stuhlmacher Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991) miss the opportunity to address his above challenge in a direct manner. Recently, Dunn has concentrated upon the issue of how the text's presentation may have been connected to its impact on the early Christian community ("Jesus in Oral Memory: The Initial Stages of the Jesus Tradition," in *Jesus: A Colloquium in the Holy Land*, ed. D. Donnelly [New York & London: Continuum, 2001], 84-145).

<sup>376</sup>"Jesus in Oral Memory," 123.

<sup>377</sup>"Jesus in Oral Memory," 124.

(reported) sight more objective than a (reported) sound, smell, or taste? Our bias for one and against the other is a matter of cultural choice rather than validity.<sup>378</sup>

The strength of most methodological approaches is that they are designed to guard the critic against subjectivity and to place controls upon an interpreter's findings. Yet, if audience persuasion was the goal of most first century literature, one might contend that objectivity should not be the primary criterion for judging the validity of a methodological approach. With that in mind, Fowler has observed that Markan scholars, regardless of methodological approaches, make extensive comments about readers and their reading experiences.<sup>379</sup> It should not surprise us that many reading methodologies are as much intuitive as descriptive. For that is the nature of reading; it's more than meets the eye. Thus, a critical reading of the text need not discount an intuitive reading of Mark, since an oral approach assumes that a reading-event is designed to work on the affective level. Horsley reminds us, "it will surely help to strip away too bookish an approach to the written texts, and to emphasize the value and circumstances of the performance."<sup>380</sup>

Robert Tannehill argues that among methodological approaches, rhetorical criticism is the most appropriate choice in dealing with the affective nature of a text. He says that rhetorical criticism is concerned with the "interactions between the work, the author, and the audience," and is thus particularly appropriate in analyzing "those forms of literature which . . . have designs on an audience."<sup>381</sup> Tannehill continues, -

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<sup>378</sup>Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 108.

<sup>379</sup>Cf., *Loaves and Fishes*, 150-151 and *Let the Reader Understand*, 15. Fowler says he is "trying to do consciously and carefully what critics of Mark's Gospel have always done unknowingly and haphazardly" (15).

<sup>380</sup>Richard Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 62.

<sup>381</sup>Robert Tannehill, *The Sword in His Mouth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 18. Tannehill is quoting, summarizing, and agreeing with E. P. J. Corbett, *Rhetorical Analysis of Literary Works* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1969), xi-xxviii.

Rhetorical criticism does not fall under W. K. Wimsatt's strictures against the "Affective Fallacy" because it does not proceed from the subjective effects of the work on the critic or others but focuses on the text itself and from there works outward . . . to consideration of the author and the audience. The critic can protect himself (sic) against impressionism and subjectivism by confining his analysis as much as possible to those elements in the work which are capable of producing the effect of a certain kind on an audience, i.e., by concentrating on the response as it is potentially contained in the work.<sup>382</sup>

The rhetorical approach outlined by Tannehill is taking us in the direction to which this thesis is leaning, focusing upon the affective value of a text and to the "forceful and imaginative language in the synoptic sayings."<sup>383</sup> However, this approach is a modern construct which allows (1) the text to rule autonomously in setting the agenda, (2) with the critic somehow suspended above the action as an objective observer, and (3) negates the medium of the text's presentation and the vital role which the reader performs in the gospel event. This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that it is anachronistic to speak of the text as a separate entity from the reader or the audience. Moreover, Tannehill's methodological approach assumes a reading technique which runs against its ancient rhetorical assumptions. Mark was never meant to be read or heard objectively. Is it necessary for a method to assume a posture of neutrality to engage in biblical interpretation?<sup>384</sup>

When one analyses the lack of scholarly consensus arrived at by the intricately fashioned controls devised by source, redaction, and literary critical approaches, we must agree with Joseph Fitzmyer that each new methodological approach is a "child of disappointment" born as the progeny from the shattered hopes of its methodological

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<sup>382</sup>Tannehill, *The Sword in His Mouth*, 18-19.

<sup>383</sup>Tannehill, *The Sword in His Mouth*, 1.

<sup>384</sup>This debate may be re-opening. Cf. esp. Joel Green "Modernity, Late Modernity, and the Theological Interpretation of the Bible," *SJT* 54 (2001), 308-329; Thomas L. Haskell, "Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Rhetoric versus Practice in Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream*," in *Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Explanatory Schemes in History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 145-73.

fore-father.<sup>385</sup> We return then to the immediate question, What method would be appropriate for interpreting an ancient text that was meant for an audience to hear?

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<sup>385</sup>Joseph Fitzmyer, "Memory and Manuscript: The Origins and Transmission of the Gospel Tradition," *TS* 23 (1962), 444, 446. Fitzmyer's statement "child of disappointment" originates in Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London, 1949), 10.

## 2 TOWARD A SOLUTION: EXPERIENCING READER, TEXT, AND AUDIENCE AS ONE

Thus far this thesis has focused upon an historical reconstruction of an ancient reading-event. Now, as a final precursor to our reading method, we will take our investigation to the next level. We must move from a list of interesting historical facts to how they actually inter-related in cultural practice. Aristotle puts it this way, "A speech consists of three things: a speaker, a subject on which he speaks, and someone addressed, and the objective (τέλος) of the speech relates to the last."<sup>386</sup> Aristotle reminds us that in describing our reading-event, we cannot neglect the goal, which consists of a persuaded audience. Thus, we do not have the luxury of making a distinction between reader, audience, and the text. For the elements of each fade into a partnership whereby the respective actions and reactions of each commingle as the reader, text, and audience fashion a performative whole. In what follows, we will reshape Aristotle's rhetorical instruction into the form of a question, what personal interactions and social forces were at work as a reader presented the Gospel of Mark to his/her<sup>387</sup> audience? Moreover, how did each shape the outcome of the reading-effect?

### 2.1 THE READER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE READING-EVENT

In the ancient world, the efforts of an author climaxed with the work's oral delivery. In a manuscript's preliminary stage, this would encompass partial readings before friends in a casual dinner setting to gain an initial audience reaction.<sup>388</sup> Once the material had been finalized, it would be publicly presented in a *recitatio*, perhaps before one's peers. This was the equivalent of modern day publication. Suetonius notes the

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<sup>386</sup>Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 1.3.1358a39.

<sup>387</sup>Studies have demonstrated that women may have been key transmitters of stories, especially in the rural areas of Palestine during the first century. Cf. Dewey, "From Storytelling to Written Text," 71-78.

<sup>388</sup>For example, the host of a dinner party would have readings as the evening's entertainment (cf. Pliny, *Ep* 1.13, 1.15, 8.21; Martial, *Epigrams* 3.44, 3.50). Horace encourages authors to take an even more thorough review period prior to publication because "*nescit vox missa reverti*" (the word once uttered cannot be recalled, *A.P.* 386-390).

melding of writing and performance when he states that Virgil's public delivery was "sweet and wonderfully effective, and the envy of one contemporary poet, who was fond of saying there were passages he wouldn't mind stealing from Virgil, if only he could steal Virgil's voice, facial expression and talent as an actor as well."<sup>389</sup> Thus, the term "reader" more accurately reflects the expectations of the ancient world, since the end result of the creative process was not the written material but its oral recitation before a listening audience.

However, that leads us to cite another observation based upon ancient practices. As mentioned previously, the technological process of producing a written document in the first century is distinct from our twenty-first century counterparts. Rather than texts penned by an individual author working in isolation, compositions created in an orally influenced environment should be defined as collaborative community enterprises, scripted through a dialectic between author and audience. Larry Hurtado emphasizes this point as he states,

We may note the absence in Mark of any authorial self-disclosure (cf. Luke 1:1-4) or recommendation (cf. John 21:24) as an indication that the author saw the work as not simply his own but rather a text that incorporated the contents and general shape of the Jesus tradition already in circulation among at least some Christian groups. This in turn suggests that in Mark the tradition, and perhaps the anticipated audience, has likely exerted some significant influence upon the text that the author wrote. This influence may well have been indirect, and to be sure, the author seems to exhibit some degree of authorial influence upon the tradition. *But it is likely that the Markan gospel is the result of a dialectic between author and audience.*<sup>390</sup>

Mary Ann Beavis also displays an awareness of the subtle nuances which functionally differentiate ancient communication techniques from modern ones. She

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<sup>389</sup>Quinn, "The Poet and Audience," 30.1, 87, quoting *Vita Verg.* 130-132.

<sup>390</sup>Larry Hurtado, "Greco-Roman Textuality and the Gospel of Mark," *BBR* 7 (1997), 101 (emphasis added). F. G. Downing concurs when he says, "There is, for sure, still a real author, a main focus for production, a band-leader as it were. It is not a spontaneous group activity over a shorter or longer period. But it is certainly a complex communal event" ("Word-Processing in the Ancient World," *JSNT* 64 (1996).

carefully defines and historically positions the term "Markan reader" as an educated individual of antiquity, who is capable of grasping rhetorical devices and later transmitting their meaning to a listening audience during oral recitations.<sup>391</sup> The reader for Beavis is not the "ideal reader" in the modern literary sense, created exclusively from the textual clues of an autonomous text. Rather, she defines the role of the reader from actual practices of the first century. This historical reconstruction of the "reader" provides supportive details regarding how this trained individual<sup>392</sup> will function as a part of the communication process and how cultural aspects should not be neglected.

Furthermore, once the "Markan reader" is properly defined, the educational make-up of the listening audience will better reflect historical research. They become less of a "scholarly community"<sup>393</sup> who do not need to be highly literate or formally trained in rhetoric to have access to the elements of Mark's Gospel. Beavis assumes that for the text to function in a community, the reader(s) and the listening audience must possess corporately the ability to identify the sophisticated literary allusions Mark employs. Thus, the community working as a whole in the interpretative process becomes a key element in the function of writing in the early church.

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<sup>391</sup>Surprisingly, Richard L. Rohrbaugh ("The Social Location of the Markan Audience," *Interp* 47 [1993], 382) misunderstands Beavis' use of terms as he sums up her work on the Markan reader from pages 42-44, "Mark's audience was made up of competent first century Markan readers trained to make connections between parts of a narrative and able to catch sophisticated literary allusions the author might have used. Because of the difficulty of catching such things during oral performances . . . Mark's was a scholastic community in which his rhetoric might have been studied closely and therefore properly appreciated." Rohrbaugh incorrectly assumes that Beavis is using the term "Markan reader" synonymously with "Markan audience." She argues that the Markan reader must be rhetorically trained for he/she must prepare the cumbersome manuscript text, interpret it as it is read, often memorize it, prior to delivering it to the essentially illiterate (not ignorant) Markan audience.

<sup>392</sup>Educational training could be formal, such as from skilled rhetoricians, or informal in nature as from village schools or guilds. Cf., Hopkins, "Conquest by the Book," 152ff.

<sup>393</sup>One problem with contemporary Markan interpretation is that the ideal reader reacts and interprets the text as a scholar rather than as a layman utilizing the gospel to find God. Jane Tompkins, in a personal communication (2 Jun 99) says, "the thesis has extra force in relation to a religious document, because it takes the emphasis away from scholarly parsing of the text and places it on the context of uptake -- and hence on feeling, motivation, action within a particular frame of reference."

Regarding the social dynamics at work in the first century, historical accuracy may require us to speak of an authorial community as well as attempting to ascertain the identity of an individual ancient author. It may be helpful as well to think in terms of specific social forces at work during the text's creation which closely link the author/reader with their audience. This can be illustrated in three ways, (1) the implied social contract between the patron and his client in the writing community, (2) a workable model of storytelling in antiquity, and (3) summary of other social forces at work which elaborate upon the concept of an authorial community.

### 2.1.1 IMPLIED SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN PATRON AND AUTHOR

Relating to the patron-client relationship in the last century B.C.,

To those whom he took under his wing, the Roman aristocrat extended material and moral support, as well as legal (and non-legal) protection. . . . Such relationships were, in effect, an extension of the Roman concept of family, which comprised not only all related to blood or marriage, but also all who had been by custom, explicitly or implicitly accepted into the family.<sup>394</sup>

Barbara Gold has done groundbreaking work on this subject, in her book, *Literary Patronage in Greece and Rome*.<sup>395</sup> On the whole, her thesis downplays the influence of a patron upon the outcome of a writer-client. Gold discusses the somewhat elastic terms used to define the patron-client relationships in ancient literature and takes a stand over against patron-client functioning in the literary arena as it did in other cultural sectors of the Greco-Roman world. She argues that there is a lack of evidence, which prohibits concluding that the social phenomenon of patronage affected the outcome of client/writers, as a normal course of practice. "It is hard to estimate the

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<sup>394</sup>Quinn, "The Poet and Audience," 117-118. A well-known example has Horace (*Odes* 3.8.13-14) depicted as Maecenas' client (*cliens*). Often, as the writer's work became more influential, the patron referred to them as *amicus*, a Latin term which disguised social inequality or dependence, separating them from the normal working class, artisans, and freedmen. Among the patrons of literature of the last century B.C., the best known are Lucullus, Cicero, Piso (father-in-law of Julius Caesar, patron of the poet-critic Philodemus). Cf., Quinn, "The Poet and Audience," 116-139 for extensive references.

<sup>395</sup>(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

nature, value and the consequence of gifts [given to clients] because writers were reluctant to bring up this potentially embarrassing subject; when they did, it was often in a vague and teasing way."<sup>396</sup> However, she does have these closing remarks which substantiate my argument that writers were influenced substantially by their implicit social contracts.

[M]ost forms of ancient literature *did benefit* from the institution of patronage in measurable and immeasurable ways. Patronage came from emperors, great magnates, and less prominent men; it could be given by Roman to Roman or Roman to Greek; it could operate on a one-to-one basis or in a group situation. In each case the conditions differed and with them the nature of the gifts, the expectations, and the benefits. *In all cases, there was a clear mark left by the patron on the external circumstances of the writer and on the style, tone, and topics of his work.* Therefore, we might say that a patron is as much a precondition of a writer's work as any other social or cultural element.<sup>397</sup>

Gold acknowledges not only the existence of a social transaction between the patron and the client-writer but that this social contract in some manner (implicit or explicit) had an impact on how the writer visualized his implied audience/real audience. I am not arguing that the writer was obligated to praise or honor the patron, though that was a common occurrence. Rather, my point is that as authors wrote, they had in mind real people, within concrete social situations, assuming constant feedback in a flesh-and-blood exchange.<sup>398</sup>

The social transaction between author and audience can be further substantiated with work done by Stanley Stowers who has argued for a sociological reading of letters.<sup>399</sup> This social situation should be considered since ancient epistolary theorists say that authors wrote their letters as if they were speaking face to face with the

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<sup>396</sup>Gold, *Literary Patronage*, 174.

<sup>397</sup>Gold, *Literary Patronage*, 175 (emphasis added).

<sup>398</sup>Note the difference between an ancient author knowing his audience and a modern author writing to a fictional audience. Cf. Walter Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction," in *Interfaces of the Word* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), *passim*.

<sup>399</sup>Stowers, "Social Typification."

recipients.<sup>400</sup> Deissmann likened a letter not to literature but to a phone call, the personal presence of those who are physically separated.<sup>401</sup> "Thus ancient letters were largely constituted by the literary typification of social situations where two or more people interacted, usually in face-to-face encounters."<sup>402</sup> The body of the letters, apart from brief introductory material and the closing words (often penned by the actual author) is not mere information to be communicated but rather a medium through which a person performs an action or a social transaction with someone from whom he is physically separated. Stowers concludes with these words:

The [rhetorical] handbooks<sup>403</sup> and their method of classification allow us to understand letter writing as a dynamic and complex system of social transactions which could be carried out by separated people. The handbooks specify genre by describing a characteristic action performed in a typical social situation.<sup>404</sup>

Therefore, any attempt to examine ancient letters based solely upon literary critical categories of form and structure might be termed reductionistic.

This social relationship between patron and writer existed in an uninterrupted line from antiquity through the first half of the eighteenth century. Bertrand Bronson says,

From this moment on [early 1700's], gradually but increasingly there develops a race of authors who write to an indefinite body of readers, personally undifferentiated and unknown, who accept this separation as a primary condition of their creative activity and address their public invisibly through the curtain, opaque and impersonal, of print.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>400</sup>Stowers, "Social Typification," 79; Abraham Malherbe in "Ancient Epistolary Theorists," *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* 5 (1977), 15. Cf., also Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia," *passim*.

<sup>401</sup>Quoted in Stowers, "Social Typification," 81.

<sup>402</sup>Stowers, "Social Typification," 79.

<sup>403</sup>Stowers is referring to the two extant rhetorical handbooks on letter writing that classify letters into types: *Typoi Epistolikoi* and *Epistolimaioi Characteres*. Introduction and translation found by Malherbe in "Ancient Epistolary Theorists," 3-77.

<sup>404</sup>Stowers, "Social Typification," 87.

<sup>405</sup>Bertrand Bronson, *Facets of the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 302.

An underlying factor in this breakdown was the increase of commercial printing and the growth of a large reading public which changed the relationship of a writer to his audience.<sup>406</sup> Once authors ceased being dependent upon their patrons and relied upon the sales of their work as their primary means of support, the personal relationship with their readership changed accordingly. Thus, writing will move outside of a distinct social relationship between author, patron, and audience.

### 2.1.2 THE READER AND THE ANCIENT STORYTELLING MODEL

Other social forces at work in the life of an ancient reader can be found in the role of a storyteller<sup>407</sup> in antiquity. It is here that we will try to build a sociological backdrop describing how the storytelling material shaped and was itself shaped by a community through a story's telling and retelling.

The best model for this sociological phenomenon is found in the work of Kenneth Bailey, who describes the world of oral narrative as *informal* but *controlled*.<sup>408</sup> Bailey defined a storytelling society as *informal* when most anyone could be a participant in the process, provided that they have been a part of the community long enough to qualify.<sup>409</sup> At the same time these narratives are *controlled*. Bailey argues that

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<sup>406</sup>This concept of patronage was not simply a social contract limited to antiquity but thrived long into the Renaissance. "[F]or virtually all English Renaissance literature is a literature of patronage." (Arthur Marotti, "John Donne and the Rewards of Patronage," *Patronage in the Renaissance* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981]). For an excellent account of the change, cf., A. S. Collins, *Authorship in the Days of Johnson, Being a Study of the Relation Between Author, Patron, Publisher, Public, 1726-1780* (London: Robert Holden & Co., 1927).

<sup>407</sup>Alex Scobie, "Storytellers, Storytelling, and the Novel in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," 229-259. Possibilities are public crier, rhapsodies, cynics, itinerant prophets or a model offered by Dieter Georgi (*The Opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986]) for synagogue oral interpreters.

<sup>408</sup>Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition," 34-54. Thanks to Tom Wright who brought this article to my attention (29 Oct, 1999). For an excellent summary of Bailey, cf., N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 133-136 and Dunn, "Jesus in Oral Memory," 91-93.

<sup>409</sup>The qualifications for this last parameter, tenure in community, is somewhat hard to quantify. Bailey tells of a personal encounter with an Egyptian storytelling community. He says, "I can recall vividly, in the village of Kom al-Akhdar in the south of Egypt, asking a particular person about a village tradition. He was in his sixties and seemed to be an appropriate person to ask. He offered a few remarks,

since the community itself has been shaped by the story, it can easily recognize and reject any serious innovation(s) which will diminish the story's capacity to house and faithfully communicate its traditions. To plot Bailey's position on a continuum of his peers, he would fall midpoint between Bultmann and Gerhardsson who stand at two opposing poles. Bultmann proposed that the oral traditions about Jesus were *informal* and *uncontrolled*.

The community was not interested in preserving or *controlling* the tradition; it was free to change this way and that, to develop and grow. Furthermore, that tradition was always open to new community creations that are rapidly attributed to the community's founder. It is *informal* in the sense that there is no identifiable teacher nor student and no structure within which material is passed from one person to another. All is fluid and plastic, open to new additions and shapes.<sup>410</sup>

Conversely, the Scandinavian school of Riesenfeld and Gerhardsson argued that the teachings of Jesus were more rigidly defined and preserved by the community and thus functioned more in a setting better defined as *formal* and *controlled*.<sup>411</sup> Riesenfeld argues that the *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel tradition does not originate in the communal instruction of the early church but rather it stems from the person of Jesus. "The words and deeds of Jesus are a holy word, comparable with that of the Old Testament, and the handing down of this precious material is entrusted to special persons. . . . Jesus is the object and subject of a tradition of authoritative and holy words which he himself

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and was soon interrupted by others around the circle who said, 'He wouldn't understand - he is not from this village.'

'How long has he lived here,' I queried.

'Only 37 years,' came the answer."

Bailey concludes his comments quite tongue-in-cheek, "Poor fellow - he didn't understand, he was an outsider - only 37 years - clearly not long enough to be allowed to recite the village tradition!" (40-41).

<sup>410</sup>Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition," 36.

<sup>411</sup>Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*. Cf. also, H. Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984).

created and entrusted to his disciples for its later transmission."<sup>412</sup> Gerhardsson identifies this view as *formal* in the sense that there is a clearly identified teacher, a clearly identified student, and a clearly defined block of traditional material that is being passed from one to the other. It is *controlled* in the sense that the material is memorized or written and preserved intact.

Bailey acknowledges that there certainly is evidence for both Bultmann's and Gerhardsson's findings. For example, Bultmann's category of informal and uncontrolled traditions can be illustrated by how a community handles rumor transmission which, in the midst of its transmission, is exaggerated and reshaped. Gerhardsson's classification of formal and controlled can also be supported from many oral examples, such as Muslims memorizing the entire Koran or the retention and flawless recital of vast passages from the Jewish oral Torah. However, Bailey finds the views of these two scholars to be uncharacteristic for how a community retains and transmits its own narratives.

Bailey's work divides the traditions that are preserved in an informal yet controlled community into five sub-categories: (1) proverbs, (2) story riddles, where a wise hero solves a problem [such as Solomon's encounter with the one baby and two mothers], (3) poetry, (4) parable, and (5) accounts of important figures in the history of the community. Each of these categories retains a varying degree of flexibility, exercised by the community. For example, poems and proverbs allow no variation while some flexibility is found in parables and sagas of historical people. He summarizes his finding in this manner, "the central threads of the story can not be changed, but the flexibility in detail is allowed."<sup>413</sup> More fluidity is permitted when "the material is irrelevant to the identity of the community, and is not judged wise or valuable."<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>412</sup>Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition*, 19, 29.

<sup>413</sup>Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition," 42.

<sup>414</sup>Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition," 45 (italics original).

The relevance of Bailey's work can be summarized. First, by and large, Bailey argues that western cultural models and mental attitudes are often imposed upon a discussion of oral transmission in a Middle Eastern world. Bailey states that "mental gymnastics incredible for the Middle Eastern peasant people are at times assumed by Western oral tradition theories."<sup>415</sup> He is convinced that a traditional Middle Eastern cultural model is more appropriate to the materials of the New Testament. Second, Bailey's application of these findings to early Christian traditions is straightforward. He says for a community "[t]o remember the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth was to affirm their own unique identity. The stories had to be *told* and *controlled* or everything that made them who they were was lost."<sup>416</sup> Third, this proposal enables us to explain the way a story, functioning in the midst of community life, changes only slightly with the sayings remaining essentially identical.<sup>417</sup> Thus, Bailey's work provides a viable alternative to resorting to complex theories of literary relationships which display little or no historical affinity to the way narratives functioned in the first century.<sup>418</sup>

### 2.1.3 CONCLUSION: THE READER LIMITED BY COMMUNITY CONTROL(S)

The purpose of this section has been to highlight the role of the reader as s/he is relationally connected to the text and the receiving audience. From the preceding work on the patron-writer relationship and Bailey's model of oral storytelling, we see that writing in antiquity and then the text's subsequent reading is not the work of solitary individuals. Outside social forces are at work, some on the front end of the writing

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<sup>415</sup>Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition," 34.

<sup>416</sup>Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition," 45 (italics original).

<sup>417</sup>Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 136, "Moreover, it asserts that the narrative form is unlikely to be a secondary accretion around an original aphorism: stories are fundamental." See also Dunn, "Jesus in Oral Memory," 91-93.

<sup>418</sup>Wright (*Jesus and the Victory of God*) says, "It enables us, in other words, to understand the material before us, without invoking extra epicycles of unwarranted assumptions"(136).

process, such as in the patron-author relationship. Others are integrated into aspects of the story's delivery system, as documented by Bailey's "informal and controlled" model for storytelling. Thus, I propose that an accurate means for describing the complexities of a reading-event is to speak of a corporate influence, where the range of acceptable meaning is shaped and/or limited by a community.<sup>419</sup>

This community concept could easily take this study in a diverse number of directions. In particular, the question could be asked, was there a "proper reading" for essentially every text, based on community standards? Rather than answering the question exhaustively, I would like to suggest several factors at work which shape the reader's understanding as s/he prepares a text for a reading-event. For example, we have already detailed the pedagogical process involved in educating a reader. As the reader prepares the text for presentation, this work is being done in conjunction with his instructor, in a tightly controlled line of tradition. Novelty in one's approach to a text is essentially non-existent. One learns to write and to present materials orally based upon the accepted norms of the past. This self-regulation was not only imposed upon the reading practices of secular education but may have been even more strictly regulated within the confines of Judeo-Christian worship in the first century.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>419</sup>Of course, the term "community" is quite open-ended. In some scenarios, it could encompass an actual community of varying size and cultural make-up or possibly a worshipping Christian group. In any case, there were accepted traditions which place limits upon the range of acceptable interpretation(s). An example of this was referred to earlier, in Chapter 2 of this thesis *The Reader in Extra-Biblical Texts*, where Irenaeus (*A.H.* 3.7.2) describes an improper reading as "blasphemy." On the other hand, the term community could also be helpful if it prevents us from defining the ancient reader as someone who interprets a manuscript in isolation.

<sup>420</sup>This aspect would illuminate the threat which the religious authorities sensed by the "new" interpretation(s) of Jesus. For example, "Have you never read (οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε, 12:26) . . . followed by Jesus' application of the passage.

## 2.2 THE TEXT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE READING-EVENT

### 2.2.1 AN ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT: FIXED OR FLUID?

Throughout this thesis, terms have been carefully situated within their ancient setting. The use of the term "manuscript" should not be an exception. Ancient manuscripts which were copied and circulated, did not have the same fixed and permanent quality as they do in a modern sense. Additionally, if we factor in antiquity's oral-performative custom for employing texts, they were often an extension of speech, which by definition allows room for fluidity.<sup>421</sup> However, I do not want to explore a manuscript's fluidity solely from a text critical/history of textual tradition perspective.<sup>422</sup> Rather, I intend to identify some of the sociological factors which influence the real life transmission practices of the first century world and the practical aspect of how manuscripts were actually created and circulated in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>421</sup>Cf. Christine Thomas, "Stories Without Texts and Without Authors: The Problem of Fluidity in Ancient Novelistic Texts and Early Christian Literature," in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, ed. R. Hock, J. Chance, J. Perkins (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). Her work has been helpful in setting a path through the issue of fluidity in performative texts. In a personal communication (3 June, 1999) she says, "I generally agree with you and Boomershine that these texts are fundamentally auditory events, although as you can see I did not head in the direction of performance (which is very productive) but in the direction of the traces the performative aspect left in the manuscript tradition."

<sup>422</sup>This is not to be heard as a disparaging cry against the efforts of text critics. Rather, it is a critique of how one articulates the goal(s) of text criticism based upon the presuppositions held regarding ancient literary practices. Parker (*The Living Text*, 1-7) raises a fallacy assumed by most modern readers and textual critics that a precise original text can be recovered. Parker draws an analogy between the editorial practice-publication of Mozart's musical score of Figaro and Shakespear's King Lear. Mozart changed Figaro dramatically while it was in rehearsal, even exchanging vocal lines of Susanna and the Countess, in order to accommodate the singers' voices. Therefore, which score was the original, the earliest version? In a literary example, King Lear changed so dramatically that when catalogued bibliographically, it has become accepted practice to list different editions under two separate titles, *The Tragedy of King Lear* and *The History of King Lear*. (William Shakespear, *The Complete Works*, ed. S. Wells and G. Taylor [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986]).

<sup>423</sup>The most thorough, current discussions of this matter are found in Alexander, "Ancient Book Production," 71-105; Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 82-143. Much of what follows arises, in part, from their work.

Texts in antiquity often proceeded through several stages of an editing process prior to what we might call a final form ready for "publication."<sup>424</sup> However, we must take into consideration several relevant issues regarding a text's publication (ἔκδοσις, Latin, *editio*). (1) Rarely did an author benefit financially from a publication since there was no arrangement whereby profits were accrued to an author through the enterprise of publishers and booksellers.<sup>425</sup> (2) Throughout the writing process, authors often gave preliminary draft copies to friends and peers for feedback. (3) Once an author had completed a written work, the publication announcement was often made official through a public reading (*recitatio*).<sup>426</sup> (4) In addition to the *recitatio*, another key element in the work's publication would be the provision of a final copy (exemplar edition) to a small circle of friends and possibly to the patron to whom the work was dedicated. By this act, the author was surrendering his control over the text as he made the exemplar available to any interested party for copying, usually at no expense other than materials and/or scribal services.

Several parallel observations can be made regarding the publication of a text in antiquity. First, the circulation of texts was accomplished primarily through an informal, social network. To put it colloquially, texts were made known through word-of-mouth recommendations and copies were made just as informally. Rarely were there large numbers of first editions made to be sold by booksellers.<sup>427</sup> Second, this

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<sup>424</sup>Cf. below, The Effect of the Audience on the Shaping of the Text for a detailed discussion of "publication" in antiquity.

<sup>425</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 83; Alexander, "Ancient Book Production," 87. The benefit an author may expect was honor, reputation, and the influence of a wealthy patron.

<sup>426</sup>Cf. below, The Effect of the Audience on the Shaping of the Text for documentation regarding *recitatio* in antiquity.

<sup>427</sup>For a concise corrective to the often overstated influence of the book trade in antiquity, cf. Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 85-93, who cites numerous earlier works that overestimated the evidence and made anachronistic assessments. For a humorous discussion on the implausibility of mass production in antiquity, cf. Quinn, "The Poet and Audience," 78-79. Also, Gamble points out that complaints about the quality of commercial copying were consistent and continuous. It seems as though the best scribes were employed as private copyists (slaves or free) by wealthy households (93). Cf. Alexander, "Ancient Book

informal method of distribution was, for the most part, restricted to the elite, "arising partly on the basis of those factors which defined the upper class, providing it the leisure to read, partly through the complex relations of patrons and clients, and partly through the natural affinity of persons of talent and cultivated interests."<sup>428</sup> Third, and of primary importance for our discussion, this informal network of manuscript circulation gives rise to the possibility of textual errors, both accidental and intentional. The accidental corruptions can come from a number of directions, due in large part to the copying process itself.<sup>429</sup> We can assume that early Christian authors anticipated that their texts would suffer some degree of adulteration by the warnings which they included or appended to their material.<sup>430</sup> However, many ancient writers also speak extensively about the intentional changes which arose in the first few centuries of the

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Production" for numerous citations regarding transcription carelessness (88).

I must be careful to clarify, I am in no way implying that booksellers did not exist in large number in the first century Greco-Roman world. Only, that (1) their poor copying practices did not add to the stability of the text, and (2) that the circulation of most manuscripts was not dependent upon them, but rather the preponderance of circulation took place in the "private" sector (Alexander, "Ancient Book", 88-89).

<sup>428</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 85.

<sup>429</sup>For examples of transcriptional errors, cf., Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*. E. J. Kenny argues ("Books and Readers in Ancient Rome") that the first task of any owner of any new book was to correct (*emendo*) the obvious errors in the text (18). Moreover, records of these corrections are kept in the *subscriptions*, which are notes in the manuscripts of certain authors which document what individual corrected the copy, with or without the help of a mentor or another copy (28). Thus, the assumption was that even a new text, especially a new text, would contain errors.

<sup>430</sup>From a New Testament perspective, cf. Rev 22:18-19. Similar warnings regarding the LXX can be found in Aristeas 311; Philo, *De vita Mos.* 2.34; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.109. Eusebius (*H.E.* 5.20.2) records a plea by Irenaeus at the end of one of his books (*On the Ogdoad*, no longer extant) to preserve his work carefully, "I adjure you who will copy this book, by our Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious advent when he come to judge the living and the dead, that you collate what you transcribe and that you correct it against this copy, and that likewise you shall transcribe this oath and put it in the copy."

Common era.<sup>431</sup> The first clear reference surrounds Dionysius, the bishop of Corinth (circa 170 A.D.) as recorded in Eusebius (*H.E.* 4.23.12),

[Dionysius] speaks as follows about the falsification of his own letters. "When Christians asked me to write letters I wrote them, and the apostles of the devil filled them with tares (ζιζάνιων), leaving out some things and putting in others. But woe awaits them. Therefore it is no wonder that some have gone about to falsify even the scriptures of the Lord when they plotted against writings so inferior."

Eusebius elaborates that some textual changes were intentional in practice and polemical in nature. At the end of book 5 in *Ecclesiastical History*, he details the scribal activity of a theological school in Rome during the last decades of the second century,

For this cause, they did not fear to lay hands on the divine scriptures, saying that they had corrected them. . . . If anyone wishes to collect and compare with each other the texts of each of them he would find them highly divergent. . . .and it is possible to obtain many of them because their disciples have diligently written out copies of them corrected, as they say, but really corrupted by each of them. . . . They cannot even deny that this crime is theirs, seeing that the copies were written in their own hand, and they did not receive the scriptures in this condition from their teachers, nor can they show originals from which they made their copies (*H.E.* 5.28.18-19).

These complaints about textual alterations are frequent in early Christian literature. The writings of Origen<sup>432</sup>, Tertullian<sup>433</sup>, Augustine<sup>434</sup>, and Jerome<sup>435</sup> make

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<sup>431</sup>Below we will discuss Christian emendations. However, this was far from a religious phenomenon. Cf. Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 1. pr 7-8; Galen, *De libr. prop. praef.* In antiquity, corrupted texts circulating without an author's permission are often stated as the reason for a work's publication. Cf. Ovid, *Trist.* 1.7.15-34; Artemidorus (contemporary of Irenaeus) *Oneir.* 2.70. Diodorus Siculus' remarks at the end of his history (40.8), "Some of the books were pirated and published before being corrected and before they had received the finishing touches, when they were not yet fully satisfied with the work. These we disown."

<sup>432</sup>Origen, *De prin.* praef.

<sup>433</sup>*adversus Marcionem* 1.1

<sup>434</sup>Ep. 174, discusses the problem in a letter to Aurelius, bishop of Carthage (418-419) that his works are copied and distributed before the final copies of *De Trinitate* and *De Civitate Dei* are ready. Cf., Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 133-137 for details.

<sup>435</sup>Jerome wrote that whatever he composed was "at once laid hold of and published, either by friends or enemies" (*Ep.* 79). Expressing frustration in the fact that his incompleting work could not be recalled, he quoted Horace's words, "Words once uttered cannot be recalled," *Ars Poet.* 390).

reference to their opponents making revisions to their texts in a misappropriating manner. However, Gamble insightfully places these adulterators in proper perspective. Most of the documented changes were neither haphazard nor uncritically founded. Even the radical reconstructive work of Marcion has begun to be reappraised, taking into account the relatively fluid state of the second century scriptural situation. "Marcion's textual revisions were less numerous and extensive than once supposed: many readings once regarded as Marcionite are now recognized as variants stemming from an earlier non-Marcionite tradition."<sup>436</sup> Just as enlightening, Gamble argues that Marcion's textual emendations were aimed at nothing less than a "critical reconstruction of a pure text" and the changes followed an approach to the texts which was entirely consistent with "well-established traditions of philological criticism in Greco-Roman antiquity."<sup>437</sup> Thus, the publishing scene in antiquity, for many authors, was both a blessing and a curse. It was a curse, as writers complained that their works were being circulated without their authorization, usually copied from an early draft

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<sup>436</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 126. Harnack's work on *Marcion*, long considered the standard, has been reappraised by J. J. Clabeaux, *A Lost Edition of the Letters of Paul: A Reassessment of the Text of the Pauline Corpus Attested by Marcion* (CBQMS 21; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1989).

<sup>437</sup>Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 126. An important supporting document is R. M. Grant, "Marcion and The Critical Method," in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honor of Francis Wright Beare*, ed. P. Richardson and J. C. Hurd (Toronto: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1984, 207-15; and *Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, 33-49. The same textual and literary approach has been observed in Papias (M. Black, "The Rhetorical Terminology in Papias on Mark and Matthew," *JSNT* 37 [1989], 31-41), Tatian (Eusebius, *H. E.* 4.29.6), where Tatian corrects Paul's style. An overview can be found in R. M. Grant, "Literary Criticism and the New Testament Canon," *JSNT* 16 (1982), 24-44.

yet to be finalized.<sup>438</sup> However, it was also a blessing since the manuscripts were being distributed and the author's renown was spreading.

One final observation should be made; there was little distinction between sacred and secular since the publication and circulation of practices for producing texts were essentially the same.<sup>439</sup> Ironically, manuscripts such as Mark and the letters of Paul may have been more vulnerable to changes precisely because of the common manner in which they were used, and the distance in which they were rapidly disseminated.

Helmut Koester points out,

There can be no question that the Gospels, from the very beginning, were not archive materials but *used texts*. This is the worst thing that can happen to any textual tradition. A text, not protected by canonical status, but used in liturgy, apologetics, polemics, homiletics, and instruction of catechumens is most likely to be copied frequently and is thus subject to frequent modifications and alterations.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>438</sup>For readers outside the tight circle of friends, it was difficult to distinguish the final text from any of the initial drafts which would have been distributed for an early critique. A clear discussion of this problem is painted as Augustine sketched the history of his composition of *De Trinitate* in a letter to Aurelius, bishop of Carthage (*Ep.* 174). The work began in 398 but he did not complete it until 418-19. The real impetus behind its completion was that early manuscripts began to be distributed. Augustine says, "I discontinued my dictation, thinking to make a complaint about this in some of my other writings, so that those who could might know that those books had not been published by me but filched from me before I thought them worthy of being published in my name. But now . . . I have devoted myself to the laborious task of finishing them. . . . and I give my permission for it to be heard, copied and read by any who wish."

<sup>439</sup>As a side note, Gamble (*Books and Readers*) argues that the circulation of Christian materials was "private, being part and parcel of the constant intercourse between individual congregations" (142). He then states that methodology and communication strategy remained essentially unchanged for the first five centuries of the Christian era. It is no less typical of Augustine in the fifth century than it was for Paul in the first.

<sup>440</sup>Helmut Koester, "The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century," in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission*, ed. W. Petersen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 20, emphasis added. In the same volume, cf., Eldon Jay Epp, "The Significance of the Papyri for Determining the Nature of the New Testament Text in the Second Century: A Dynamic View of Textual Transmission," 71-103. G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum*, Schweich Lectures 1946 (London: British Academy [Oxford University Press]), "The common respect for the sacredness of The Word, with [Christians], was not an incentive to preserve the text in its original purity. On the contrary, the strange fact has long been observed that devotion to the Founder and His apostles did not prevent the Christians of that age from interfering with the transmission of their utterances. . . . The sacredness of a text is not by itself a guarantee for its faithful transmission" (268-269).

The purpose for our historical digression into ancient publication practices is to point out that a Christian manuscript was fluid chiefly for two reasons, (1) accidental changes because of the nature of first century copying and (2) intentional changes, in part because of the prominence the text had in the Christian community. Detractors modified the text because they wanted to diminish its impact by undercutting its validity. Supporters changed the text for exactly the opposite reason, to strengthen its claims as being the voice of God. Furthermore, we should grant a degree of tolerance to the ancient reader as the text is recited faithfully according to first century standards, not ours.<sup>441</sup> Finally, the argument throughout this section is that it is inappropriate to speak of a text standing independent of its reader and its impact upon a listening community.

#### 2.2.2 TEXT AS SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Visual stimulation played a prominent role during an ancient reading-event. When a first century person acquired a text, s/he did so with the intention of having it performed by a professional reader, or as a record of a performance which they had previously heard by the author. It was not itself a substitute for performance.<sup>442</sup> The audience not only listens to the performer but sees him as well. Moreover, the performance is not a monologue since the lines of communication go both ways between hearer and performer. In any reading-event, there are members of the audience who are reacting to the performer and interacting with the responses of others in the performance, thereby increasing the complexities of the communication. Any reading-event places a reader and an audience in physical/spacial contact with each

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<sup>441</sup>F. G. Downing, "Word-Processing in the Ancient World," 35. Downing, in regards to the fixed status of a written text says, "Oral performance without a script or with one is much freer. For sure, once a particular text has been copied onto papyrus, it is difficult to alter the copy. But prior to that inscribing, matter written on tablets or on parchment can be changed, and any script can still be performed afresh, with that performance providing the basis for the next use of the text, or for the next transcription, or both."

<sup>442</sup>Quinn, "The Poet and Audience," 30.1, 90.

other, kindling human interactions on multiple levels. Certainly the intellect plays a vital role in the interpretative process. But at the same time, the experiential, dialogical, and sensual aspects of the encounter come to the forefront because of the human exchange inherent in a first century gospel performance. As Kelber says, "It is standard epistemological experience, far into the middle ages, that word and pictures are conjoined, that sensation interacts with intelligibility, and sight and hearing serve as catalysts for cognition."<sup>443</sup>

Our focus on the aural experience should not discount the role the other senses play in the experiential aspect of the gospel. Seeing and hearing are intimately linked.<sup>444</sup> Further, if we are to consider liturgical practices which closely surround a gospel reading, the senses of smell, taste, and touch are instrumental in the act of communion. Thus, it is important to recognize that a reading-event goes beyond a mono-sensual hearing experience and into a communal-multi-sensual environment.

### 2.3 THE AUDIENCE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE READING-EVENT

We will break this discussion down into three areas. First, we will document the social make-up of Mark's audience. Second, the effect which the audience has on the shaping of the text and on the reader's performance during the reading-event. Third, we will investigate the effect which the text and the reader have upon the audience. We

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<sup>443</sup>Kelber, "Jesus and Tradition," 163.

<sup>444</sup>Pliny the Younger recommends Nepos to hear the famous Isaios in person, for even if he reads his works at home, he rarely hears the real thing. For Pliny, the spoken word is more effective (*viva vox adficit*). "For granted the things you read make a point, yet, what is affixed by delivery, expression, appearance and gestures of a speaker resides deeper in the soul" (II 3:9).

Cicero (*Brut.* 38:142) as well, emphasizes that "nothing penetrates deeper into the mind than the oral performance with its gestures and characteristic voice. Language, mind, and body were synergistic forces that negotiated knowledge and perception" (paraphrase by Byrskog, *Story as History - History as Story*, 107).

Reading in antiquity was work not leisure. That is why the ancients employed readers, so they could concentrate on the story and not the mechanics of reading. Cf., Starr, "Reading Aloud: Lectores and Roman Reading," 343. Starr quotes Dio Chrysostom who recommends a solution to the unwieldy text, "Have someone read to you, because you will get more out of it if you are spared the trouble of reading it yourself (18.6)." Starr concludes, "lectores provided the ultimate experience of literary texts: a polished rendition in which the auditor could focus on the literary work and not on the work of reading."

should remember that manuscripts were intimately linked with the assembly of people and further that "both the production and consumption of manuscripts grew out of the living tissue of speech."<sup>445</sup>

### 2.3.1 BACKGROUND OF THE SOCIAL MAKE-UP OF MARK'S AUDIENCE

As the performative aspects and the group experience of Mark's narrative are highlighted, an interpretive problem is introduced. It assumes that the social setting of the performance exerts a major force upon the text's meaning.<sup>446</sup> Historically, there is little consensus regarding the original social setting of Mark's gospel. In recent decades, the view of many scholars has been that Mark's Gospel was written for people in Rome.<sup>447</sup> But an increasing number of scholars place Mark's audience in the rural areas of southern Syria or upper Galilee.<sup>448</sup> Recently, Richard Bauckham has undercut those scholarly efforts with the premise that the gospels functioned in the first century with an appeal to a wider, more generic audience, rather than a specific Markan

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<sup>445</sup>Kelber, "Jesus and Tradition," 153.

<sup>446</sup>This issue is certainly well known in Aristotle's day, for rhetorical instruction immediately deals with the divergent audiences, the social settings, and the genres of speeches (deliberative, judicial, and demonstrative.) Joel Green, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), "Utterances only rarely if ever occur in isolation; they are embedded in ongoing social interaction between human beings, and it is from this interaction that the utterances take their meaning" (180). For a Markan-specific discussion of the subject, cf., Rohrbaugh, "The Social Location," 380-395.

<sup>447</sup>The traditional position for Markan authorship has been best argued by Martin Hengel, "Entstehungszeit und Situation des Markusevangeliums," in *Markus-Philologie: Historische, literargeschichtliche und stilistische Untersuchungen zum zweiten Evangelium*, ed. H. Cancik, WUNT 33, 1-45. Donald Senior has summarized the work in "With Swords and Clubs..."-The Setting of Mark's Community and His Critique of Abusive Power," *BTB* 17 (1987), 10-20.

<sup>448</sup>Case for Syria, Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age* (London: SCM, 1977), 102-105; Joel Marcus, "Mark 4:10-12 and Marcan Epistemology," *JBL* 103 (1984), 557-574. For a detailed review of both positions cf., Joel Marcus, "The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark," *JBL* 111 (1992), 441-462; For additional information, cf., Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark-Traditions in Conflict*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); Werner Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and A New Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Vernon Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); Beavis, *Mark's Audience*.

community.<sup>449</sup> Bauckham begins with the thesis that “extensive evidence [demonstrates] that the early Christian movement was not a scattering of relatively isolated, introverted communities, but a network of communities in constant, close communication with each other.”<sup>450</sup> In addition, the determination of the implied readership of the gospels is not to be culturally or geographically specific but generic; written to diverse Christian communities throughout the first century Roman Empire.<sup>451</sup> With that in mind, attempting to locate any given performance of a gospel in a specific social setting with any degree of accuracy would be all but impossible. Further, the contribution of this thesis has been to identify the common elements at work in oral social settings.

### 2.3.2 THE EFFECT OF THE AUDIENCE ON THE SHAPING OF THE TEXT<sup>452</sup>

What do the extant records imply about the participation of an audience on the final outcome of an author’s material? Tessa Rajak, speaking of the younger Pliny, tells us that “it was customary for authors to give readings from their productions before invited audiences in order to gather useful criticisms and to make improvements before the final version was issued, and that he (Pliny) went so far as to do the same thing in his speeches.”<sup>453</sup> She alludes to the fact that Josephus may have acted similarly with his

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<sup>449</sup>Richard Bauckham, *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998). Pieter Botha (“Historical Setting of Mark’s Gospel”) after citing evidence, makes an assumption that Mark’s gospel is linked to an oral communication. Therefore, rather than focusing upon a specific Markan community centered on a text, his presupposition is that a reader communicates Mark to numerous Greco-Roman audiences (54).

<sup>450</sup>Bauckham, “The Gospel for All Christians,” 2.

<sup>451</sup>Bauckham, “The Gospel for All Christians,” 1.

<sup>452</sup>Thiselton (*New Horizons in Hermeneutics*) discusses the capacity of an audience/reader to transform a text (35ff). Yet, Thiselton is referring to the event in a much different sense than this thesis. He sees the audience’s ability to domesticate a text’s efficacy as functioning in direct contrast to a text’s ability to transform a reader. He later writes that “readers may consciously or unconsciously brings about a transformation of texts and their meaning, for good or ill” (38). He then elaborates upon six distinct levels at which this takes place.

<sup>453</sup>Tessa Rajak, *Josephus* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 62ff. Pliny, *Letters* VII.17; cf. also Cicero, *Atticus* 2.1.1-2; interestingly, E. Best (*Mark: The Gospel As Story* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983]) notes that

work and certainly indicates that he submitted his work early to important patrons.<sup>454</sup> One can comprehend the influence of a "sample audience" in the words of pseudo-Socratic letter 22 of Xenophon,

I do not yet have anything of the sort that I would have the confidence to show to others without being there myself, as when I readily chatted with you (Simmius and Cebes) in the house where Eucleides was lying ill. And you must know, friends, that it is impossible to take back writing once it has reached the hands of the public.<sup>455</sup>

Additionally, F. Gerald Downing has observed that in most studies of linguistics, feedback to the speaker in communication should be accorded prime importance in the creation process.<sup>456</sup> This feedback can take on various forms. Whitney Shiner has carefully documented an audience's response throughout an actual first century reading-event, ranging from vocal retorts to applause.<sup>457</sup> This exuberance is also known to have emanated from Jewish and early Christian gatherings.<sup>458</sup> Kenneth Quinn relates an example detailing Virgil's composition of the *Aeneid*,

There is no denying that performance can stretch the mind more tightly than private, silent composition. All who teach know how the right way to put something, the proper understanding of something complicated, can elude us in our private thinking and then come to us in a flash as we strain to express our

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the Gospel of Mark is most likely to have been composed in constant interaction between author and congregation (13, 19). The communal aspect of a document's publication is well established in Quintilian (*Institutes, Dedication and Preface*) as well as in Dio of Prusa (*Discourses* 11.6; 57.10-12; 42.4-5).

<sup>454</sup>Josephus, *Life*, 361-367.

<sup>455</sup>A. J. Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977).

<sup>456</sup>F. G. Downing, "Ears to Hear," in *Alternative Approaches to NT Study*, ed. A. E. Harvey (London: SPCK, 1985). Downing goes on to note that "the response of a hearer forms an integral part of Wittgenstein's analysis of the impossibility of any true 'private language'" (100). Cf., L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958); and specifically regarding the Gospel of Mark, Kelber, *The Oral and The Written Gospel*, 75.

<sup>457</sup>"Working the Audience: Applause Lines in the Performance of Mark," *passim*.

<sup>458</sup>Jerome in his commentary on Ezekiel (at Ezekiel 34:1) says of Jewish preachers, "They persuade the people that what they invent is true; then in theatrical manner, they invite applause and shouting." Chrysostom claims in his *Homily Against the Jews* (1.2.247) that speakers in synagogues played as if on stage. For applause in later Christian liturgical settings, cf., H. F. Stander, "The Clapping of Hands in the Early Church," *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993), 75-80.

meaning to the audience in front of us; the audience need not be large, it can happen even with the simulated audience of a private dress-rehearsal. In our humbler way we come within sight, perhaps, in such moments of something you could call inspiration. We may compare Suetonius' story of Virgil's sudden inspiration during a performance of Aeneid 6. In the passage where the Trojan trumpeter Misenus challenged Triton to a contest of skill, there were two successive lines which Virgil had been unable to complete to his satisfaction; in each case he had abandoned the line at the third-foot caesura. In the heat of the performance the second half of each line came to him, and he turned to his secretary and ordered the completed version to be noted down for incorporation in the master copy of the text.<sup>459</sup>

This brings up another important aspect regarding the reading-event mentioned previously; feedback between reader and audience. Since a reading-event took place in a public setting, a hearing of the gospel must also take into account the impact of group dynamics during the recitation. Thus, not only the effect of the reader on the audience must be considered but also the effect of the audience and social setting on the performer. Werner Kelber says, "The nature and the reactions of the audience itself must also be remembered . . . this participation by the audience forms a recognized aspect of the whole occasion." Kelber goes on to say,

The context in which oral communication transpires is not purely linguistic, but physical and social as well. . . . The hearers may respond during and/or after the narration. Their questions, interjections, applause and expressions of doubt reflect back on the speaker and sway his or her formulation of the message. . . . In short, all oral communication passes through the feedback loop. . . . It may be said, therefore, that in oral speech, both with regard to the effect it achieves and the meaning it creates, nonlinguistic features have priority over linguistic ones.<sup>460</sup>

This may go deeper than mere interpretation of the text for the specific reading-event. If the hearers work in conjunction with the reader in the performance, this further substantiates our earlier argument that Markan authorship should be discussed not in terms of an individual but rather a community.

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<sup>459</sup>Quinn, "The Poet and Audience," 85.

<sup>460</sup>Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 75.

Some of the methodological issues to be raised later in this chapter are surfacing, specifically, the function of memory, voice, elocution, even gestures in the performance of a script.<sup>461</sup> Regarding this, Quintilian says, "Speakers stimulate us by the animation of their delivery, and kindle the imagination, not by presenting us with an elaborate picture but by bringing us into actual touch with the things themselves."<sup>462</sup>

A parallel issue, which arises from the interaction of performer and audience, is what happens to the textual interpretation when it is separated from its performative and/or liturgical setting. Darryl Tippens makes a similar observation regarding Shakespeare's plays when they are read privately as psychological novels rather than heard as public theatrical experiences.<sup>463</sup> Tippens uses the character Hamlet as an example. The Danish prince is experienced differently "[w]hen divorced from his theatrical presentation and read as a closet drama, Hamlet becomes problematic, confusing, and ambiguous. He even can be seen as evil to some silent readers, though viewing audiences don't respond that way."<sup>464</sup> Boomershine has equated this same negative assessment of the disciples (especially Peter) by literary scholars when they

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<sup>461</sup>Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*; Christopher Bryan, *A Preface to Mark* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993), 167ff for discussion of Mark as performance. On gestures, cf. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 49ff; Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 286. Cf., also Cotterell & Turner for discussion of semantics (actual language used) and pragmatics (dealing with accompanying circumstances of actual language). Cf. also Amos Wilder (*The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric* [New York: Harper & Row, 1964], where he says, "[Jesus] did tell stories and with such felicity that they could not be forgotten. Later his followers, like the rabbis, cultivated devices to aid memory, and among these, anecdote and story. Moreover, when we picture to ourselves the early Christian narrators we should make full allowance for animated and expressive narration. In ancient times even when one read to oneself from a book, one always read aloud. Oral speech also was less inhibited than today. It is suggestive that in teaching the rabbis besides using cantillation also used 'didactic facial expressions' as well as 'gestures and bodily movements to impart dramatic shape to the doctrinal material'" (64). Cf. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 163-68. As an aside, while describing other aspects of Rabbinic reading tradition, Gerhardsson says, "It would be interesting to have considered in this context [techniques of public oral delivery] other pedagogical details, such as the didactic facial expressions which were evidently used, as well as the gestures and bodily movements to impart dramatic shape to the doctrinal material." (168).

<sup>462</sup>*Inst. Or.*, 10.1.16.

<sup>463</sup>"Reading at Cockcrow," 159 n8.

<sup>464</sup>Terence Hawkes, "Shakespeare and the New Critical Approaches," *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 293.

isolate the figures from their oral setting and evaluate them only through the visual text.<sup>465</sup>

The audience does not always affect the outcome of a script in such a subtle manner and first century feedback was usually more tangible. Documents from antiquity depict an interchange between orator and audience, in a group debriefing following the performance.<sup>466</sup> Especially in rhetorical argumentation, there seemed to be a direct causal relationship between an audience and the final outcome of the text. For in antiquity, judgement (κρίσις) fell squarely into the hands of the listening audience (κριτής). The end result was not a published work, but a persuaded audience. "Those in the first century world who put together words for others to listen to seem to have been aware of the need to work hard to keep their hearers' attention. You had to give them a lot of what they wanted - they were in a very real sense, your masters."<sup>467</sup> Sources from antiquity also show that there may have been a select group which may have been part of the production from the start.<sup>468</sup>

Furthermore, even the writing process itself incorporated numerous sets of hands and listening ears. Material was often worked and re-worked beginning with

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<sup>465</sup>For a summary of the argument, Cf. Boomershine, "Peter's Denial as Polemic," 47-68.

<sup>466</sup>As cited previously, Plutarch, *On Listening to Lectures*, 42-48. According to Plutarch, the listener may even interrupt the lecture with questions, not simply wait until the end. Cf., Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 124; Quinn, "The Poet and Audience," often refers to an opportunity for face-to-face discussions following a performance. "We can easily imagine [Virgil] might have read three books in the course of an afternoon, with an interval after each for discussion" (92). Further, critics tried to establish authoritative texts for the works of earlier poets and "presented these in some kind of public performance with interpretative commentary" (99). "How performance and interpretation were integrated in the routine of a critic's hermeneutical exposition is not clear, but perhaps easily guessed: one imagines short texts lent themselves to performance in full followed by interpretation" (104).

Regarding the presentation of poetry, the *Epistle to Florus* (2.2.97-98) suggests regular meetings, apparently open to the public, at which poets read and discussed their work (149). Cf. Pliny, *Epistles* 9.26 (*Ancient Literary Criticism*, 429) for a discussion of a person making notes which are misunderstood in the text as it was performed. Cf. Chapter 2 of this thesis, *The Reader in New Testament Texts*, for a parallel discussion regarding Acts 15:31 and additional primary source citations.

<sup>467</sup>Downing, "Word Processing in the Ancient World," 31-32 for primary sources.

<sup>468</sup>Downing, "Word Processing in the Ancient World," 33.

oral dictation to a scribe-secretary on a wax tablet. The editing of the first draft then took place via several options; a personal rewrite, or a secretary reading aloud as the author made changes accordingly. Next, clean copies of the first draft were often distributed for their comments, or portions of a work in progress was read for opinions before friends at dinner parties<sup>469</sup> or peer poetry clubs know as the *Collegium Poetarum*.<sup>470</sup>

The publication of the final form of the text could be more accurately labeled as a releasing of the text into the community. Frequently, this was done with an oral public recitation. William Graham adds, "There is ample evidence that not only poetic or dramatic, but even historical works continued to be read before audiences: public readings either preceded or accompanied the diffusion of individual historical works in manuscript copies."<sup>471</sup> In the Greco-Roman era, the regular method of publication was by public recitation.<sup>472</sup>

Emerging from this discussion comes a practical observation regarding what might be a modern misconception of Mark. We often assume Mark to be an obtuse,

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<sup>469</sup>For background material cf. *Dining in a Classical Context*, ed. William J. Slater (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

<sup>470</sup>The only reference to the *Collegium Poetarum* is found in Valerius Maximus 3.7.11. However, most scholars assume that Valerius' *Collegium* is the descendent of a social body dating from about 200 B.C., associated with the name of Livius Andronicus. Later, Horace's *Satires* 1.10.37-39 and *Epistles* 2.2.91-100 link the social gathering of the *Collegium* to literary contests. Cf., Quinn, "The Poet and Audience," 30.1, 173-176 for an excursus on the *Collegium Poetarum* or Kenny, "Books and Readers in the Roman World," 10-12.

<sup>471</sup>Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, 35. Cf. Arnaldo Momigliano, "The Historians of the Classical World and Their Audiences," *American Scholar* 47 (1977-78), 193-204, esp. 195-196. For sources during the time of the Roman republic, cf., Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: The People and the City at the Height of the Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 193-201. Harris (*Ancient Literacy*) says, "Readings and not books made a man famous" (226). Cf., Strabo (i.19-20) and Dio Chrysostom (xx.10) who state readings are prevalent in cities of Imperial Rome.

<sup>472</sup>Hadas, *Ancilla*, 50, cf. 51-60 for numerous references to recitation of different genres. Cf. Also Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition*, 111.

parabolic text; almost impossible to decipher with any kind of certainty.<sup>473</sup> However, if an audience could not comprehend it or if it was impractical for use, it was customary for them to force a change upon the author.<sup>474</sup> Downing has challenged biblical scholarship to approach the New Testament documents with the premise that authors would have to pay meticulous attention to what their audiences were able to hear.<sup>475</sup> Furthermore, if the speaker was attempting to move the audience in a new direction, the audience held considerable control over the material.<sup>476</sup>

### 2.3.3 THE EFFECT OF THE TEXT ON THE SHAPING OF THE AUDIENCE

According to Aristotle, a text is not an end in itself but a means to an end; it does something. Ideally, it persuades the audience to accept the author's (in our case, the reader's) perspective. I would like to discuss this by taking up a specific question, does an oral/aural reading-event enhance Mark's persuasiveness, ultimately being heard as authoritative by its listening audience?<sup>477</sup> I will attempt to answer the question utilizing two areas of input; first, from a general overview of the Markan story and second, from underlying cultural assumptions which accompany an oral delivery.

As a precursor, Mark does not claim explicitly to be authoritative by equating itself to scripture.<sup>478</sup> Yet, George Kennedy points out that, "The Gospel of Mark is an

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<sup>473</sup>On occasions an author may purposefully want to be incomprehensible, as in the case of the innocuous symbols to casual readers of Revelation. All human communications are in some sense partially opaque if not carefully considered in co-text and historical context. Cf. Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 39-72.

<sup>474</sup>F. G. Downing, "Theophilus' First Reading of Luke-Acts" in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* (JSNT 116), 102; Nelson, "From 'Listen, Lordings' to 'Dear Reader,'" 110-124.

<sup>475</sup>Downing, "Theophilus' First Reading of Luke-Acts," 102ff.

<sup>476</sup>Downing "Word Processing in the Ancient World," 32 for citation of primary sources.

<sup>477</sup>Cf. Robert Detweiler, "What is a Sacred Text?" *Semeia* 31 (1985); H. J. B. Combrink, "Readings, Readers and Authors: An Orientation," *NeoT* 22 (1988), 198-203.

<sup>478</sup>Cf. William Graham, "Scripture," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (ed. Mircea Eliade; New York: Macmillan, 1987) 13.142. Graham says that "scripture" means "texts that are revered as especially sacred and authoritative" (133). However, defining scripture is itself a nebulous task, especially if you ask,

example of what may be called radical Christian rhetoric, a form of 'sacred language' characterized by assertion and absolute claims of authoritative truth without evidence or logical argument."<sup>479</sup> In the reader's introductory words, Jesus is established as the Messianic Son of God (1:1). Then, the sacred writing of Isaiah prophetically announces the forerunner (1:2-3) and the first words from John the Baptizer portray Jesus as the one mightier (ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου) than himself. The audience is presented with an interesting progressive move. The sacred scriptures have foretold John's coming. Then, once he comes, he is immediately surpassed. How is the audience to understand the man Jesus if his ministry operates on a level exponentially above a fulfiller of scripture such as John?

Next, the audience is given a glimpse behind the veil as the reader shares insider information regarding the Spirit's descent as the heavens are torn open (σχιζομένους). It was Jesus alone who "saw the heavens opened" (εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, 1:10), and it was the Son who hears the words, "σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα." Yet the audience is given the divine perspective of the private filial conversation between God and His Son which is withheld from the story's characters. Through the spoken words of the reader, prior to Jesus' first act or utterance in the story, He is portrayed as the long-awaited representative of God.

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"sacred and authoritative to whom?" That notwithstanding, there are explicit examples of the early church recording material as scripture: 2 Peter refers to Paul's letters as scripture (3:16); the *Shepherd of Hermas* was regarded as scripture by Irenaeus (*A.H.* 4.20.2), Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.17.29; 2.1.9, 12) and Tertullian (*De Orat.* 16). Cf. also Barnabas 4.14; 2 Clement 2.4; 14.1.

<sup>479</sup>George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, 104. Whitney Shiner ("Working the Audience: Applause Lines in the Performance of Mark") makes an interesting supporting argument regarding the unique form of Jesus' speech in Mark. He states that listening audiences were enamored with pithy and memorable lines called *sententiae*, which was originally used as the equivalent of the Greek γνώμη by Quintilian (*Ins. Or.* 8.5.3). Shiner goes on to state that though Mark may not be the master stylist, the words of Jesus tend to stand out as well-wrought *sententiae*. Further, Quintilian links *sententiae* with the authority of the speaker, as he says they are "best suited to speakers whose own authority and character would lend weight to the words. For who would tolerate a boy, or a youth, or even a man of low birth who presumed to speak with the authority of a judge and to thrust his precepts down our throats?" (8.5.8). Thanks to Dr. Shiner for an advanced copy of this paper.

This theme of Jesus as an embodiment of God's authority is pushed even farther by the reader as the opening healing stories are told (1:21-28; 2:1-12). Jesus is represented as being wholly different from the scribes (ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς), whose authority came from the long line of teachers who came before them, and their interpretation of the scriptures (e.g., traditions of the elders, τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, 7:3). In their day, no one had more insight into the Word of God than the scribes. Contrastingly, Jesus' authority can be termed self-authenticating (e.g., 11:27-33) and from divine origin. The Gospel of Mark as a whole takes on this same self-authenticating air. At no place in the story does the reader step out of character and argue for his authority or reliability.<sup>480</sup> The authority issue is further escalated in 2:1-12 as the reader, through a dialogue between Jesus and the scribes, attributes to Jesus the very authority of God; that of forgiving sins. And the scene closes with a summary from the crowd, in two parts; reader commentary and direct discourse. The reader tells the audience how to hear the first person words of the crowd with the preliminary description ὥστε ἐξίστασθαι πάντας καὶ δοξάζειν τὸν θεόν. This reader commentary serves as a corrective to the earlier exchange between Jesus and the scribes as he is accused of blasphemy (2:7). How could it be so if the end result was amazement and praise? Then, the words of the crowd set the tone for Jesus' work throughout Mark, οὕτως οὐδέποτε εἶδομεν. A whole new work is arising in the person of Jesus. Later, from Mount Transfiguration, with Moses and Elijah at his side, the voice of God echoes, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him" (9:7). Jesus is being described as the authoritative interpreter of scripture and possibly his words and actions are being presented in a new category of authority, surpassing the Law and the Prophets (cf. Deut 18:18-19).

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<sup>480</sup>Conversely, Luke saw the need to justify the accuracy of his research in the preface (Luke 1:1-4). Similarly, the Gospel of John, through the use of narrative asides, makes explicit claims to reliability of his eye witness foundations (John 20:30-31; 21:24; 1 John 1:1-4). The Apostle Paul's on-going arguments with his detractors regarding his apostolic authority require him to establish his own explicit claims for authority.

Paradoxically, the humiliating death on a cross, which by all rights should exclude Jesus from any messianic claim, has been (re)shaped by means of Old Testament prophecy<sup>481</sup> to exalt him to the ultimate place of authority, seated at the right hand of power (14:62; ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως).<sup>482</sup> In the final analysis, the Markan passion narrative depicts Jesus' death as a consummation of Old Testament predictions and for the early church this demands "the production of more scripture which will explain how this happened. Such scripture is required to explain this not first of all to the outsiders but rather to the Christians themselves."<sup>483</sup> It seems quite plausible that the Markan story was heard not simply as a continuation of the larger Jewish saga but as its climax, therefore allowing its own authority to be authenticated by the Hebrew scriptures and even surpass them.

Now we will combine these textual findings with some underlying cultural assumptions and summarize how an oral delivery might impact a listening audience. This divine-human drama is being told via the voice and presence of a flesh-and-blood reader, who claims to be speaking from an omniscient perspective. Meir Sternberg, in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, carefully interjects his narrative study with cultural insights of the omniscient narrator in Old Testament narrative. He makes two claims

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<sup>481</sup>It should be stated, however, that Mark's use of scripture is complex. Cf. Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1992). For example, the early references in the introductory material are conflated passages from several sources, somewhat of "composite of poetic couplets that would have been written in different scrolls. 'As it is written in the prophet Isaiah' in 1:2-3, for example begins with a version of Mal 3:1, with differences from the Hebrew and Septuagint texts, and continues with Isaiah 40:3" (Horsley, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, 142). Furthermore, on several occasions, Jesus makes an appeal to the general authority of scripture without citing specific references (e.g., 9:12-13; 14:49). It appears that Mark uses the terms γέγραπται and γραφή not as citation formulas to a specific text but as references to the general authority of scripture.

<sup>482</sup>E.g., Psalms 22, 69, Isaiah 53, Zephaniah 3:17, and Daniel 7. Additionally, the familiarity of a reader or listener should not be limited to OT passages. It is highly unlikely that a performance of the Gospel of Mark will be a first time exposure to events of the life of Jesus for a listening audience. Greene ("The Spoken and the Written Word," 29) argues that "an eager anticipation by the audience of a familiar theme, whether it is handled in a new fashion . . . or whether it is the very same . . . story . . . that is presented again" will aid a listener in comprehending the narratives.

<sup>483</sup>D. Moody Smith, "When Did The Gospels Become Scripture?," *JBL* 119 (2000), 12.

which we can apply regarding the authority of Mark to his listeners. First, Sternberg maintains that in antiquity, the omniscient narrator of "history" constitutes a claim to inspiration; for uninspired historians are not omniscient.<sup>484</sup> This concept is just as prevalent in the Greco-Roman world as it was in Jewish culture. For example, a singer of poetry is not just inspired but infallible regarding facts in antiquity since the inspiration comes from the divine realm (e.g., muse).<sup>485</sup> Second, Sternberg contends that the omniscience of God imparted to the characters within "history" is paralleled by the omniscience of the flesh-and-blood reader in the world of the audience.<sup>486</sup> Sternberg shows that some rabbis were aware of the problem of history presented from the perspective of omniscience. Their practice was to cite evidence of the omniscient "historian" as an argument for inspiration.<sup>487</sup> Just as Jesus, inside the story world, is portrayed as the earthly representative of God, so too, the reader of Mark speaks to his audience with omniscient knowledge and divine authority.

This claim to inspiration is by no means unprecedented regarding Judeo-Christian literature. James Kugel, in laying out a series of assumptions which all

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<sup>484</sup>Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 32-35. For counter argument, cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 54. However, though Wolterstorff questions the methodological practices of Sternberg, his own presuppositions appear to preclude either revelation or inspiration. Sternberg addresses such a position when he says, "To guard against uncontrolled anachronism, however, it is well to bear in mind that [to reject the Bible's inspiration] one is operating from a source-oriented rather than discourse-oriented position, imposing one's own standards and concerns on a text that would hardly welcome such attention" (34).

<sup>485</sup>George Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment: Early Greek Views of the Nature and Function of Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3-21.

<sup>486</sup>Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 87-98. Sternberg does not make the full leap to analyzing the situation from an oral perspective. However, if his argument is considered credible assuming a modern reading approach, how much more authority will there be if a storyteller is intimately conveying the voice of God and Jesus? Thanks to Walter Lawrence (*"Reader-Response Criticism for Markan Narrative,"* Ph.D. dissertation, Saint Louis University, 1990) to whom I credit these observations of Sternberg. Lawrence adds this disclaimer, "It is important to stress that Sternberg's thesis does not arise out of his religious commitments but from his determination to read the OT narratives with the insights of modern narratology and with the assumptions of antiquity" (107).

<sup>487</sup>Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 58-59, 77-80.

ancient interpreters held regarding the Hebrew scriptures, said, “[A]ll scripture is somehow divinely sanctioned, of divine provenance, or divinely inspired.”<sup>488</sup> With direct reference to Christian writing, Albert Sundberg has demonstrated that early Christian leaders typically asserted that they were writing under divine inspiration.<sup>489</sup> One of the earliest church writings outside the New Testament, First Clement (95 A.D.) says of Paul’s letter to Corinth, “Take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle. What did he write to you at the beginning of his preaching? With true inspiration (ἐν ἀληθείας πνευματικῶς) he charged you concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos” (47:1-3). Moreover, Clement later applied the concept of inspiration to his own work when he wrote, “You will give us joy and gladness if you are obedient to the things written by us through the Holy Spirit” (τοῖς ὑφ ἡμῶν γεγραμμένοις διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, 63:2).<sup>490</sup>

Where does this issue of authority take our study? First, this creates a new set of reading and/or listening conventions for the ancient audience as they approach Mark as a sacred text. In most Markan literary studies, the narrator is described as a third-person, a generally unintrusive, invisible and omniscient narrator, i.e., a narrator who stays in the background, rarely making his presence felt.<sup>491</sup> Moreover, the narrator’s role is to control the sympathies or distance of the reader in relation to the characters or values in the story. However, in an oral presentation, the omniscient reader collapses this distance, reducing the possibility of objectivity, and assumes the role of authority for the length of the performance. He is far from invisible and it is his voice which speaks for each character, including his own intrusions into the story. During the first

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<sup>488</sup>James Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 21-22.

<sup>489</sup>Albert C. Sundberg, “The Bible Canon and the Christian Doctrine of Inspiration,” *Interp* 29 (1975), 352-371.

<sup>490</sup>Sundberg documents numerous other citations from Ignatius, Polycarp, Epistle of Barnabas, Epistle to Diognetus, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, and Eusebius.

<sup>491</sup>Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 35-43.

person dialogues, he literally speaks *for* God and *for* Jesus to the audience.

Methodologically speaking, in an oral presentation of Mark, the reader embodies the story.

A more subtle aspect of the reader's authority springs from his third-person narration. Robert Fowler states the obvious when he points out that Mark is wholly a retrospective narrative.<sup>492</sup> However, that is a tribute to its rhetorical success, that Mark has masked his retrospective perspective. By being everywhere, and knowing everything, the reader has successfully created the illusion of omnipresence and omniscience. He puts the audience in the very midst of action, creating an experience of vividness and immediacy. The ubiquitous employment of verbs in the historical present where the audience might expect a past tense gives the impression of a story unfolding for the first time rather than simply a story-teller's reflections of past events.

Second, the issue of Mark's authority addresses the genre question. The cultural forces at work in antiquity may have given Mark a certain "biblical-ness"<sup>493</sup> as its listeners may have treated it with unquestioned authority, much different from our modern view of the Bible as literature. James Kugel highlights the genre difference of reading a text as literature verses reading a text as scripture.

This literary reading, which has been around since antiquity is not now a mere "also" that has come to heighten our appreciation of the Sacred Writ, it is not simply "another dimension" of a great book, but rather the modern rival of an

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<sup>492</sup>Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 65.

<sup>493</sup>Cf., Gert Luederitz, "Rhetorik, Poetik, Kompositionstechnik im Markusevangelium," in *Markus-Philologie: Historische, literargeschichtliche und stilistische Untersuchungen zum zweiten Evangelium*, ed. Hurbert Cancik (Tuebingen: Mohr, 1984), 165-168. Luederitz, in a brief discussion, argues that Mark's style is an indicator of its "biblical-ness," which he considers a genre. In antiquity, he argues, genre rather than the desire for individuality determined style. In his opinion, Mark's style stands in the tradition of the books of the prophets in the LXX. He closes with the notion that Mark is not a prophetic book in the OT tradition but indicates that the second gospel contains elements of one. James Sanders seems to concur, as he deals with the gospel form. He argues that features similar to Jeremiah and the Pentateuch can be found in the gospels. "This suggests that the gospels wish to be understood as 'biblical books', that is, as standing in the line of the earlier tradition about what God has done. Their basic theocentrism reveals that they are biblical books and expressions of a Jewish pluralism" (*The Relationships Among the Gospels*, ed. W. O. Walker [San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1978], 244).

older reading, "The Bible as Scripture." Our new reading is the creation of a modern tradition of exegesis that brackets what used to be the most fundamental aspect of the Bible, the tradition of its divine character and the reading(s) that that implied.<sup>494</sup>

The literary critic George Steiner writes of a similar tendency in Alter's and Kermode's work in *Literary Guide to the Bible*. He writes in his review, ". . . a terrible blandness is born. . . . We hear of 'pressure cookers,' not of terror, the *mysterium tremendum*, that inhabits man's endeavor to speak to and speak of God."<sup>495</sup> The point being made is that viewing the Bible as literature and critiquing it with literary tendencies foreign to it may in a sense domesticate the awe-inspiring authority with which it captivated its ancient audience.<sup>496</sup> Though nowhere does Mark make a declaration of scriptural authority, a first century community might recognize in the oral performance of the gospel a claim upon their lives of no less significance than that of the scriptures.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>494</sup>James Kugel, "On the Bible as Literature," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982), 329, quoted in L. Poland, "The Bible and the Rhetorical Sublime," in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in The Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*, ed. M. Warner (London: Routledge, 1990), 31.

<sup>495</sup>George Steiner, "The Good Books," *The New Yorker*, January 11, 1988. R. Alter and F. Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (London: Collins, 1987).

<sup>496</sup>Poland ("The Bible and the Rhetorical Sublime") suggests that literary analysis "domesticates the religious power, or what I should call the 'sublimity' of the biblical texts" (32).

<sup>497</sup>It seems as though the New Testament, in part, re-fashioned the Christian Community's use of the Old Testament. Paul and the Gospels clearly used the life and stories of Jesus as the hermeneutical key for understanding many Old Testament passages. Could it then be argued that the stories of Jesus were "more authoritative" than the Old Testament in the life of the early church, even though they may not have been called "scripture" until much later?

### 3 A SOLUTION: AN ORAL HERMENEUTIC

I have argued that methodological neglect of the oral nature of ancient texts is hermeneutically inappropriate. Moreover, this same evidence beckons us to move outside our textual comfort zones into the less controllable world of the spoken word. However, this thesis cannot fashion an entirely new hermeneutic, for that is the culmination of a life-time of work; a *magnum opus*, rather than one's academic genesis as found in a doctoral thesis. Thus, this overture will attempt to reconstruct a reading-event of Mark and what might be found in the experience of selected passages of the gospel by an early church community.

The best model for fashioning this style of delivery is found in the work of Whitney Shiner with his convergence of the concepts of an "ideal performance" and an "implied performance" as applied to an oral reading of a gospel.<sup>498</sup> He has proposed that each of these can be reconstructed with two different yet converging lines of evidence. The first concept, the ideal performance is analogous to an "ideal reader" in literary critical studies. The ideal reader is a construct that acknowledges that actual flesh-and-blood readers may miss many of the nuances of the text, while at the same time locating meaning in the experience of reading that a fully competent reader would have.<sup>499</sup> Thus, recovering an ideal performance demands careful consideration of the cultural background matters which go unspoken by the text itself.

Shiner's second converging line of evidence calls upon textual clues from the Gospel of Mark to recover an "implied performance" of the text. This concept is comparable to the literary constructs of "implied readers" or "implied authors," where clues primarily from the text are used to fashion a hypothetical reader or author. In a more recent work, Shiner has "tried to refine a method for understanding the way

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<sup>498</sup>"From Text to Oral Performance." Shiner employs the term *performance* rather than *reading-event*.

<sup>499</sup>Shiner, "From Text to Oral Performance," 1-2.

meaning would have been produced in an oral presentation of the Gospel."<sup>500</sup> Shiner does this as he reconstructs the effect of a public reading performance upon an audience and attempts to recount the "norms of audience reaction in the first century Mediterranean world."<sup>501</sup> Shiner goes on to say,

if we are to reconstruct the actual experience of hearing the gospel as a communal event, we have to imagine audience response as part of that experience. If we are to recover the meaning of the gospel as an aural, visual, and visceral event, we need to think about how the performer would try to move and involve the audience in and through the recitation of the gospel.<sup>502</sup>

It is clear that this method necessitates painting both a historical and a hypothetical reading situation.<sup>503</sup> Thus, it is where these two constructs converge that we have the best case scenario of approximating an actual oral Markan performance and reconstructing how scriptures in the early church may have been heard and appropriated.

### 3.1 ORAL HERMENEUTIC - PART 1: HISTORICAL READING-EVENT

It would be fair to say that all of the previous work of this thesis should be considered methodological in nature. For identifying our twenty-first century biases and immersing ourselves in the first century rhetorical culture is a precursor to hearing the story of Mark as the ancients did. Further, defining a first century reading-event apart from discussing the interchange between the reader, the text, and the audience

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<sup>500</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death: Audience Reaction to Mark 8:27-9:1," unpublished presentation at SBL 2000.

<sup>501</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death," 6. As will be described later, Shiner labels these (1) audience inclusive dialogue and (2) applause lines.

<sup>502</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death," 6.

<sup>503</sup>Shiner ("Disciples and Death") says, "It goes without saying that it is impossible to reconstruct how any audience would react to a performance of the Gospel of Mark. In any case, it is not necessary to determine the exact reactions in Mark's historical first century audiences for this examination to bear fruit. Whether or not a line elicited actual applause or not, if it creates an impetus toward applause, the analysis will remain generally valid" (6-7).

could lead one toward anachronistic conclusions regarding the world of the Second Gospel.

Thus, what reading model would be most effective if indeed, the New Testament was recorded speech? The works of Ricoeur, Gadamer, and others who have followed in their footsteps stand firmly upon the hermeneutical premise that the text as it stands, has meaning.<sup>504</sup> They argue that the text is valuable apart from its original author, audience, or referential situation. But what if the writings of the New Testament were indeed oral discourse written down?<sup>505</sup> What if they were composed primarily for the ears to hear and not for the eyes to see? What if part of the understanding of the text lay dormant beneath the surface, only to fully manifest itself during the oral exchange of a reader and an audience? What might happen if we would treat the text in a manner more analogous with a music score than a modern novel? Might there be a more collaborative experience with scripture if the marks<sup>506</sup> on a page represent the story waiting to be released through the voice of a reader. Will there be a change in our understanding and appropriation if we view the entire life cycle of these texts as oral; from their creation via dictation to their delivery before a listening audience?

Even more important from a methodological perspective, what elements of the "World Behind the Text" do we disregard? Ricoeur acknowledges that there is not an absolute break between the historical situation of the text's origin and our

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<sup>504</sup>Primarily I am calling upon Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 22-23. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Continuum, 1998), 171-264 for a general discussion of the issues surrounding Schleiermacher and Dilthey. To date, the best overall discussion on the subject of hermeneutics is done by Anthony C. Thiselton in his two works, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) and *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*.

<sup>505</sup>Achtemeier, "Omne Verbum Sonat," 19. Achtemeier says, "...apart from any unique characteristics they may possess in the matter of form or language, they are oral to the core, both in their creation and performance . . . that in turn means that to be understood, the NT must be understood as speech."

<sup>506</sup>At numerous junctures throughout his work, Ricoeur speaks about the banishment of the human factor in the message to be replaced by inanimate "marks." Cf. *Interpretation*, 26, 27.

understanding of it. In his discussion of the effect writing has on severing the message from its referential perspective, he qualifies himself, "Does this mean that this eclipse of reference, in either an ostensive or descriptive sense, amounts to sheer abolition of all reference? No. My contention is that the discourse cannot fail to be about something."<sup>507</sup> Thus, even to Ricoeur, the historical reference of a text serves as a guide and places limitations upon its possible meanings. My assertion is simply, which of the historical referential moorings are considered essential for interpretation, which are to be jettisoned, and what (or who) will be the determining factor in making the decision? For example, New Testament scholars would unanimously agree that discarding the fact that Mark's Gospel was written in first century Greek would be interpretive suicide. Additionally, being sensitive to social and cultural practices of antiquity prevent us from making anachronistic interpretations. Yet, in the same breath, how can we acknowledge the cultural reality that ancient documents were produced to be read aloud all the while ignoring this phenomenon in our exegetical method?

Sandra Schneiders approaches the methodological question this way, "How does one arrive at a valid 'real meaning(s)' of the text? And how does one know when that has occurred?"<sup>508</sup> She employs the concept of "ideal meaning." By this she does not impose a replacement for the singular standard of authorial intent. For that would simply supplant authorial meaning with that of a textual meaning, which would "assume that there is in a text, independent of the reader, a free-standing meaning that exegesis aims to extract."<sup>509</sup> By ideal meaning, she signifies a "dynamic structure in the text that derives from the confluence of three factors: (a) the dialectic between sense and

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<sup>507</sup>Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, 36.

<sup>508</sup>Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), xxxii.

<sup>509</sup>Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., xxxii. Cf., Green, ("Modernity") says, "Historical criticism locates 'meaning' as a property of the historical events one might view through the text-as-window, a perspective that minimizes or obliterates the role of text as an instrument of meaning. In this case, meaning is objectified and the text is regarded as a thing to be interrogated and manipulated so that it might divulge its deposits of meaning" (318-19).

reference by which the text says something intelligible about something; (b) the genre in which the intelligible utterance is expressed and by which it is shaped; (c) the personal style of the author."<sup>510</sup> It is the second factor, genre, which I would like to consider for just a moment. Relating to genre study of the gospels, Larry Hurtado says, "In seeking to determine a writing's genre, therefore, we must work with genres and literary conventions relevant to the era of the writing."<sup>511</sup> Moreover, Hurtado argues,

The analysis of a work's relation to literary genres should involve comparison of all the characteristics of the relevant genres and of the work in question. Emphasis on isolated characteristics of a work can produce misleading conclusions. A writing can be associated with a particular genre only to the degree that all characteristics of the writing can be understood adequately in terms of features of the genre.<sup>512</sup>

The issue of a text's genre links the interpreter with the necessity of historical inquiry. In short, the form in which the text was conceived and communicated may provide keys for how the text wants to be read or more importantly in our case, how it wants to be heard. Coming full circle in the argument, one sociological phenomenon which can clearly be associated with every ancient genre was the text's oral presentation. The reading-event which accompanied the work was as much a function of the ancient text as was its literary form and content. The oral recitation only seems to

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<sup>510</sup>Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., xxxii. Schneiders, in another setting says, "The reason the biblical scholar is concerned with the historical reference of the text is because the ideal meaning of the text, which is what we seek to actualize as understanding by interpretation, consists of a dialectic between the sense of the text (what it says) and its reference (what it is about). What the text is about is God's real, historical self-revelation in the person of Jesus, which becomes accessible to us through the text. It is the historical reality of Jesus which actually creates and founds the existential possibility of discipleship which the text projects before it. The historical reference, is essential to, although not coterminous with, the ideal meaning of the text" ("Paschal Imagination," 63). Green similarly says, "The modern perspective posits a purposeful segregation of "history" and "text"—or, to put it in a slightly different way, of "history" and "textual interpretation." Here we learn that the history to which the biblical text gives witness and the biblical text that provides such a witness are not coterminous" ("Modernity," 312).

<sup>511</sup>Larry Hurtado, "Gospel (Genre)" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight; Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1992), 277.

<sup>512</sup>Hurtado, "Gospel (Genre)," 277.

have been separated from its actualization since the advent of modern silent reading.<sup>513</sup>

Joel Green, in a corollary discussion, demonstrates that our own attachment to modern cultural paradigms pervades the totality of our lives. "We are acting out of cultural paradigms even when we are not looking. . . . To assume we can escape the interests of modernity . . . would be naive."<sup>514</sup> Applying that concept to language theory, Green argues we must take into account that

all language is imbedded in culture, and this includes the language of the Bible. This is a fundamental assumption of the Greek lexicon, with the result that it should go without saying that historical inquiry is inescapable. If this is true at the philological level, it is also true of still higher levels in the study of the communicative intent of biblical texts, such as semantics, and pragmatics.<sup>515</sup>

Edward Hall presents a model for explaining the vast differences between past and present cultures.<sup>516</sup> For Hall, a culture designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore. This screening process provides an overall structure for our world but also protects our senses from information overload. This is accomplished by what he terms the "contexting" process. Without a context, the code of a language is incomplete since it encompasses only part of the message. Hall envisions that cultures, in reference to their communication systems, exist along a high-low continuum. Cultures which are

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<sup>513</sup>Ricoeur makes this statement in his discussion of the change of medium from discourse to written, "Writing raises a specific problem as soon as it is not merely the fixation of a previous oral discourse, the inscription of spoken language, but is human thought directly brought to writing without the intermediary stage of spoken language. Then writing takes the place of speaking. A kind of short-cut occurs between the meaning of discourse and the material medium" (*Interpretation*, 28). The issue I take up with Ricoeur is that this assumption may be true of modern texts but is not true of how ancient manuscripts were conceived.

<sup>514</sup>Green, "Modernity," 314. To fully clarify Green's point of view, later in the article he proposes an approach to scripture reading which unites biblical studies and theology, thereby collapsing the so-called epistemological chasm between past meaning of the text and present appropriation. Schneiders (*From Exegesis to Hermeneutics*) concurs with Green when she says, "[L]et me insist that the work of historical criticism remains and will always remain an essential element in biblical research. The question is not whether it should be done, but whether it is enough. . . . [T]he time has come to incorporate historical critical methodology into a larger interpretative model" (32).

<sup>515</sup>Green, "Modernity," 314.

<sup>516</sup>Edward Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1981), *passim*.

considered high-context societies communicate with most of the information internal to the person and little in the coded part of the message. Conversely, a low-context society finds the majority of the information encoded in the communication itself, with less assumed. The Greco-Roman world falls into the former high-context category with the modern Western society finding itself portrayed by the latter.

This theory impacts any interpretative work which is done cross-culturally. First, if what one pays attention to in a given text is largely a matter of culture, then it is possible to discuss context in relation to meaning; ergo, textual meaning may become closely linked and dependent upon one's culture.<sup>517</sup> Second, communication circulated in the high-context culture of the first century would expect listeners to be privy to high volumes of insider information which would not be explicitly encoded in the text. The reader or listener would have the key to unlock the meaning of the passage, a meaning otherwise lost by a cultural outsider.

I am not implying that the text as we have it today does not function as scripture simply because we do not present it via the oral medium. For, "[h]ow can Ruth or Esther be Scripture *for us* if their meaning is solely the property of these biblical texts at the historical moment of their origin?"<sup>518</sup> The very nature of the texts which we include in the New Testament is a re-contextualization of past historical events. The gospel writers established a precedent for interpreting words of the past in light of their present situation as revealed in Jesus. However, my proposition is that though the text is scripture, the medium through which its understanding was conveyed is not an insignificant act, to be detached from the modern interpretative act. The present-day technique of "silent reading" is no more appropriate for understanding a text than the original method of reading it aloud.

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<sup>517</sup>Jerry Cammery-Hoggatt (*Speaking of God: Reading and Preaching the Word of God* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995] proposes a helpful definition of valid cross-cultural reading, "An act of reading is valid to the extent that it fills in the gaps of the text with the schemas that were operative for the culture in which the text was composed" (84).

<sup>518</sup>Green, "Modernity," 318, emphasis original.

Finally, our method asks, is the world in front of the text to be understood as an individual or a community? I am convinced that an oral reading-event which presupposes a listening community will have a dramatic effect upon the outcome of the experience, as the communal context becomes an interpretative key. Recently, Whitney Shiner has argued that "the meaning of any oration is found only in the communal context as it is presented by the orator and as it is received by the audience."<sup>519</sup> The emotional appeal, conveyed by the reader to his audience, which was such an important ingredient in persuasion in first century rhetoric cannot be reproduced apart from an actual reading-event. Nor can the contagious atmosphere which arises from an audience's affirmation and applause to a reading-event be replicated apart from community.<sup>520</sup> Thus, it would be reductionistic to describe the impact of the New Testament in the first century to the meaning of words contained in manuscripts apart from the human (and divine) exchanges which transpire during an actual reading-event.<sup>521</sup>

This takes our hermeneutical question in a new direction. Specifically, should the value of scripture be limited to a text's forensic meaning or should the discussion be

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<sup>519</sup>Whitney Shiner, "Working the Audience: Applause Lines in the Performance of Mark," forthcoming in a Festschrift for Wilhelm Wuellner to be published by Trinity Press. Cf. also, "From Text to Oral Presentation: Emotion in the Performance of the Gospel of Mark", unpublished paper presented at 1999 SBL seminar. Though oration and reading may appear to be different forms, they are closely connected in the first century. As Shiner points out, Quintilian had his students read histories to train them in emotional inflection (2.4.1-6). He also has them study with actors. Pliny discusses three readers that were members of his household at various times. His favorite was an actor who performed plays for his dinner guests and read to Pliny during dinner. Pliny considers reading and acting to be distinct talents, but clearly the reader's acting ability helped to make him a good reader (*Epistle* 9.36.4).

<sup>520</sup>Two examples: (1) The emotional exchange which takes place between a speaker and his audience in Afro-American churches in America. There is a constant vocal exchange, which contributes to the overall experience. (2) There is dynamic feedback which is constantly at work during the proceedings of British Parliament. Affirmation from fellow members, during one's comments seems to spur on the debate.

<sup>521</sup>As a modern day illustration, if meaning is housed exclusively in the words of a text and not equally shared in the communal hearing of the word, why not have pastors and parish priests of our local churches simply mail their sermons to their congregations (or email them along with a virtual benediction)?

enlarged to include the part played by the larger community as the "story" is performed? Dunn says,

[T]radition-forming is a communal process, not least because such tradition is often constitutive of the community as community. As it was a shared experience of the impact made by Jesus which first drew individuals into discipleship, so it was the formulation of these impacts in shared words which no doubt bonded them together as a community of disciples.<sup>522</sup>

I have tried to argue that in the first century, an audience's encounter with a gospel reading-event would have been more concerned with its effect, personally and corporately, than with what the text may mean on purely intellectual grounds. Thus, methodological integrity compels us to attempt to investigate Mark as a "community-shaping hearing-centered reading-event" rather than to scrutinize it solely as a textual container which houses cognitive propositions.

Thus, let me summarize our work on the historical reading-event with my understanding of Mark.<sup>523</sup> *I consider the Gospel of Mark to be a manu(script) for oral recitations<sup>524</sup> to be made by a believing reader to other believers, and prospective believers in a communal setting.<sup>525</sup> Though Mark's content may be Petrine in origin<sup>526</sup>, each performance*

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<sup>522</sup>Dunn, "Jesus in Oral Memory," 120.

<sup>523</sup>Interpretative problems arise when presuppositions are either unstated or un-recognized. One of the best discussions is found in Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 20, 157-179.

<sup>524</sup>I use the word *recitation* in a technical way. According to V. Robbins, recitation (ἀπαγγελία) is an extensive phenomenon, for it includes the transmission of both speech and narrative, either from oral or written tradition, in exact or different words from which the person received them. For more detail, cf., Robbins, "Oral, Rhetorical, Literary Cultures: A Response," 83ff.

<sup>525</sup>If forced to take a definitive stand, I feel it would be prudent to limit the conversation regarding the gospels' social setting to a generic description, such as a worship assembly or later in church history as general catechism instruction. Darryl Tippens ("Reading at Cockcrow") notes that we must "keep in mind Mark's oral, didactic, and ritual reception within a living community" (146). Furthermore, he argues that the text was likely used to instruct catechumens or read prior to initiation into baptism.

Cf. also, Thomas Finn, "It Happened One Saturday Night: Ritual and Conversion," *JAAR* 58 (1990), 589-616; Mark McVann, "The Passion in Mark: Transformation Ritual," *BTB* 18 (1988), 96-101; Carol LaHurd, "Reader Response to Ritual Elements in Mark 5:1-20," *BTB* 20 (1990), 154-160.

<sup>526</sup>As we discuss in detail the issue of communal authorship, I will carefully side-step a question, "Was the second gospel initially composed in writing (by author himself or via dictation) or was it composed and transmitted orally and then came into writing as a transcript?" That historical issue is

becomes a fresh presentation of the Good News as the reader encounters a different audience in a new setting.<sup>527</sup> This of course begs the question, since only a trace of the oral performance remains in the Second Gospel<sup>528</sup>, and since oral performances are ephemeral, and since we have no extant records regarding an actual Markan reading-event, is retrieval of its oral characteristics possible? Even though such a recovery operation can never "simulate the receptive capabilities of the audience for whom the work emerged in context as a fact of social life, that problem does not excuse us from doing what we can in this regard; any movement toward more faithful reception will be a finite improvement."<sup>529</sup>

### 3.2 ORAL HERMENEUTIC - PART 2: HYPOTHETICAL READING-EFFECT

Within the framework of the historical reading-event, we will now describe a hypothetical<sup>530</sup> reading-effect which the Markan reader and his audience create. I must

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outside the scope of this thesis. However, Kelber saw its composition as a polemic against early Christian orality. For excellent discussion cf. references in Kelber (*Oral and Written*, 77-78). For those who propose Mark as orally composed, cf. 18<sup>th</sup> century: Johann Gottfried Herder; 20<sup>th</sup> century: Albert B. Lord, *The Relationships Among the Gospels*, 33-92; Pieter J. J. Botha, and Thomas Boomershine. Boomershine's method "presupposes a multiple/composite/communal author who is writing a story to be read aloud by a storyteller to an audience which is broad in its conception. The audience is the composite group of those who may hear the story either read aloud from a manuscript or told without a manuscript" (from personal communication 30 Aug, 1998).

<sup>527</sup>Contra Bultmann (*Jesus and the Word* [New York: Scribners, 1935] 12-13) who argues that the Synoptics are "composed of a series of layers." Dunn argues that "An oral retelling of a tradition is not at all like a new literary edition. It has not worked on or from a previous retelling. . . And in the retelling in turn the retold tradition did not come into existence as a kind of artefact, to be examined as by an editor and re-edited for the next retelling" (*Jesus in Oral Memory*," 124).

<sup>528</sup>In the Markan gospel there are textual hints to go along with the often subjective reading of the oral structuring. For example, one can hear the "stage direction" to the reader in 13:14. Also, the numerous "narrative asides" throughout the gospel can also be taken as keys to assist the reader/performer in communicating with his/her audience (Walter Goodman, *Narrative Asides in Mark: Aides for the Reader/Performer in Communicating with a Listening Audience*, Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1994).

<sup>529</sup>John Miles Foley, "Words in Tradition, Words in Text," *Semeia* 65 (1994), 172.

<sup>530</sup>Shiner ("Disciples and Death") labels this method "somewhat experimental" (1). However, he displays much more confidence than that term may convey. His reserve may be for the sake of his colleagues whom he is trying to persuade during the 2000 SBL seminar.

reiterate that we have no way of recovering with certainty the oral style of a particular performance, since by definition, each performance was unique and unrepeatable. Nevertheless, we will employ historical imagination<sup>531</sup> as we attempt to unite historical

and cultural evidence together with the Markan text in order to create a first century reading-event, including the possible range of its reading-effect.

This “reading-effect” is depicted in the chart (Figure 3: Oral/Aural

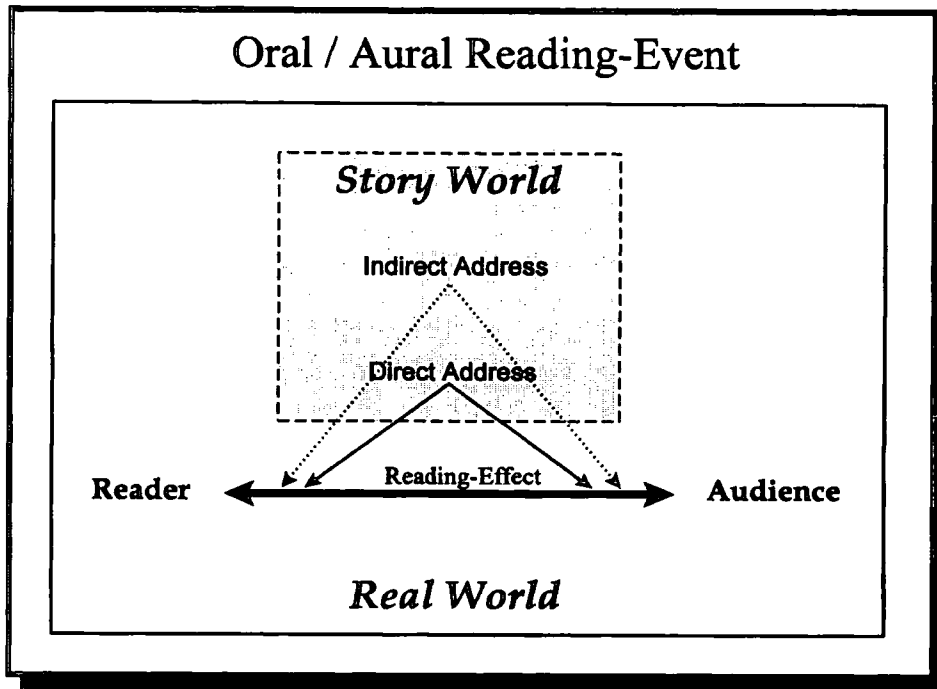


Figure 3: Oral/Aural Reading-Event

Reading-Event) with the solid black line connecting the reader to the audience. The historic role of the reader in the reading model comes from instructors in ancient rhetoric who left extensive records with sections relating specifically to how the reader

<sup>531</sup>I considered using a more mediating (safe?) term such as “historical reconstruction” which may be a descriptive equivalent to “historical imagination.” I put scholars such as Ben Witherington and N. T. Wright into the category of historical reconstruction. They argue, for example, that historical parameters demand that Mark 16:8 was/is not the ending of the gospel. For them, no document would answer the cultural needs of the people if a resurrection narrative was not firmly in place. My retort to them has been two fold, (1) their historical reconstruction ends in circular reasoning as their view of history demands how a text must exist in some stage of its tradition or literary form. They say Mark MUST have had a resurrection account to function adequately in the early church. Especially if it was the first Gospel in existence. (2) This historical reconstruction of the Markan ending seems to imply that Mark is the only formative material in the early church. However, the oral world of the early church is well known to both scholars and neither Wright nor Witherington would discount that the readers/listeners were fully aware of Jesus’ resurrection.

should address the audience. Quintilian, for example, touches upon every aspect of the rhetorical act, including voice inflection, eye contact, and even gestures with which they attempted to affect their audience.<sup>532</sup> The effect was more than on a cognitive level as Quintilian states, "the power of eloquence is greatest in emotional appeals" (4.5.6). "For it is in the power over the emotions that the life and soul of oratory is found" (6.2.7). Quintilian would go so far as to argue that emotional appeal surpasses logical proof:

Proofs, it is true, may induce the judges to regard our case as superior to that of our opponent, but the appeal to the emotions will do more, for it will make them wish our case to be the better. And what they wish, they will also believe. . . . Thus the verdict of the court shows how much weight has been carried by the arguments and the evidence; but when the judge has been really moved by the orator he reveals his feelings while he is still sitting and listening to the case. When those tears, which are the aim of most perorations, well forth from his eyes, is he not giving his verdict for all to see? (6.2.4-7)

Finally, the reader energized the reading-event. Regarding the energy level of ancient oratory, Quintilian assumes that by the end of a speech, the orator "will be fatigued and streaming with sweat, with his clothes and hair disheveled. Such signs of strenuous exertion, he believes, adds to the emotional appeal of the speech and should not be avoided (11.3.144-49)."

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<sup>532</sup>Taking seriously the performative aspect of Mark works against the recoverable meaning of a text according to current Speech Act theory as per J. L. Austin (*How to Get Things Done With Words* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962]) and John R. Searle (*Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969]); and Stanley Fish, "How to Do Things With Austin and Searle: Speech-Act Theory and Literacy Criticism," *MLN* (1976), 983-1025.

Here is the inherent problem. The three main components of Speech-Act theory are (1) *locutions*; utterances themselves, (2) *illocutions*; speakers' intentions by uttering a locution; (3) *perlocution*; what the speaker actually accomplishes through the locution. These are all valid and should be considered. However, speech act theory normally discards locution because it is merely the sound of the utterance and perlocutions because theorists say one can never know for sure what an utterance will accomplish. Thus, speech-act focuses upon the illocution, "which is where a speaker and a hearer, dealing with shared knowledge of the conventions of language, work toward an agreement about how an utterance is to be regarded" (Fowler, *Let Reader Understand*, 48). Yet, as we have argued, in a reading-event, the sound itself is vital and carries much of the emotional appeal. Further, even though perlocutions may be beyond one's absolute control as one attempts to determine what an utterance might accomplish, we should not discount how a reader may attempt to persuade listeners.

Correspondingly, our chart has arrows on both ends of the reading-effect line, since the audience was expected to provide ample feedback to the reader throughout the reading-event.<sup>533</sup> Pliny describes audiences jumping to their feet and shouting applause during his speeches (*Epistle* 9.23.1-2) and also views this as accepted practice at ancient dinner party readings (*Epistle* 2.14). The animated reaction of the listeners was considered the norm since Pliny pours out condemnation on a non-responsive audience at a friend's reading (*Epistle* 6.17.1-3).<sup>534</sup>

A second distinguishing characteristic of our oral reading-event model is the infusion of the real world by the Markan story world. While a silent reader tends to mentally perceive of dialogue taking place in the story world<sup>535</sup>, a listening audience hears a story's dialogue existing in their own real world. For the purpose of description, I have segmented the "story world" into two distinct areas. The first

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<sup>533</sup>Shiner, "From Text to Oral Performance," 9. Parallels of this sort exist throughout history. Cf., Nelson, "From 'Listen, Lordings' to 'Dear Reader'" especially for a discussion of literature being written to be read until late in the 1700's. Manguel (*A History of Reading*) adds a wonderful modern parallel from the life of Charles Dickens. The discussion which follows focuses upon Dickens' reading of his own material in a public performance. "Dickens was a performer. His version of the text - tone, the emphasis, even the deletions and amendments to make the story better suited to an oral delivery - made it clear to everyone that there was to be one and only one interpretation. . . . The public reacted as Dickens wished. One man cried openly and then 'covered his face with both hands, and lay down on the back of the seat before him, and really shook with emotion. Another, whenever he felt a certain character [in the story] was about to appear, would 'laugh and wipe his eyes afresh, and when he came he gave a kind of a cry, as if it were too much for him.' The effect was laboriously obtained; Dickens had spent at least two months working on his delivery and gestures. He had scripted his reactions. In the margins of his 'reading books' - copies of his work which he edited for his tours - he had noted reminders to himself of the tone to use, such as 'Cheerful. . . .Stern. . . .Pathos. . . .Mystery. . . .Quick on' as well as gestures: "Beckon down. . . .Point. . . .Shudder. . . .Look Round in Terror.' Passages were revised according to the effect produced on the audience. After the reading, he never acknowledged the applause. He would bow, leave the stage, and change his clothes, which would be drenched in sweat" (257-258).

<sup>534</sup>Shiner, "Working the Audience." Cf. Stander, "The Clapping of Hands," 75-80.

<sup>535</sup>One of the short-comings of a print-centered reader-response approach can be seen in Fowler's summary (*Let the Reader Understand*) of the author-reader relationship. "The real author and the real reader are easy enough to grasp. . . . In the act of reading, however, we do not encounter a flesh-and-blood author but rather the author's second self, which was created for the purpose of telling this tale. Similarly, we as readers are not wholly ourselves as we read but at least in part the reader the text invites us to be" (31-32). Though this may be true in theory, the real world model we are proposing works against this proposition.

section is labeled "direct address," when the reader speaks directly to the audience.<sup>536</sup> The story's direct address is connected to the reading-effect with a solid line, indicating a high affective level between the reader and the audience. The story world also contains an area labeled "indirect address" which connects the reader and the audience to narrative elements of the text but with less emotional appeal. The difference may seem overly subtle in theory. Yet, during an actual oral performance, direct address would be rendered by the reader making eye contact with his audience and speaking directly to them.<sup>537</sup> Conversely, indirect address represents those passages which are merely overheard by the audience, for example as characters are talking to one another within the story world. Direct address is an active interchange between reader and audience while indirect address is more passive in nature. Thus, I define "reading-effect" as the affective results of the reader communicating direct and indirect address of the story world to the audience in the real world. Interestingly, this effect is much stronger in the oral recitation of narrative than in an actual staged drama.

In drama, we watch performers enacting dialogue on a stage. While dialogue in a play often carries a great deal of emotional power, the audience is primarily a spectator, overhearing dialogue between others. The distancing of staged dialogue is lost in oral narrative because the performer addresses the narrative to the audience and thus the words of the dialogue are addressed to the audience, not to other performers on the stage.<sup>538</sup>

Now for a detailed definition of terms; first, direct address. In its most general sense, direct address exists when the reader draws the story world into the life of the listener(s) and they hear it as part of an event in the real world, fusing past and

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<sup>536</sup>Shiner ("Disciples and Death") call this "Audience Inclusive dialogue" (3).

<sup>537</sup>David Rhoads ("Performing the Gospel of Mark" in *Body and Bible: Interpreting and Experiencing Biblical Narratives*, ed. Björn Krondorfer [Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1992]) in his description of how he performs Mark, says, "[W]hen I tell the story as narrator, I focus off stage [towards the listening audience]. . . . Then, when I play the narrator, I show the audience what a character in the story has said by assuming the role of the character. When I show the character this way, I focus on stage and address other characters in imagination before me. This helps the audience to distinguish when I use the voice of the narrator and when I assume the voice of a character" (105).

<sup>538</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death," 4.

present.<sup>539</sup> For our purposes, direct address makes up the participatory elements in the story which we will categorize as (1) emotional and vocal markers, (2) inclusive dialogue, (3) reader commentary, and (4) insider information. First, emotional and vocal markers are textual clues that guide the reader in not just what to say (content) but how to express it emotionally and vocally. For the most part, they supply the reader with quasi-stage directions. In antiquity, readers spoke texts in a way that imitated not only the appropriate emotion, but also the voice inflection appropriate to the part. Quintilian suggests that an actor playing a woman spoke shrilly; one playing an old man affected a trembling voice (1.11.1). When discussing character impersonation in rhetoric, Quintilian says, "...we may draw a parallel from the stage, where the actor's voice and delivery produce greater emotional effect when he is speaking in an assumed role than when he speaks in his own character (6.1.26). He goes on to suggest an acting approach to oratory is best suited for enlisting the emotions of an audience.

It is sometimes positively ridiculous to counterfeit grief, anger and indignation, if we content ourselves with accommodating our words and looks and make no attempt to adapt our own feelings to the emotions to be expressed. ...we must assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who are genuinely so affected, and our eloquence must spring from the same feeling that we desire to produce in the mind of the judge. Will he grieve who can find no trace of grief in the words with which I seek to move him to grief? Will he be angry, if the orator who seeks to kindle his anger shows no sign of laboring under the emotion which he demand from his audience? Will he shed tears if the pleader's eyes are dry? It is utterly impossible (6.2.27; cf. 11.3.61-62).

Emotional markers abound in Mark. In order of frequency, the emotive reactions of those inside the story world are (1) amazement, (2) fear, (3) anger, (4) sadness/grief.<sup>540</sup> Other more subtle keys for a reader's voice inflection are also present in the text and often the lines of distinction between emotion and vocalic markers are

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<sup>539</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death," 4. Shiner adds, "past and present time are fused, or confused, with sometimes the past and sometimes the present predominating."

<sup>540</sup>Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*, 122-123) lists each occurrence.

unclear. We find God's voice being uttered with pleasure to his son in 1:11 (εὐδόκησα) yet with command to the disciples in 9:7 (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ). The demons shout (1:24, ἀνέκραξεν), cry out (5:7, κράξας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ), and cry out and convulse (9:26, ράξας καὶ πολλὰ σπαράξας). The disciples display a wide range of emotional markers, such as devotion (1:18, 20, εὐθὺς ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ), repeated dullness (4:13, 7:52, 8:17-18, Οὐκ οἶδατε), fear, (4:41, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν), sorrow (14:19, λυπεῖσθαι), and a sense of corporate cockiness (14:31, ὁ δὲ ἐκπερισσῶς ἐλάλει, Ἐὰν δέη με συναποθανεῖν σοι, οὐ μὴ σε ἀπαρνήσομαι. ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ πάντες ἔλεγον). Moreover, even though Jesus' climactic moments on the cross are severely limited by a lack of first person discourse on his part, it is carefully accented with vocal markers (15:34, 37, ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) to assist the reader in conveying Jesus' anguish and travail. Mark has a plethora of markers which serve as guides for the reader's delivery.

These markers can serve in other subtle ways. For example, Mark's constant use of the adverb "immediately (εὐθὺς)" encourages the reader to increase the pace of the story. Moreover, the constant change of scenes within the story may serve as a stage direction for the reader's movement during the reading-event. "The story is not just a vehicle, or a component added to an idea. The story itself has power. The story affects the whole person - heart, soul, mind, and body."<sup>541</sup> And these markers help the reader bring the story to life.

From a reading-effect perspective, these textual markers also serve as indicators for the audience's reaction(s). These references let the audience know of the responses of others within the story; wonder, amazement, fear, anger, and mourning. The markers set the range of appropriate responses for the audience. Thus, emotional and vocal markers serve as a helpful guide for identifying bi-lateral feedback as the reader weaves the story into the world of the audience.

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<sup>541</sup>David Rhoads, "Performing the Gospel of Mark," 108.

The second category which makes up direct address will be labeled as inclusive dialogue.<sup>542</sup> "All dialogue in orally performed narrative is simultaneously addressed to a character or group of characters in the story world and to members of the audience in the [real] world."<sup>543</sup> In the case of first person dialogue, it would be presented by the reader "in character." Throughout the Markan narrative there are numerous opportunities for the reader to use voice and body in communicating the first person words of God, Jesus, the demons, the disciples, Jesus' adversaries, and the recipients of grace. Thus, in a first century reading-event, these characters actually occupy the same time and space as the audience.

Second person dialogue functions in a profoundly different manner within an oral presentation. Each second person dialogue has at least the potential for a double reference. The pronoun "you" on the surface is addressed to the characters in the story but in an oral recitation, it may include the audience in the real world. Shiner argues, "the extent to which I do hear 'you' as addressed to me depends on a number of factors, including how much I identify with the addressee in the story world and how much I identify the words as appropriately addressed to me."<sup>544</sup> However, putting this kind of limitation on inclusive dialogue may discount some of the performative aspects which the reader retains. For it is not exclusively the listener who evaluates the text. During a performance of Mark, the reader profoundly determines the reference of inclusive dialogue in the story. This can be accomplished simply by looking directly at the audience when saying "you" versus looking away as if it only pertains to one of the characters in the story. For example, "To *you* has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God" can be referentially diverse depending upon the reader's voice, tone, gestures, and eye contact.

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<sup>542</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death," 3.

<sup>543</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death," 4.

<sup>544</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death," 5.

Lest one thinks that all second person references transcend the story world, there are some reader controls, especially when we consider the highly inflected Greek language in which Mark was written. The use of pronouns in the nominative case are superfluous and normally are used to express emphasis. For example, the second person plural pronoun in Mark 13:9 (βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτούς) could be written to the four disciples quizzing Jesus on the end times. Yet the force of the passage seems to elevate the dialogue to include the listening audience. The audience inclusive intent of Mark 13 is even more prominent with Jesus' utterance of the last verse of the chapter, ὁ δὲ ὑμῖν λέγω πᾶσιν λέγω, γρηγορεῖτε. As the reader is portraying Jesus in the midst of a lengthy soliloquy, the concluding remarks "What I say to *you* (ὑμῖν) I say to *all* (πᾶσιν): Watch" causes the entire discourse to become direct address to the listening audience.<sup>545</sup> Thus, the story world and the real world converge as the reader applies the Markan story to the audience's real world.

A third crucial element of direct address which will assist us in identifying the level of audience participation with the reader are the numerous examples of reader commentary in the Markan text.<sup>546</sup> Though reader commentary is not an ancient term, similar features are described in rhetorical handbooks regarding persuasive speech techniques. The first is *parenthesis*, a device which "consists in the interruption of the continuous flow of our language by the insertion of a remark."<sup>547</sup> Quintilian describes another feature, *apostrophe*, as the act of turning aside from addressing the judge in the

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<sup>545</sup>Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*) says, "Although the disciples remain on the stage throughout the apocalyptic discourse, we in the audience tend to forget their presence because the entire discourse is spoken over their heads and directly at us" (85).

<sup>546</sup>What I have labeled as reader commentary is often referred to as narrative asides. Yet that term itself implies a textual description rather than a reader-audience interaction during an oral event. For the most thorough treatment of narrative asides in the gospel material, cf., Goodman, *Narrative Asides in Mark*; Stephen Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSS, vol 72 (Sheffield,: JSOT Press, 1992); Boomershine, *Mark, the Storyteller*; Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*.

<sup>547</sup>Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 4.3.23.

courtroom to address some other person.<sup>548</sup> Finally, *digression*, refers to the interruption of the logical presentation of one's case in order to deal with a related issue. According to Quintilian, *digression* may be used to describe people and places or to describe historical or legendary events. (*Inst. Or* 9.2.38).

These occurrences of reader commentary on the events in the text can be placed into two categories.<sup>549</sup> First, *parenthesis*, where the commentary is presented smoothly and inconspicuously in the story. Second, reader commentary can be identified by its somewhat awkward literary construction which is called *anacoluthon*. These apparent rough spots in the written text, in actuality form natural pauses as the reader interjects his own commentary.<sup>550</sup> Fowler gives keen insight regarding these two categories,

First, we should remember that the true parenthesis is a typographical convention apprehended visually; Mark's parentheses were meant to be heard, not seen. The same holds true for Mark's use of ruptured text [anacoluthon]. Such liberties taken with syntax are inexcusable in a polished, literate text, but they are effective and therefore acceptable in an oral presentation. The abundance of anacolutha is yet another characteristic of Mark's narrative that suggests that it was intended for oral performance.<sup>551</sup>

Mark's parenthetical comments could be grouped as follows: statements of cause<sup>552</sup>, statements of purpose<sup>553</sup>, and statements of result.<sup>554</sup> Additionally, some of

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<sup>548</sup>Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 4.1.63.

<sup>549</sup>According to Boomershine (*Mark, the Storyteller*, 270-273) narrative asides can be identified by distinctive grammatical forms. These forms include (1) appositive comments, (2) explanations introduced by γάρ, (3) additional information introduced by ἦν δὲ or ἦσαν δὲ, and (4) Old Testament allusions.

<sup>550</sup>1:2-3; 2:10-11, 22; 3:30; 7:2-5, 19; 11:31-32; 14:49. The literary-awkward *anacoluthon* is visually represented in the United Bibles Societies' Greek text of Mark with a dash.

<sup>551</sup>Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 92. However, when Fowler concludes this section he makes a statement which works at cross purposes with these remarks, "A literate-visualist modern can scarcely appreciate the original oral-aural apprehension of Mark's parenthetical comments and, of course, of his entire narrative. Reader-response criticism can help us, however, because it attunes our ears to the narrator's discourse and dissuades us from submitting freely to the lure of his story" (92). Ironically, Fowler has missed the whole purpose of the narrative asides; to unite the reader with the audience, thereby enhancing the story's lure.

<sup>552</sup>These include clauses which begin with γάρ (for), ὅτι (because), and διὰ (Because of). Examples of γάρ: 1:16, 22; 3:21, 34-35; 5:7-8, 27-28, 42; 6:14-20, 51-52; 7:2-5; 9:5-6, 33-34; 10:21-22, 45; 11:13, 18; 12:12;

Mark's use of relative pronouns<sup>555</sup> and adverbs<sup>556</sup> fall under the rubric of parenthetical statements.

The final element of our definition of direct address is the reader's use of insider information.<sup>557</sup> In our oral-aural reading model, insider information refers to the comments by which the reader provides the listener with insights into the inner life of the characters in the story.<sup>558</sup> From these insights, the listeners become aware of sense perceptions, motives, and emotions<sup>559</sup> which are normally beyond the grasp of those inside the story world.<sup>560</sup> A simple example can be found in 2:5, as the reader states when Jesus "saw their faith (ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν) he [Jesus] said to the

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14:70; 15:9-10; 16:3-4, 8. Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*) points out the presence of *gar* clauses in direct discourse attributed to characters in the story (92, n19). Yet in oral narrative, the reader speaks for each character. Examples of ὅτι: 1:34; 3:29-30; 5:9; 6:17; 9:41; 14:21, 27.

<sup>553</sup>These include clauses which begin with ἵνα; 2:9-11; 3:2; 4:11-12; 12:13; 14:10, 49.

<sup>554</sup>These include clauses which begin with ὥστε: 1:27; 2:12, 27-28; 15:5.

<sup>555</sup>These are primarily: ὅς: 2:26; 3:19; 5:2-3; 14:32; 15:40-41, 43, 46; ὅστις: 12:18; 15:7.

<sup>556</sup>These are primarily: ὅτε, καθὼς.

<sup>557</sup>Insider information can often overlap with previous category of reader commentary. For example, many of the γάρ clauses can be discussed under either heading. From our hermeneutical approach, the model categories into which the textual comments are placed are not as important as the resulting reader/listener effect. For a discussion of insider information, cf., Boomershine, *Mark, the Storyteller*, 273-275; Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 166-167 and *Let the Reader Understand*, 120-126; Rhoads, *Mark as Story*, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 42-43.

<sup>558</sup>A literary approach to the text labels this narrative device as the work of an unobtrusive omniscient third-person narrator who "does not figure in the story as a character-narrator" (Rhoads, *Mark as Story*, 35). Surprisingly, Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*) offers a similarly sterile comment when he says, "Insider views in general are designed to serve rhetorical purposes. . . . [T]hey are always offered to the narratee, by the narrator, and only because they suit the narrator's purposes" (122).

<sup>559</sup>Boomershine (*Mark, the Storyteller*, 273-275) uses the categories (1) perceptions, (2) emotions, (3) inner knowledge/motivation, and (4) inner statements to categorize this inside view. Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*) elaborates upon the same categories and meticulously details each occurrence (120-126). Personally, I would add another category; the reading-event ushers the audience into the hearing radius of private conversations, ranging from an individual's inner thoughts to personal prayer.

<sup>560</sup>In some cases, characters in the story are indeed privy to this information but in the story, they demonstrate no uptake. For example, Jesus' provision of the parabolic secret (4:11-12) and each of the son of man comments. Peterson ("Point of View' in Mark's Narrative," *Semeia* 12 [1978], 116-117) lists the times in the Gospel when the reader reveals more knowledge than any of the characters.

paralytic, 'My son your sins are forgiven.'" Here the reader is providing commentary beyond the means of the observers of the event.

Each time insider information is revealed, the reader is elevated to center stage, taking the listener into his confidence and temporarily leaving behind those in the story world. Thus, this reader-audience information exchange is a chief way for the gospel to bond the reader and his audience<sup>561</sup>, and indirectly between the audience and God. Furthermore, this reader-knowledge serves as a world-view corrective as the reader is prominently displayed as God's agent for communicating this insight to the audience. One of the main themes of Mark is that the world is not as people naturally perceive it. This is best captured in Jesus' rebuke of Peter following his rejection of the suffering messiah disclosure in 8:33; "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men." The Greek text points out the polarity between divine and human perception; οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.<sup>562</sup> Mark is a multi-layered<sup>563</sup> text in which the reader is pushing the audience "to see" beyond the limited human level of perception of the story's participants and to grasp life from the reader's divine point of view. Mark is a book which wants to be heard/read as revelation from God.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>561</sup>Community building can take place on many levels. Mark's ubiquitous employment of irony plays a major role in establishing the reader-audience community. Jerry Camery-Hoggatt (*Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992]) says, "[I]rony contributes to community . . . because it divides its listeners or readers into 'insiders' and 'outsiders' [thereby] aiding in group-boundary definition" (4). This will be discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>562</sup>Cf. Whitney Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric*, 266-67, for discussion of this passage as hermeneutical key.

<sup>563</sup>On the surface, I would call Mark a two level text; divine perspective and human. However, the ironic effect of the text works on at least three levels. First, there are the unaware people in the story, who are the ironic victims. Second, we have the level which contains the reader and the audience, who together stand above the first level. However, a third level appears as the audience falls victim to the ironic effect at several points as the story develops quite differently than anticipated (e.g., the ending; cf. J. David Hester, "Dramatic Inconclusion: Irony and the Narrative Rhetoric of the Ending of Mark," *JSNT* 57 (1995), 61-86; Paul L. Danove, *The End of Mark's story: A Methodological Study* [Leiden: Brill, 1993]).

<sup>564</sup>Thanks go to Joel Marcus, "Mark 4:10-12 and Markan Epistemology" and to his mentor, J. Louis Martyn, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Cor 5:16" in *Christian History and Interpretation*, ed. W. Farmer (Cambridge 1967), 269-287 for their opening this perspective on the Markan narrative.

Finally, the second portion of the story world (see above, Figure 3: Oral/Aural Reading-Event) is called indirect address. According to our reading model, indirect address occurs when the oral recitation by the reader operates more on the level of information than on the affective level.<sup>565</sup> The best way to define indirect address is that it operates more inter-character within the story world and its primary purpose is to exchange necessary information. Certainly it is foundational for the story yet only indirectly affects the world of the audience, preparing the audience for the affective level. For example, indirect address may involve such generic issues as geographic or temporal references and background information necessary to construct the flow of the story. Indirect address may also include dialogue between characters in the story, excluding what we have previously defined as "audience inclusive dialogue."

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<sup>565</sup>Fowler says (*Let the Reader Understand*), "[Other methodological approaches] have sought the meaning of Mark's Gospel in terms of its informational content, but time and time again we have found ourselves reflecting upon our experience of reading the Gospel. We could say that the Gospel is not so much designed to construct its own world as it is designed to construct its own reader; it is not designed to say something about the implied world as it is to do something to its implied reader; the narrative does not strive to convey meaning as referential content as much as it strives to achieve communion with its audience by means of a forceful event that takes place through time" (57).

#### 4 SUMMARY

This chapter began with a call for a solution to the question, "What method would be appropriate for interpreting an ancient text that was meant for public performance?" In part, we set up a sense of dissonance by describing the inherent anachronistic tendencies which arise as scholars overlook the oral environment of antiquity.

Next, the final stage of our historical re-creation of the reading-event investigated the role of the reader, the text, and the audience. There we established the symbiotic relationship within the reading-event. It might be fair, from an analytical perspective to argue that one element in the reading-event may serve a more prominent role only if it remains interdependent upon the others. For example, we saw that in the first century communication process, there were social forces at work which precluded a reader from functioning in isolation from his audience. Moreover, the relationship between an author and his working (and exemplar) text was directly related to the responsiveness of his audience. Thus, the intimacy created between the reader and audience had both an effect upon the outcome of the finished text but also on the overall experience of the performance. During each subsequent reading based upon the finished manuscript, the reader and his audience(s) exchanged their own unique feedback which created a non-repeatable experience. Thus, based upon historical and societal inquiry regarding Mark, a conclusion was stated: *a reader and an audience worked together forging a message which would serve to guide the community in the issues of faith.*

In the second half of the chapter, a reading model was proposed which integrates the historical and cultural norms of orality. Our study of first century history provided the background to construct our *historical reading-event*. From the traditional material of Mark we postulate that an ancient reader would create the Gospel message by utilizing reading keys to recite the text to a listening audience. The text will also give the listeners a range of audience responses, within what might be called the community standard. Thus, together they fashion the *hypothetical reading-effect*. This returns us to

the question, will our model assist us in interpreting an ancient text that was meant for public performance first century? It is to this final question that we turn our attention in chapter 4.

# 4

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## Answering the Question of an Oral Mark

There is no higher and purer pleasure than with closed eyes to have someone recite to you - not declaim - in a naturally right voice a piece of Shakespeare.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Shakespeare und kein Ende*

[T]here is no reason to suppose that Mark intended anything other than that his book be read aloud and never imagined it would be the subject of careful examination in the quiet of the study.

Martin Hengel, *Mark: The Gospel as Story*

The Gospel of Mark, then like its counterparts up and down the aesthetic scales of Hellenistic literature, was an aural text, a spoken writing, a performed story.

Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*

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### 1 INTRODUCTION: AN ORAL/AURAL TEST CASE

In this chapter we will apply our oral/aural hermeneutic to the story of Mark. Though it might be appropriate to pursue a literary theme<sup>566</sup> per se, that effort itself might distract us from the oral world we are probing and cause us to focus more on bookish issues. Rather, we will direct our attention to the movement of Mark sequentially, just as presented by the reader to an audience.

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<sup>566</sup>For the theme of faith, cf. Christopher D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For the theme of wonder/amazement, Timothy Dwyer *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark* JSNTSup 128 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

This will be accomplished in the following manner. Using our proposed method from chapter 3, we will explore how the text of Mark provides keys to the reader for how to orally present the Second Gospel. At the same time, our reading model will assist us to determine how the reading-event produced a controlled reading-effect upon an ancient listening audience. Throughout the detailed work on Mark, we will attempt to show how an oral perspective reveals distinctive features which otherwise might would be left unheard by silent readers.

We will make special note of a rhetorical dimension of Mark which by its nature assumes a close relationship between the reader and the audience. I refer to the theme of Markan irony. Donald Juel, referring to the Markan account, says,

Irony is the only suitable means for narrating the climax to the story. Truth is not identical with appearance but must in some way be in tension with it. Jesus is a hero who does not look like a hero. Thus, conventional ways of narrating stories about heroes are not sufficient as vehicles for the evangelists.<sup>567</sup>

Irony is a rich opportunity to test our theory that an ancient reader provides the audience with listening clues for how to understand and experience the gospel since for irony to exist, the reader must convince the audience that Mark is not to be heard in a flat, what-you-see-is-what-you-get manner. And what better way to communicate the subtleties of irony than with a flesh-and-blood reader who can combine a wink with spoken words.

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<sup>567</sup>D. Juel, *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 102.

## 2 A MARKAN READING-EVENT / READING-EFFECT

### 2.1 THE READER, BACKGROUND, AND THE AUDIENCE

The first verse of Mark opens with the reader informing the audience of Jesus' identity, Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]. This is closely linked with the prediction of the Isaianic witness (1:2-3)<sup>568</sup> and its immediate fulfillment in the person of John (1:4-8). Then, the reader tells his audience of the pleasure of God in heaven with the confirming voice from heaven (1:11). Thus, in a few short verses, the reader has established his story as being in harmony with the Old Testament prophetic tradition and with God the Father. As we discussed earlier regarding the self-authenticating nature of Mark<sup>569</sup>, the audience would hear the opening words of 1:1-13, and the earliest synagogue miracles as establishing this story and the man Jesus as the new authoritative norm. From this initial point, the audience will be asked to evaluate all other opinions of Jesus against what they now know. Moreover, the opening words (1:1-13) are shared as insider information with the audience. The characters in the story may know of these events in a disconnected way but in a Markan reading-event, they become community shaping words, culminating with hearing from heaven. Even the words of the Father appear to be given in secret, one-on-one to Jesus, while the audience has the privilege of overhearing the intimate conversation.

From this point forward in the story, the reader has established at least one level of tension. All future conflict of opinions regarding Jesus will be evaluated against this established norm. For example, the story as told by the reader continually censures the disciples and scribes for their lack of knowledge and faith.<sup>570</sup> The conflict cannot remain

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<sup>568</sup>There is solid evidence that 1:1 is connected with vv2-8 and does not stand alone as a book level title or superscription. First, καθὼς never introduces a sentence in Mark or the rest of the NT (V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* [London: Macmillan, 1959], 153). Second, when καθὼς is used in conjunction with γέγραπται it always refers to the preceding not the following material (cf. 9:13; 14:21).

<sup>569</sup>See above, Chapter 3, The Effect of the Text on the Shaping of the Audience.

<sup>570</sup>Heightening the sense of the ironic, the story affirms the minor characters or "little people" who appear throughout the gospel. Term coined by Rhodes and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 129ff.

There are minor characters in the story who appear to comprehend and adopt Jesus' call to

totally unresolved by the audience. The reader urges the audience to commit themselves to Jesus, on his terms, or pass judgment upon themselves as faithless followers.

It is important to recognize that the story functions on yet a deeper level. With the introduction of Satan in 1:13 and the ongoing battle with demons in the first half of the book, the controversies between Jesus and his human counterparts are being pushed beyond the categories of mere religious and political power. The reader is attempting to convey to the audience that Jesus' ultimate conflict is of cosmic proportions and that any opinion regarding Jesus' person and mission which differs from the established norm is Satanic in origin (cf. 8:33).<sup>571</sup> Mark's emphasis, however, is a radical incongruity between what the story might convey to the audience through indirect address and the reading-effect communicated by the reader to his audience in what our model has called direct address. The facts and the inter-story dialogue occur in the indirect address while much of the irony is conveyed in the direct address, as the reader communicates to the audience how the story is actually intended to function.

The multi-valance of the Second Gospel has long been a mainstay of Markan studies. This central thesis was brought to the forefront with the 1973 dissertation of Donald Juel, *Messiah and Temple*. In a later work, summarizing his earlier findings, Juel observed that the "passion of Mark operates on two levels, and that dramatic irony runs

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Kingdom rule. However, they enter the narrative and leave in the same pericope and may well be placed there to act as foils to the actions of the disciples. Cf. E. S. Malbon, "The Major Importance of the Minor Characters in Mark," *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, 58-86 and Joel Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: The Characterization of the Individuals from the Crowd in Mark's Gospel*, JSNTSup, 102, 1994).

<sup>571</sup>It must be emphasized that Jesus' conflict with Satan and with his human adversaries is not unrelated. As Rhodes and Michie, *Mark as Story* have pointed out, "Jesus' conflict with Satan indirectly comes in focus in the conflict with people. Because of the limitations on Jesus' authority in relation to people, his conflicts with people are more difficult and more evenly matched than those waged directly with demonic forces or with nature" (78-79).

throughout the passion story."<sup>572</sup> Juel was elaborating upon the observation of his mentor, Nils Dahl,<sup>573</sup> that the so-called Messianic secret was only a secret to the characters in the story not to the readers/hearers. Thus, the two levels (1) insider information to the readers (in our case, hearers) and (2) mystery to the characters form a basic foundation for Mark.

Mark's structure accentuates this two-level story by designating people as being in one of two categories, "insiders" or "outsiders" (4:10-12). Markan duality is first introduced by the reader as opposing positions on a theological spectrum, with the initial confrontation of Jesus (good) and Satan (evil) in 1:12-13. It is continually reinforced as the audience hears voices from heaven (1:11; 9:7) and from the netherworld (1:24; 1:34; 5:7) who comprehend the identity and mission of Jesus. Those closest to Jesus, such as in family gatherings (3:31-35), in hometown reunions (6:1-6), or in the midst of miraculous events (4:35-41, 8:14-21) constantly misunderstand him. The participants inside the story have their knowledge about Jesus confined to the physical world while the reader provides the listening audience with insider information from the larger cosmic realm.<sup>574</sup> These irreconcilable world views are later clarified in Jesus' words to Peter, "Get behind me Satan! For you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men" (8:33). The Markan reader would certainly accent the strongly contrasting concepts of the Greek, τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.<sup>575</sup> The point is clear; thinking like men is not reality but only the appearance of reality. The audience is

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<sup>572</sup>Juel, *An Introduction to New Testament Literature*, (1978), 179. (Cf. 176-196 for a thorough discussion of the mystery of Mark's gospel).

<sup>573</sup>Nils Dahl, "The Purpose of Mark's Gospel" in *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), 56.

<sup>574</sup>This is first put forth when the heavens tear open (σχίζω, 1:10) and the listeners are shown that there is action taking place beyond the physical world. The one who stands behind the torn heaven is the sending and blessing agent of Jesus. This vital information is withheld from the participants of the story world of Mark (not so in Matthew). Mark utilizes the second person singular (Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός) rather than Matthew's third person singular (Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός).

<sup>575</sup>See below for a more thorough treatment of the ironic effect of the passage.

called to look for truth beyond the empirical world and to find it in the reader's omniscient knowledge of the events.

The search for how the Markan reader conveys irony to his audience must be found beyond the mere presence of a two-level story. For irony to be present, a definition demands that there must be conflict or incongruity between the two levels of meaning.<sup>576</sup> Soon after Juel, Robert Fowler produced his dissertation, *The Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark*, in which he tabulated the manner with which Mark supplied reliable commentary to the readers. Fowler was documenting how the narrator was establishing himself to be reliable within the story-world. Fowler explains the priority of this,

One way an author may control his reader is by providing trustworthy, dependable commentary for the reader as the narrative progresses. Among the many purposes for which it may be used, reliable commentary may be used to furnish the reader with exactly the kind of stable, dependable store of knowledge to be able to detect when the author is being ironic.<sup>577</sup>

What goes relatively unspoken by Fowler is that if guidance is needed for the listeners, then tension must exist between the differing points of view<sup>578</sup> of the audience and the characters within the story world. Fowler is looking at the text alone as his information base. We will look to the reader, as he guides the audience through the earthly events of Jesus, with an omniscient perspective.

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<sup>576</sup>We will define irony as a two-level phenomenon whereby the first level contains only the appearance of its meaning while the second level holds a radically different, incongruous meaning.

With this thesis in mind, it is impossible to discuss irony apart from the effect it has on the audience, who is invited to move beyond the superficial and enter into the deeper significance being communicated by the reader. This may underscore irony's use as a heuristic device, persuading the listener to perceive that things are not as simple as they seem. The effect of irony may be summarized thus: "Irony suggests a choice between two large structures of beliefs, each so tightly associated that to reject or accept any one of them may well entail rejecting or accepting a whole way of life." (W. C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975], 37-38). This understanding of the effect of irony helps undergird the gospel's protreptic nature, where the reader is presenting to his audience a call to abandon an old way and adopt his new point of view (Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, 23).

<sup>577</sup>Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 158.

<sup>578</sup>Cf. Norman R. Peterson, "'Point of View' in Mark's Gospel," 97-121 for the most thorough investigation of technical perspective of this argument.

## 2.2 THE READER, JESUS, AND THE AUDIENCE

The next place to search for reading-effect surfaces in Jesus' first words, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (1:15).<sup>579</sup> These words are placed within a temporal frame of reference regarding the end of one era (Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην, 1:14) and the initiation of a mightier epoch ("Ἐρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω μου, 1:7). The reader's introductory words of 1:1-3 show John's actions as precursors to the one who is to follow. These opening verses depict a land with a great spiritual hunger and the reader succinctly identifies it to the audience as sin, "they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (1:5). It was a pervasive problem, as all Judea and Jerusalem sought out John to receive what he had to offer. In these opening verses, the reader is communicating to the audience directly, providing insider information as Isaianic prophecy is fulfilled in John the Baptist. John's own words then indicate his work is merely preparatory for the more efficacious baptism of Jesus (ἐγὼ ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ).<sup>580</sup> Thus, even with water baptism and sincere repentance, there was something more which could be done for "all" the people. John's time is concluded with the coming of Jesus.

The reader speaks for Jesus as he proclaims an almost identical message, repent and believe in the gospel.<sup>581</sup> Moreover, there is a parallel drawn between the ministry of John and that of Jesus, they both preach (κηρύσσω, 1:7; 1:14) and they both baptize (1:5; 8). Yet, the reader has prepared the audience that the efficacy of repentance is

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<sup>579</sup>For the scope of this essay, it will be necessary to avoid the difficult grammatical problems of Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ and deal strictly with the form and the intention of Jesus' imperatival call to all people, μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. A fine discussion of the issues relating to this passage and a thorough citation to other literature is found in Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, 34-56.

<sup>580</sup>Note the careful parallel construction in the clauses and the use of emphatic nominative pronouns.

<sup>581</sup>John: βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, 1:4.  
Jesus: μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, 1:15.

linked to both the time<sup>582</sup> and now to the person of the proclaimer. If all Judea and Jerusalem respond obediently to John's message, how much more should people respond to one who is stronger? The reader has set the stage for God to reclaim his dominion through his agent, the son of God.

The tension we alluded to above continues to mount. The theme of prediction and fulfillment has played a vital role in both establishing the reliability of the reader but also in identifying a key theme which will be set up for the remainder of the story.<sup>583</sup> Isaiah's prediction (1:1-3) was fulfilled in John. Similarly, John's prediction of one who will follow him immediately comes to pass in the person of Jesus. Then the reader speaks Jesus' own prediction of mankind's proper response to the Coming/Come Kingdom of God; repentance. Yet, ironically, Jesus' call to belief in the gospel only seems to be superficially fulfilled in the remainder of Mark's narrative.

Our reading model gives an additional explanation as to how these words function in the Second Gospel. On the surface, these initiatory words of Jesus appear to be spoken to his new Galilean audience and to signal a change in venue. Yet there is no description of a response or uptake by the story characters, certainly nothing comparable to the "all of Judea" response received by the weaker John. It is almost as if Jesus' call has fallen upon deaf ears, uncaring ears. But we know from John's example, they are responsive to the call to repentance. How can this be explained? First, these two verses may introduce the Galilean ministry of Jesus, speaking in general terms as if this proclamation may summarize the essential nature of his message. This can be seen as the next passage moves into the specifics of the spacial change from the Jordan and the wilderness to Galilee. Now we find Jesus, in rapid succession at the seashore calling disciples (1:16-20) and teaching in the synagogue (1:21-27) so powerfully that his fame spread to all the region of Galilee (1:28). Jesus' renown heightens as he heals (1:29-31)

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<sup>582</sup>John's time is designated as transitory (ὀπίσω μου) and Jesus' time is clearly shown to be eschatological (Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς)

<sup>583</sup>Peterson, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, 49-80.

casts out demons (1:32-34), and preaches (1:35-39) with such force that he cannot enter a town publicly (1:45). His only option is to stay out in the wilderness (ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις; 1:45) where people from all directions came to him (καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντοθεν; 1:45). The place where John lived (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ; 1:4) and preached, the place where the people came out to see and hear him (1:5), the place where they repent and are baptized, is the place where Jesus' ministry returns because of his success.

Second, as mentioned above, the reader following Jesus' initial proclamation in 1:14-15 does not describe any response by the people. This seems quite strange since the purpose of most of the opening stories details their responses; their obedience (1:18, 20, 26, 31), amazement (1:22, 27), even a healed man's preaching (1:45).

Third, the reader has introduced the term "gospel" in close quarters with the person of Jesus in 1:1.<sup>584</sup> Then, the first preaching (κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ) of Jesus depicts gospel in a subtly different manner; a message of the coming/come Kingdom of God, with little or no clarity. Simply, the people do not respond because the message has not yet taken shape for them. The reader may want his audience to hear 1:14-15 as direct address from the reader to the audience, through the voice of Jesus. This might be called a proleptic summary statement which will serve as a listening key for the audience to comprehend the preaching and teaching of Jesus' gospel. As the story unfolds in subsequent passages, Jesus teaches and preaches and the content of that material should be superimposed back upon 1:14-15.<sup>585</sup>

By extension, we can apply the same foreshadowing to teaching that we have to preaching, for there is a close connection between the Markan concepts of κηρύσσω and

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<sup>584</sup>Subjective genitive, the gospel by (or transmitted by) Jesus or objective genitive, the Gospel about Jesus. In 1:1 objective seems to fit best if it serves as a title to the introduction (1:1-13) or even the entire book.

<sup>585</sup> John's preaching 1:4,7; Jesus' preaching 1:14, 38, 39, 45; 5:20; disciples' preaching 3:14; 6:12; 13:10; others 7:36.

διδάσκω. Whatever differentiates them, it is not their content.<sup>586</sup> Interestingly, though Mark contains more references to Jesus as teacher than any other Synoptic, it contains far less actual teaching material.<sup>587</sup> Jesus is called a teacher, with only a few extended examples of his teaching.<sup>588</sup> Furthermore, the major blocks of teaching found in Mark do not contain clear διδαχή but parabolic material of chapters 4 and 12 and the enigmatic discourse of chapter 13.<sup>589</sup> Finally, as will be demonstrated below, each of Jesus' most revealing teaching moments, such as the parabolic instruction, the Feeding narratives, and especially his passion predictions, escape the grasp of the disciples yet are clearly communicated to the audience, heightening the ironic experience. Thus, the totality of Mark for the audience should be heard as διδαχή.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>586</sup>Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, goes on to argue that in 6:12,30, both words are used to depict the same event, and the phrase 'speaking the word' serves as an equivalent for both preaching (1:15, 45; cf. 14:9) and teaching (4:33; 8:32; 9:31). Furthermore, faith is the desired response to both preaching (1:15) and teaching (2:2,5; 6:2,6). Cf. Paul Achtemeier, *Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 66-84.

<sup>587</sup>1:21f; 2:13; 4:1f; 6:2, 6, 30, 34; 7:7; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:14, 35; 14:49. Maybe the best example of this comes in the synagogue scene in 1:22-28. The pericope opens with Jesus teaching and the people's astonishment at his teaching yet there is no verbal teaching described by the reader to the audience. Here Mark's Jesus teaches by action, which would give the reader opportunity to use gesture to convey the teaching in a physical presence fashion. Even more provoking is the response of the people to the exorcism, καὶ ἐθαμβήθησαν ἅπαντες ὥστε συζητεῖν πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς λέγοντας, Τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο; διδαχὴ καινὴ κατ' ἐξουσίαν.

<sup>588</sup>One primary exception is Jesus' passion predictions. However, they are essentially impenetrable to the disciples since there is no uptake described by the reader.

8:31 Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν...

9:31 ἐδίδασκεν γὰρ τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι Ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων...

10:32 Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἀναβαίνοντες εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, καὶ ἦν προάγων αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἐθαμβοῦντο, οἱ δὲ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἐφοβοῦντο. καὶ παραλαβὼν πάλιν τοὺς δώδεκα ἤρξατο αὐτοῖς λέγειν τὰ μέλλοντα αὐτῷ συμβαίνειν... Though in 10:32, teaching is not made explicit with the word διδάσκω the use of the words θαμβέω and φοβέομαι causes the audience to reflect upon the effects other teaching events have had on the onlookers. For θαμβέω, cf. 1:27 and 10:24 in the previous pericope where the rich man addresses Jesus as "Good Teacher" (Διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ). For φοβέομαι cf. 4:41; 5:15, 33; 6:50; 9:32; 11:18, 32; 12:12; 16:8.

<sup>589</sup>John Donahue, "Jesus as the Parable of God in the Gospel of Mark," *Interp* 32 (1978), 369-386.

<sup>590</sup>Priscilla Patten, "The Form and Function of Parable in Select Apocalyptic Literature and Their Significance for Parables in the Gospel of Mark," *NTS* 29, 247-258.

The true reading-effect of this opening passage is not encountered until the end of the book. The proclaimer and teacher, whose call to repentance and belief is the paradigm for all followers, ends his life abandoned and in shame. The most powerful expression of irony closes the story, as the first command for people to go and proclaim the gospel (16:7) manifests itself in fear and silence. Knowing this factor prepares the audience for an incongruity between what the text says (the coming stronger one says the kingdom is here; so repent and believe) and how the text functions in reality (repentance and belief cannot manifest themselves fully in a pre-crucifixion world.)

Thus, the repentance described by the opening words of Jesus is not to be understood as an act of the will, as if a character in the story merely needs to correct a false notion of religion (e.g., Sabbath, purity laws, or the role of the temple) or revise a cultural norm (e.g., family or wealth). Rather, repentance is linked to the battle waged in the wilderness on a cosmic scale. For throughout Mark, most of humanity refuses to comprehend the gospel as depicted in the teaching of Jesus. And it is only fully perceived retrospectively, as one gazes back on the events in Mark using the cross-beam of a suffering messiah as one's focal point for understanding the kingdom of God. Thus, the entire introduction of Mark must be heard as a direct address by the reader to the audience and 1:14-15 casts an ironic shadow over the entire book with the audience knowing that what is being called for, repentance and belief, is improbable for anyone in the story.

### 2.3 THE READER, THE DISCIPLES, AND THE AUDIENCE

A good place to begin an investigation of the convergence of reader, disciples, and the listening audience is found in Jesus' explanation of parables in 4:10-12,

And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. <sup>11</sup>And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; <sup>12</sup>so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven."

### 2.3.1 PARABOLIC (MIS)INFORMATION

An appropriate starting point for discussing the reading-effect of the disciples upon the audience is to pose the question, Who is the reader referring to when he says "to you?" (Ἑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ; 4:11). The reader places the "Ἑμῖν" group in direct contrast with another group designated as the "outsiders" (ἐκεῖνοις δὲ τοῖς ἔξω) whose cardinal trait is characterized by a perception dilemma; "see but not perceive, hear but not understand (4:12)." It is interesting to note that at no time does the reader make the direct contrast between outsiders and insiders. Rather the contrast is between the outsiders (τοῖς ἔξω) and the referentially powerful term (Ἑμῖν). Not only does it take a place of emphatic prominence at the start of the quote but subtly it prevents the audience from distancing themselves from the story. Since the audience already knows more than the disciples because of the extensive commentary throughout the opening chapters, the reader's word, Ἑμῖν, escapes the story world into the real life of the audience. Certainly they are included by the reader, alongside of the disciples, as Jesus teaches.

First, by way of setting, the parable(s) of chapter 4 are given to everyone (πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος) within ear-shot of Jesus, yet Jesus' explanation is given in private to the disciples and to a select few (οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα). Second, the parable of the sower is placed within the context of teaching (4:1, 2) and later in the chapter, the audience hears that all of Jesus' speaking will fall within the context of parabolic instruction (χωρὶς δὲ παραβολῆς οὐκ ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς, κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς ἰδίοις μαθηταῖς ἐπέλυεν πάντα, 4:33-34). Third, and most appropriate for us, this chapter is shaped for a listening audience, both within the story world but also in the real world as well.<sup>591</sup> Thus, the audience hears/overhears that the disciples have been given (δέδοται) privileged information regarding the parable. Moreover, Jesus' parabolic interpretation (4:14-20) transforms

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<sup>591</sup>4:3, Ἄκούετε; 4:9, Ὅς ἔχει ὠτα ἀκούειν ἀκούετω, 4:23, εἴ τις ἔχει ὠτα ἀκούειν ἀκούετω.

the parable from an agricultural metaphor to one centered on proclamation, hearing, and response.

Membership in the two groups has been established. One might draw it up according to party lines, the “Υμῖν” group consists of the privileged few who heard Jesus’ instruction while the “outsiders” are those who have heard the same words yet suffer from a parabolic perception dilemma. Remembering our reading model, the audience is just as much a part of the discipleship group, maybe even more so since they have received more insider information than the disciples, and have just received the same μυστήριον as Jesus’ disciples. Thus, if the disciples are in, the audience must be even more secure within their position. However, the impression of the disciples being earmarked as part of the “Υμῖν” group is short lived. First, Jesus begins his explanation (4:13) with the questions, Οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην, καὶ πῶς πάσας τὰς παραβολὰς γινώσθε; and surprisingly the two synonyms οἶδα and γινώσκω echo the same characteristics found in the unperceiving outsider (ἔξω) group. With surprising speed, the “Υμῖν” disciples stand on shaky ground.

It will be insightful to investigate the reading-effect the parable has upon the listeners, who have been exposed to narrative insights unavailable to the participants in the story. The chart beside (Figure 4: Parabolic Story Level) indicates the different story levels at work throughout the parabolic discourse. As the narrative level increases (movement from inner to outer boxes), so

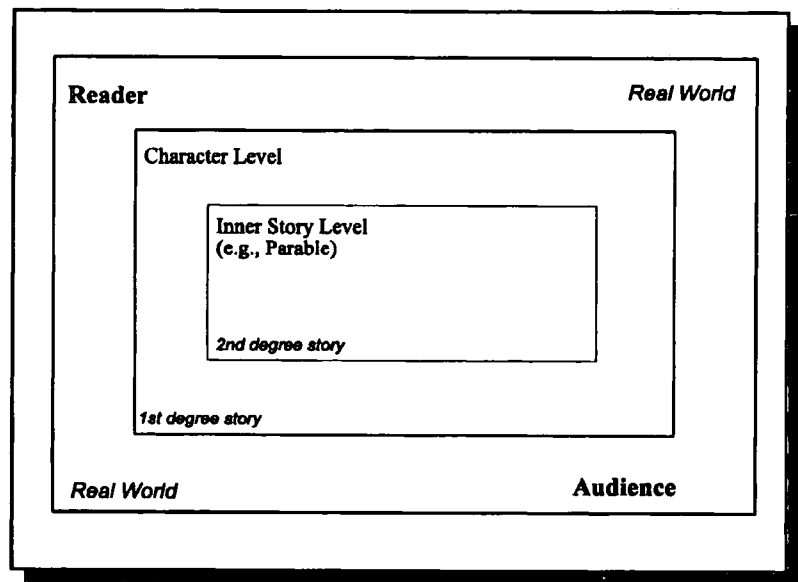


Figure 4: Parabolic Story Level

does the level of knowledge. Thus, the reader shares the story world with his audience with encyclopedic awareness. This causes the audience to hear Jesus' parabolic interpretation (4:13-20) with his/her own position in mind, not merely as an "insider/outsider" checklist for the characters in the story. So, the careful listener would like to determine his/her own soil-fate. This culminates with the ones sown among thorns. Thomas Boomershine writes insightfully,

The description of the responses of the listeners begins with those who are troubled by the possibility of persecution and progresses to those who allow other concerns such as money or pleasure to affect their hearing of the parables or the Gospel. I would argue, for example, that no listener in the entire history of the reading of Mark's Gospel from then until now can honestly say that their hearing of parables of the Gospel has not been affected by the possibility of persecution or tribulation, the anxieties of this world, the delight in riches, and the desire for other things.<sup>592</sup>

According to Boomershine, no listener can honestly conclude: "I am the good soil." The structure of the parable logically prevents it. Thus, the reader seems to be leading the audience themselves to assume the role as "outsiders" in the ever increasing group of unwitting victims.

There is another selection criterion for positing the audience as "outsiders" which flows from the story's logic. If the one who is privy to Jesus' insider information remains confused by the teaching of the parable, s/he will in the end be considered an outsider.<sup>593</sup> For Jesus' preface to his parabolic explanation (4:13) is "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?" The reader, speaking as Jesus, states an expectation for the audience to understand the parable but its meaning is not self-evident. Within the parable, the mystery of the Kingdom of God has been given (*δέδοται*, perfect passive) to the disciples in the story and to the listeners as they overhear the conversation. Yet, what constitutes this mystery is far from

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<sup>592</sup>Thomas Boomershine, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages," *Apocalyptic and the New Testament*, ed. J. Marcus and M. Soards, JSNTSS 24 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 163.

<sup>593</sup>Boomershine, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages," 161.

obvious to the listener (4:11-12). Furthermore, the dullness of the disciples in later parts of the narrative<sup>594</sup> alerts the audience that possessing the mystery itself in no way guarantees proper alignment with the expectations of God.

From this overview of the Markan parabolic story, the disciples, portrayed as the consummate insiders in 4:10-12, are given birth in the story as the unwitting victims of the Markan ironist-reader. This reversal of fortune for the disciples is unknown to them throughout the remainder of the story. The reader paints them as being a Jesus “insider” in a purely locative sense (cf. 9:5, 38-41; 10:35-37). In stark contrast, Jesus taught that it is one’s obedience to the will of God which is the essence of one’s position in the Kingdom (3:31-35).<sup>595</sup> Thus, as the story unfolds, the audience will hear the disciples’ behavior analogous with that of “outsiders.” To these twelve men, Jesus has given and interpreted the secret of the Kingdom of God. Yet the narrative displays their hubris and hard hearts to be the cause of their ultimate downfall. They trust exclusively in their own comprehension of the events which transpire in the narrative world. They are incapable of fully comprehending Jesus’s words and deeds as revelation. In several cases, the disciples are portrayed as oblivious to his teaching, often casting it aside with surprising ease.<sup>596</sup> Their ignorance of the situation gives rise

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<sup>594</sup>See below for a discussion of the boat and feeding stories.

<sup>595</sup>It should not be overlooked in the previous story when the reader tells of Jesus’ mother and brothers and sisters coming for him, they describe him as “out of his mind” (γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη; 3:21). When one of those around him (περὶ αὐτὸν) comes in to tell Jesus, his family is described as being outside seeking you (ἔξω ζητοῦσίν σε; 3:32). The reader is setting the audience up that those “outside” even if they know Jesus really can not comprehend fully. Interestingly, all this also occurs in the context of Jesus’ parabolic teaching (ἐν παραβολαῖς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς; 3:23).

<sup>596</sup>This will be portrayed by the reader by the juxtaposition of Jesus’ three passion predictions alongside the disciples incongruous reactions. A purely textual approach would describe this as structural irony. But in our method, the gestures and verbal connection of the reader which the reader could utilize to make the incongruity clear could place this irony into the realm of the verbal.

Later, the audience experiences the disciples’ blatant disregard for Jesus’ prophetic words in the Last Supper pericope. When Jesus predicts the impending betrayal, they all respond, Μῆτι ἐγώ; Though this is asked in the form of a question, grammatically it instructs the reader to present it in a manner communicating that the disciples expect a negative reply. Thus, a better translation may be in the form of a rhetorical question/statement such as, “It isn’t I, surely!” Further, this all comes on the heels of Jesus’ prophetic words to the disciples regarding the preparation of the passover meal (14:12-16) which ended

to the disciples becoming the ironist's unwitting victims.<sup>597</sup> And the profound reading-effect is that the audience is not far behind.

### 2.3.2 BOATING AND FEEDING FOOLS

This practice of misinformation does not cease with the end of the parabolic teaching. For upon closure to the parabolic section of chapter 4, the reader tells three successive boat narratives (4:35-41; 6:45-52; 8:14-21) within rapid succession. In each incident, the reader uses the boat as Jesus' teacher-lectern, to enlighten his audience regarding the impact of the miraculous events which surround each boat narrative. Our reader is setting the reading-effect for the audience on how they should react to each miracle. Just as the parable required an interpretation, so will his other actions and only our reader has the answer. Within the Markan story, humanity has the propensity for observing events on an earthly plane rather than from a divine perspective. As a corollary observation, while the reader takes his audience through the miracle-boat stories, there is a steady increase in Jesus' condemnation regarding the disciples' lack of understanding. We might also take note that the sense of audience-victimization parallels the disciples' situation.

It begins mildly, on the evening of the same day as the parabolic teaching<sup>598</sup>, with Jesus and the disciples in a boat on the storm tossed Sea of Galilee. This entire pericope has profound oral aspects since it combines language of an exorcism with the events of

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with these words, καὶ ἐξῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ καὶ ἦλθον εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ εὔρον καθὼς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἠτοίμασαν τὸ πᾶσχα. Later, Peter opposes Jesus' knowledge (and reminiscent of 8:33) when he vehemently (ἐκπερισσῶς) rejects Jesus' prediction of his denial (14:29). The reader then informs the audience that Peter is not the sole possessor of blindness for "they all said the same thing" (14:31).

<sup>597</sup>One means of identifying irony in Greek literature is defined this way by Duke (*Irony in the Fourth Gospel*), "Their literature loves to tell the story of a character whose demise is brought about by his own hubris or some cruel twist of fate; furthermore, as the story unfolds, the victims unwitting march to destruction is drawn out deliciously by underlining the fact that his own blind confidence or his own efforts to escape his fate are precisely the deeds that bring about his destruction" (11).

<sup>598</sup>Καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ὀψίας γενομένης. Here is a clear temporal link to the preceding parabolic material. It also places the disciples as the unnamed group in the boat.

a nature miracle. Moreover, the ominous description of the storm and its effect upon the boat sets the disciples on the verge of panic as Jesus contrastingly sleeps peacefully on a cushion. Then, the disciples awake Jesus and ask their question, Διδάσκαλε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἀπολλύμεθα; Previously (and subsequently), the reader has employed the term ἀπόλλυμι in reference to the cosmic battle being waged before the audience.<sup>599</sup> They seem to be asking the same question imposed by the demons (1:24), what is your intention, our destruction or our good? The reader could utilize this as a perfect opportunity to employ dramatic gestures as Jesus does not respond to their question with a verbal response but with action directed towards the apparent source their fear, the storm. Following Jesus' rebuke of the wind and calming of the sea, he poses a probing question, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (4:40). The phrasing of the question and its position in the pericope raise some interesting issues. The question, Τί δειλοί ἐστε; is stated in the second person plural, with extra-narrative implications to the listeners. Moreover, the verb is in the present tense, seemingly after the danger has subsided. So its impact may be multifaceted. Is Jesus implying that they were merely afraid of their own destruction or are they currently afraid of being in the presence of one who can still a storm?<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>599</sup>Battle between Jesus and the demonic world (1:24; 9:22); agenda of Jesus' enemies towards him (3:6; 11:18); Jesus' somewhat metaphorical language regarding servant-hood/sacrifice (2:22; 8:35; 9:41). Cf. 1:24 which tells the audience that Jesus' mission is further qualified as "destroying" (ἀπόλλυμι) the demons and 9:22 which informs the listeners that the demons are intent on "destroying" (ἀπόλλυμι) their victims. All out war takes place throughout the book.

For a contrary opinion, see E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 22, 42-44. Best argues that Satan is overthrown in the temptation of Mark 1:12-13. However, Best does not seem to adequately make sense of book level Markan themes. Why would the Mark place such an emphasis on Satan and the demons in the opening chapters and depict Jesus' ministry as a battle with Satan if the evil one had nothing to do with the necessity of Jesus' death at the climax of the story?

<sup>600</sup>Of course a third possibility exists, does the flow of the narrative not allow room for this interjection during the description of the storm? However, in the next boat narrative (6:45-52), they similarly faced a strong wind (ἦν γὰρ ὁ ἄνεμος ἐναντίος αὐτοῖς) yet the reader never interjects the concept of fear until Jesus arrives on the water. From then on, using several different words (ταράσσω, φοβέομαι) and then the reader says, ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐξίσταντο which is a similar construction to what Jesus' family thought of him in 3:21 when they claimed he was out of his mind.

Fear of Jesus is certainly being directed to the audience via reader commentary when the audience hears, *καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν*. It should be noted that they do not address Jesus directly, but respond to one another as they ask, "Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?" This removes the question from the realm of drama and directly includes the audience in the mix. For, it is quite possible the audience might respond, "who in their right mind would not have been afraid?" The calming of the sea has stretched the thinking of the disciples (and the audience) almost to the breaking point. They seem to recognize that the man they know as Jesus now defied normal human categories.<sup>601</sup>

Let us not forget that this story is not being told for us to delve into the psyche of the disciples. Rather, the reader is attempting to draw the story into the lives of his audience and to affect them in a faith-generating fashion. In the parable of the sower, Jesus gave the secret of the Kingdom of God<sup>602</sup> to the disciples and via inclusive dialogue, the reader subtly draws the audience to the Ὑμῶν group. Yet for them, being a part of Jesus' in-crowd is becoming less helpful than one would expect. Though they are with him constantly and privy to his private instruction, the disciples and the audience sit perplexed in the boat realizing Jesus himself is a parable in need of

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<sup>601</sup>Summarily, the answer is quite profoundly answered in Mark's episodic fashion, as Jesus is depicted as the Lord over nature (4:35-41), Lord over demons (5:1-20), Lord over illness (5:25-34); Lord over death (5:21-24; 35-43). Once again, actions and miracles take the place of direct teaching.

For another incident of similar reactions, cf. the Transfiguration in 9:2-13. Note that in 4:41 the disciples are said to be afraid, *ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν* and likewise 9:6 *ἐκφοβοὶ γὰρ ἐγένοντο*. In 6:45-52, as Jesus walks to the disciples' boat on the water, they thought he was a ghost (*φάντασμα*, new category for thinking like men) and they were terrified (*ταράσσω*). Immediately, Jesus says, *μὴ φοβεῖσθε*. It seems as though Jesus acting outside the expected range of humans brings on fear, which in turn gives rise to them thinking like men. (Cf. Also 9:32; 10:32; 16:8).

<sup>602</sup>One should note that the mystery of the Kingdom of God *has been given* (*δέδοται*) in the parable itself. The interpretation of the parable in 4:13-20 may allow for the disciples' (audience's?) comprehension but the implication is that the secret is found in the parable, for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. D. O. Via says, "The parables become the effective word (4:20) only through interpretation." ("Irony as Hope in Mark's Gospel: A Reply to W. Kelber," *Semeia* 43 [1988], 23). This may be true regarding the parable's potential, yet the efficacy of the interpretation remains unrealized in the Gospel of Mark. For a recent discussion of the projection of the parable outside of the story, cf. D. Juel, "Encountering the Sower in Mark 4:1-20," *Interp* 56 (2002), 273-283.

interpretation. It seems the more the reader reveals to his audience about the coming/come kingdom of God, the more difficult it is to grasp.

This continues as the final two boat narratives are juxtaposed with two of Jesus' most dramatic miracles, the two feeding narratives (6:30-44; 8:1-10). Often, these two feeding stories have been portrayed as doublets, pointing out the clumsiness of Mark's redactional style.<sup>603</sup> However, their back-to-back placement carefully shows the disciples' difficulty in grasping the full person of Jesus. Yet our reader will stimulate the situation with insider information creating an interesting reading-effect. In this first feeding episode, the reader prepares the audience via several instances of direct address. First, we find an emotional marker as the reader states, "he had compassion on them" (6:34). The reader then voices a ὅτι clause in which he describes both the problem, "they were like sheep without a shepherd," and the solution, "and he began to teach them many things." Thus, in typical Markan style, the reader tells the audience that this material, just like the previous parabolic teaching, falls under the guise of διδασχία (καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς πολλά, 6:34). This practice alerts the audience that an interpretation will be necessary for them to comprehend its significance.

The next oral key is found in the audience inclusive language used in Jesus' command to the disciples, Δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν. The appearance of the second person plural pronoun, ὑμεῖς is a signal to the reader for emphasis with the possibility of extra-narrative appeal for the audience. Further, the disciples just previously indicated that Jesus should send the crowds away to feed themselves (ἀγοράσωσιν ἑαυτοῖς τί φάγωσιν, 6:36). But with a contradictory tone, Jesus commands the disciples, ὑμεῖς supply the needs for the hungry, it is not something for them to do for themselves (ἑαυτοῖς). Beyond vocal markers, there are some dramatic spacial references which must

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<sup>603</sup>This argument most clearly articulated by J. C. Meager, "Die Form- und Redaktionsungeschickliche Methoden: The Principle of Clumsiness and the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 43 (1975), *passim*.

send the reader horizontally<sup>604</sup> from one side of the stage to another and vertically<sup>605</sup> up to heaven and down to serve the people. Finally, narrative insight is given regarding how people were affected by the miracle; five thousand were physically satisfied, with one basket of leftovers for each disciple.

Now, from the audience's perspective, they are a part of this dramatic event. It must be reminiscent of both the Mosaic wilderness events<sup>606</sup> and the Eucharist which presumably is part of their regular church practice. The echoes from this feeding narrative to the words in 14:22-23 would be almost deafening for the audience. Interestingly, the reader interjects no insider information describing how the disciples reacted to this event. No fear, no awe, no ignorance, nor understanding. Throughout Mark, the reader has been pressing a specific theme, communicating to the audience the reaction of the people in the story; amazement, fear, faith, etc. With the reader limiting the closing words of the passage to indirect address, the listeners may be reflecting upon the wonder of God's sustenance but they also wait in silence for they need more information to properly fill in the story's gaps, especially as they expect an answer to the question, "what did this event do to the disciples?"

In the following pericope (6:45-52), we find the reader again conveying to the audience the concern of Jesus when he "saw that they were making headway painfully (βασανιζομένους)<sup>607</sup>, for the wind was against them" (6:48). We also find a vocal marker

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<sup>604</sup>send/ἀπολύω (6:36); go/ὑπάγω (6:36, 37, 38); give/δίδωμι (6:37, 37, 41).

<sup>605</sup>sit/ἀναπίπτω (6:39, 40); looked up/ἀναβλέπω (6:41); place before/παρατίθημι (6:41); take up/αἴρω (6:43).

<sup>606</sup>Note reference in 6:35, "Ἐρημός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος and to the reader commentary of 6:40, καὶ ἀνέπεσαν πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ κατὰ ἑκατὸν καὶ κατὰ πεντήκοντα, finding in this arrangement the Mosaic camp in the wilderness. "Thus, Jesus is shown as the "eschatological Savior, the second Moses who transforms the leaderless flock into the people of God" (William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 230).

<sup>607</sup>The word βασανίζω has just occurred in 5:7 when uttered by the Gerasene demoniac, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."

for the disciples as the text says, καὶ ἀνέκραξαν<sup>608</sup> and a reader commentary on the thoughts of the disciples, οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης περιπατοῦντα ἔδοξαν ὅτι φάντασμα ἔστιν. Note once again the connection of the seeing (ἰδόντες) and their perception mistake (ἔδοξαν), which resulted in fear (πάντες γὰρ αὐτὸν εἶδον καὶ ἐταράχθησαν<sup>609</sup>). Jesus steps into the boat and the winds cease, and the reader uses verbal clues to remind the audience of the calm which he brought to the prior boat incident (4:39). Now, the reader interjects the long-awaited interpretation for the audience to properly understand the disciples' astonishment at Jesus from the previous feeding story: "For they did not understand about the bread but their hearts were hardened" (6:52). The reader's use of the perfect passive "hardened" (πεπωρωμένη) indicates that the problem is not bound up with their frightening meeting with the ghostly Jesus. Rather, the disciples' hard-heartedness is a lingering problem and the grammar projects the effects into the present moment, perhaps implying culpability in the life of the audience. Much like the mystery of the kingdom, insider information has been given (perfect passive, δέδοται and πεπωρωμένη), but its impact seems to be held at arm's length from the audience.

A verbal clue will point the alert listener back to understand the heart problem of the disciples.<sup>610</sup> A connection is made between this heart problem of the disciples and the only other characters in the gospel who display this uniquely worded heart

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<sup>608</sup>Which surprisingly is the same response of the demon possessed man in the synagogue (1:24), "he cried out (ἀνέκραξεν), 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.'"

<sup>609</sup>Though the word ταραάσω appears only here in Mark, Jesus' interpretation of the events in the following verse leaves no doubt to its meaning, μὴ φοβεῖσθε.

<sup>610</sup>It is well documented that Markan readers are rhetorically asked to look ahead and to look back over the material. Recurring words such as "immediately" (εὐθύς) carry the action forward and its counterpart word "again" (πάλιν) causes the reader to mentally search back for its referent. Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*) says, "We re-view and pre-view constantly to make as much sense of our experience as possible at each individual moment"(45).

condition, the Pharisees (3:5).<sup>611</sup> In that pericope, the reader gives us an emotional marker which indicates Jesus' reaction as being one of anger (μετ' ὀργῆς) followed by reader commentary further describing his level of disappointment (συλλυπούμενος ἐπὶ τῇ πωρώσει τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν) with the hardness of heart of the Sabbath law-preservers as he proposed to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus' reinterpretation of the Sabbath causes the Pharisees to hold counsel<sup>612</sup> with the Herodians in order to determine how to destroy (ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν) Jesus. The listener is quietly reminded that the disciples floating with Jesus on the water are on the "outside," with the same heart condition of Jesus' enemies.

This theme is accentuated in the next pericope as Jesus disembarks from the boat and immediately the people recognize him (εὐθὺς ἐπιγνόντες αὐτὸν, 6:54). The reader would have the opportunity to emphasize vocally the temporal adverb, εὐθὺς, as the unnamed crowds, who lack the insider information, know Jesus while the disciples misunderstand him altogether. The people's knowledge of him possibly came from a report of his healing the woman with a hemorrhage, for they begged to touch his clothes, replicating the action of the woman.<sup>613</sup> Further, the reader inserts a subtle aural word-play as he describes the means for the Gennesaret people to be healed, "They ran about the whole neighborhood and began to bring sick people on their pallets to any place where they heard he was (ὅπου ἤκουον ὅτι ἐστίν)." The people responded positively to what they heard and all that touched Jesus were healed! The reader gives his listeners these contrasting views; the disciples misunderstand Jesus while the Gennesaret people respond immediately to what they have heard. Is the audience to

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<sup>611</sup>Compare:

Reader commentary about the disciples (6:52): ἀλλ' ἦν αὐτῶν ἡ καρδία πεπωρωμένη  
 Reader commentary about the Pharisees (3:5): τῇ πωρώσει τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν

<sup>612</sup>The term hold counsel (συμβούλιον) is not used again until 15:1, when another counsel is held to turn Jesus over to Pilate for execution; the narrative fulfillment of 3:6.

<sup>613</sup>Cf. 7:56 ἵνα κἂν τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ ἄψωνται, 5:28 ὅτι Ἐὰν ἄψωμαι κἂν τῶν ἱματίων αὐτοῦ.

understand these people as examples of the good soil which Jesus has described in 4:20?<sup>614</sup>

This precarious position for the disciples is accentuated with the second feeding story (8:1-10) and its accompanying interpretation (8:14-21). The obvious echoes of this feeding story with the previous one play well into the voice of the reader with the simple adverb “again” (πάλιν πολλοῦ ὄχλου ὄντος καὶ μὴ ἐχόντων τί φάγωσιν). This time, the description of Jesus’ emotion is not accomplished in the form of the reader’s commentary (1:41; 6:34) but is communicated to the audience in Jesus’ first person voice, “I have compassion for the crowd” (Σπλαγχνίζομαι ἐπὶ τὸν ὄχλον, 8:2). With the first feeding story still fresh in the audience’s mind, Jesus’ solution to an identical hunger dilemma should be easily predicted; another feeding miracle. Furthermore, the reader refrains from sharing any insider information regarding Jesus’ reaction to the disciples’ imperceptibility throughout this *déjà vu* miracle.<sup>615</sup>

Now, as we theorize about the audience’s reading-effect, two possibilities exist regarding the reading/listening strategies. First, the audience could begin to fill in the “gaps” as they paint the portrait of the disciples with this incriminating information. Yet it seems inconceivable that the reader is communicating this story at face value for the disciples could not possibly be so dense that they would have no recollection of the first feeding event.<sup>616</sup> There must be something else overlooked in their behavior.

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<sup>614</sup>But those that were sown upon the good soil are the ones who *hear* the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

<sup>615</sup>The question Jesus asks the disciples is exactly the same in both feeding miracles, Πόσους ἄρτους ἔχετε; (6:38; 8:5).

<sup>616</sup>“Dense” may be a fair label to place upon the disciples but an even harsher tone may be appropriate. In 8:14 the text says that “they had forgotten to bring bread.” Then Jesus issues a cryptic warning, “And he cautioned them, saying, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod” (8:15). In the following verse, “they discussed (διελογίζοντο) it with one another, saying, ‘We have no bread.’” I take διελογίζοντο as an imperfect of durative action (“they continued to discuss” cf. Taylor, *St. Mark*, 336) meaning that the disciples went back to their former conversation, ignoring Jesus’ warning. Even if the imperfect is read as inceptive (“they began to discuss”) they still misunderstood Jesus, by taking literally what he surely meant as figuratively.

A second reading strategy, based upon our reading model, would cause the audience to look below the surface and recognize the severity of the disciples' perception dilemma.<sup>617</sup> Additionally, unless the disciples are to be branded as idiots, the audience must withhold judgment until they hear the reader provide his commentary on these events. Yet again, when the reader has provided insight, greater audience confusion rather than clarity has been the outcome. For example, in the boat scene following the first feeding miracle, enigmatic reader commentary comes in the form of a γὰρ clause, "for they did not understand about the bread, but their hearts were hardened" (6:52). The audience has been informed of the spiritual condition of the disciples but they themselves have not received any straight forward interpretation about the "bread" and have no better grasp on Jesus than the disciples. Finally, the passage of 8:14-21 convinces the audience that the disciples indeed do not understand about the bread any more than they understood the parable in 4:12.<sup>618</sup> The question

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<sup>617</sup>This problem is also highlighted in passages other than the feeding narratives. For in 6:7ff, Jesus sends the disciples off two by two, with restrictions. One specific item not allowed was bread (6:8). Now, the disciples never seem to be in want for bread during their own missionary outreach. Mark is not explicit regarding the source of their bread but we can assume it comes as a part of the hospitality of the homes they were welcomed. The corollary assumption is that having "no bread" means people did not receive their message. For, Jesus' marching orders to them was "if any place will not receive you and they refuse to *hear* you (ὅς ἂν τόπος μὴ δέξηται ὑμᾶς μηδὲ ἀκούσωσιν ὑμῶν, 6:11). Thus, "no bread" means no hearing as well.

<sup>618</sup>Just as parables demand an interpretation, so do the miracles of Jesus in Mark. For the two feeding scenes: Boat narrative II (6:45-52) interprets the Feeding of the 5,000 (6:30-44); Boat narrative III (8:14-21) interprets the Feeding of the 4,000. As these trailing passages provide light to the reader on how to interpret for the audience the disciples' reaction to the miracles, they also tie together other pericopes with these via common words, phrases, and themes.

**Common Words of 4:12 in 8:16-21**

➤ βλέπω(8:18); ἀκούω(8:18); συνίημι(8:21).

**Phrases of 8:16-20 which reader/listener equates with other pericope(s).**

➤ διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους. The word *διαλογίζομαι* occurs six times in Mark, each time in a conflict with Jesus (2:6, 8; 8:16, 17; 9:33; 11:31) and is used in discussions of unbelief.

➤ πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν; The phrase resonates with elements from the second boat pericope in 6:52 and with the reference to the pharisees hardness of heart in 3:5. Additionally, the use of heart (*καρδία*) up to this point of the narrative continually carries a negative connotation (cf. 2:6,8; 3:5; 6:52; 7:6; 7:19, 21). It is not until Jesus' discussion of the Great Commandment that the heart is used in a positive context (12:30, 33).

➤ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες οὐ βλέπετε καὶ ὠτα ἔχοντες οὐκ ἀκούετε; This phrase is reminiscent of Mark's quotation of Isaiah 6:9 in 4:12 yet it's a quote from Jer 5:21 and Ez 12:2. This continues the prophetic tradition being

remains, is the audience any closer to an answer themselves? As the disciples demonstrate the characteristics of the outsiders, “ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding,” the reader has utilized situational and verbal irony to welcome the audience as yet another in a series of unwitting victims<sup>619</sup> who remain ignorant of “what” they should perceive.

Let me suggest that part of Mark’s agenda is not to develop a catalogue of requirements for entry into the kingdom or even a discipleship manual, per se. The reader’s primary focus is upon how the disciples (or anyone for that matter) come to know Jesus as the Son of God?<sup>620</sup> This is not to neglect the Markan priorities of Christology, discipleship, or eschatology but the story of Jesus was never intended to generate a flat interpretation.<sup>621</sup> Rather, Mark is a multi-layered text in which the reader is pushing the audience “to see” beyond the limited human level of perception and to grasp life from the divine point of view.<sup>622</sup>

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used in Mark to substantiate the claim that the “outsiders” are a rebellious group, which is the context of each prophetic quotation.

➤καὶ οὐ μνημονεύετε; With this phrase Jesus is directly referring to the first feeding miracle. Though the disciples distinctly remember the facts of the event, they do not comprehend its significance. This gives the answer to Jesus’ previous question, πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν; The emphatic answer is, Yes!

**Themes of 8:16-20**

➤καὶ διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὅτι ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχουσιν. Within the context this proves to be a problematic phrase. For it has little or no correlation to Jesus’ warning in 8:15. It can be explained away source critically by saying 8:15 is from a different tradition which Mark has clumsily inserted. Yet its juxtaposition and incongruity again reinforces the argument that the disciples are either oblivious to Jesus’ instruction or they find him to be irrelevant to their situation.

<sup>619</sup>Or what might be called an audience-victimization strategy. For a careful analysis of this from the perspective of the Fourth Gospel, see Staley, *The Print’s First Kiss*, 95-118. The best example from a secular approach is found in John McKee, *Literary Irony and the Literary Audience: Studies of the Victimization of the Reader in Augustan Fiction* (Amsterdam: Ropodi, 1974). To date, I have not seen this applied in this fashion to Mark’s narrative.

<sup>620</sup>I recently came across Timothy Geddert’s dissertation, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) who makes a similar claim but have not been able to go over his thesis in detail.

<sup>621</sup>Geddert, *Watchwords*, 25.

<sup>622</sup>This is best captured in Jesus’ rebuke of Peter following his rejection of the suffering messiah disclosure in 8:33; “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men.” The Greek text points out the polarity between divine and human perception; Ὑπαγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ

### 2.3.3 PETER'S WORDS: CONFESSION OR CONFUSION?

The confession of Peter (8:27-30) and Jesus' subsequent messianic corrective (8:31-33) contain elements of an oral storehouse. First, the reader employs the emphatic second person plural pronoun when asking the identity question directly to the disciples, 'Υμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι; According to our reading model, the audience could include themselves in Jesus' question as it takes on a meta-narrative reference, demanding a response.

A second observation worth noting is Jesus' διδασχὴ about the fate of the Son of Man (8:31). For the first time in the Markan story, Jesus teaches his disciples plainly (παρρησίᾳ, 8:32) that suffering, rejection, and death are key components in a Messianic mission. Interestingly, the reader houses this teaching in indirect discourse not the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. Rather than listening to Jesus, the audience will hear the reader supply an insider's interpretation of Jesus' didactic instruction about sufferings.<sup>623</sup> This continues to establish the reader as the only person who knows the mind of Jesus and further deepens the relationship between reader and audience.

This would be a challenging passage for the reader to portray, struggling to vocalize Peter's opposition, "And Peter took him aside, and began to rebuke him" (καὶ προσλαβόμενος ὁ Πέτρος αὐτὸν ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ., 8:32). The repetition of the word, ἐπιτιμάω, cascades one after another from the reader's lips. It was first used in Jesus' command to silence (8:30), then immediately again in Peter's rebuke of Jesus (8:32), and then a third time in Jesus' retort and correction of the wayward disciple (8:33). How might the reader render the words of Peter's rebuke and where can we build any hypothetical vocal or body language for the reader? The pattern for "rebuke" was established by the reader earlier in the reading-event as Jesus cast out the demons (1:25;

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τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Cf. Whitney Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1995), 266-67, for a discussion of this passage as hermeneutical key.

<sup>623</sup>Matthew alters this slightly as he says, Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς δεικνύειν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ (16:21). Ironically, in Matthew, Jesus is the master-teacher yet he *shows* (δεικνύειν) his disciples about his suffering while in Mark, the action-oriented Jesus *teaches*.

3:12; 4:39; 9:25). For an individual being exorcized, rapid movement and physical convulsion is depicted as standard fare (1:26; 3:11; 9:26). Correspondingly, the same passages indicate that speaking with authority is Jesus' normal tone during an exorcism. Some motions must be assumed, but in the calming of the seas in 4:39, we hear, *καὶ διεγερθεὶς ἐπέτιμήσεν τῷ ἀνέμῳ καὶ εἶπεν τῇ θαλάσῃ*. Though lexically *διεγερθεὶς* means woke up, we must imply that the participle is an abridgment for a number of body movements. In the previous verse, the disciples' wake-up call (*ἐγείρουσιν*) was less than gentle. Their accentuated question was worded, *Διδάσκαλε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἀπολλύμεθα*. The *ὅτι* clause alerts the reader to vocalize the words assuming the same fate as the earlier cosmic clash between the demons and Jesus<sup>624</sup> or Jesus' confrontation with his human enemies.<sup>625</sup> Thus, for the reader to properly accent the disciples' concern, his voice must carry more than the fear of drowning but convey a hint of question that God's goodness may be in doubt. More than likely the reader would portray Jesus as arising, with twenty four eyes fixed upon him, and with hands and voice in unison, rebuke a force which heretofore had never been tamed. The reader having established a gesture pattern in this and other "rebuking" scenes, should be consistent throughout the story as a whole, climaxing in Jesus' rebuking in 8:33. The back and forth rebuke between Peter and Jesus might possibly communicate to the audience another encounter of Jesus with evil.

These previous "rebuking" passages also have set a range of audience response based upon the pattern set by the story's on-lookers. For example, in Jesus' first rebuke of a demon in the synagogue, the worshipers were amazed (*ἐξεπλήσσοντο*, 1:22; *ἐθαμβήθησαν ἅπαντες*, 1:27). In the reader's summary of Jesus' miraculous activities in 3:7-12, the people are constantly pressing in on him, expecting supernatural intervention (*ὥστε ἐπιπίπτειν αὐτῷ ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἄψωνται ὅσοι εἶχον μάστιγας*; 3:10). Finally,

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<sup>624</sup>1:24; 9:22.

<sup>625</sup> 3:6; 11:18.

the disciples in the first boat scene were fearful (ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν; 4:41). Thus, when the reader has the disciples utter, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" the audience already has a reader-driven guideline for their response; awe for Jesus' control over the demonic powers.

Another observation can be made from what we have defined as a reader's emotional markers. Jesus' rebuke, "But turning (ἐπιστραφείς) and seeing (ιδών) his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men'" begins with two participles which function as quasi-stage directions. The reader, speaking as Jesus, is to "turn" and "see" the disciples prior to his recitation of the rebuke. Though the words of the rebuke are singularly directed to Peter (ἐπετίμησεν Πέτρῳ), the reader is to portray Jesus fully aware of his over-hearing group of disciples and include them in the rebuke if they condone Peter's attitude.<sup>626</sup> Further, the textual instructions gleaned from the previous exorcisms go beyond facial expressions and invite the reader to muster all his vocal strength to imitate the power of an exorcism.<sup>627</sup>

Next the reader must properly portray the words of Jesus' own rebuke, especially with the shocking salvo of calling Peter his arch-enemy "Satan." Again, the reader must link this demonic name-calling with the other references to Satan (1:13; 3:23; 4:15). Interestingly, Satan is given no first person dialogue in Mark; not so in Matthew and Luke. Though he plays an integral role in the plot, his character in the

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<sup>626</sup>The audience may well have heard that the singular rebuke to Peter (8:33) has already been preceded by a group rebuke/charge (ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς) in 8:30.

<sup>627</sup>Shiner ("From Text to Oral Performance," 8) provides several interesting quotations on this subject. The orator might use extremes of volume and tone. Cicero indicates in one speech that he is shouting his loudest (*pro Lig.* 3.6-7). Quintilian suggests a tone of acerbity almost beyond the ability of the human voice for the line, "Why do you not restrain those cries?" (11.3.169). The reader's vocation was quite demanding on his voice. Pliny states that during a passionate performance his freedman Zosimus, who served as both reader and actor, began to spit blood and required a long period of recuperation. This problem returned again after he demanded too much of his voice during a several day period, requiring another period of recuperation (*Epistle* 5.19). It is not clear whether Zosimus strained his voice as an actor or a reader, but Pliny's account clearly indicates that private performances in upper class homes at least sometimes involved a great deal of intensity that could be quite taxing on the voice.

story is silent and depicted exclusively in third person narration. This also might keep the audience somewhat restrained in their reaction. For just the opposite may arise in the temptation narratives of Matthew and Luke. There are several places where an ancient audience could vocalize their approval at Jesus' success over Satan, especially at the quotation of scripture. However, as the reader tells Mark's version of the temptation, he does so almost emotionless to subdued listeners.<sup>628</sup> Moreover, though the other Synoptics portray explicit commentary about victory in the wilderness, Mark leaves the outcome of the conflict unresolved, casting a shadow of suspense over the remainder of the book.<sup>629</sup> This does not have the clarity of winner-takes-all encounter. The reader commentary of the Markan temptation may imply that the remainder of the story will represent an on-going battle until one participant is destroyed by the other.

Satan next appears as Jesus spoke in parables (έν παραβολαῖς), "How can Satan drive out Satan?" (3:23). Here the reader reacquaints his audience with the three key players of the baptismal-temptation scene; Jesus, Satan, and the Spirit. However, in this pericope the scribes from Jerusalem have misconstrued the inter-relationships. Moreover, Jesus' family want to restrain him (κρατῆσαι αὐτόν)<sup>630</sup> for they were saying, "he is out of his mind" (ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη, 3:21). The scribes envision Jesus in collusion with Satan rather than in partnership with the Holy Spirit. This is made clear by the scribal statements which initiate the parable, "He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." As the scribes equate Jesus' work with Satan, Jesus tells a parable depicting the illogic of their position.

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<sup>628</sup>Several other facts which are clear in a modern text may or may not have had an impact upon an ancient audience. In the Lucan passage, the proper name Satan is never used, only διάβολος. In the Matthean temptation account, διάβολος is also used until the climactic closure in 4:10, when Jesus says, "Away with you Satan! (ὑπάγε, σατανᾶ), a close parallel with Jesus' rebuke in Mark 8:33 (ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ).

<sup>629</sup>Lane, *Mark*, 61.

<sup>630</sup>κρατέω is used frequently in Mark (Mk. 1:31; 3:21; 5:41; 6:17; 7:3f, 8; 9:10, 27; 12:12; 14:1, 44, 46, 49, 51). For our purposes the plethora of uses in the passion narrative, and the rapid succession in chapter 14 all focus upon seizing Jesus to kill him.

The reader summarizes his interpretation at the end of the passage in the form of a ὅτι clause, “because they were saying, ‘He has an evil spirit.’”<sup>631</sup> The reader has subtly alerted the audience that future debates with Jewish authorities are not confrontations on a human level but are to be considered temptations<sup>632</sup>, thus making their evil intentions clear.<sup>633</sup> The opposition of the Jewish leaders to Jesus is seen in Mark’s gospel as a continuation of the demonic plan, first introduced at the baptism-temptation, continued in the exorcisms, and now, subversively concealed in the confrontations with the authorities. Nevertheless, Satan is depicted as the overseer of this diabolic plot.<sup>634</sup>

Satan’s next appearance comes in another parable, but this time Jesus removes any metaphorical language and says, “And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown; when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word which is sown in them” (4:15). There should be no doubt that deception originates with Satan. And the spatial clues given by the reader demand that Peter’s action (ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, 8:27) clearly imitate the acts of Satan in the parable (παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν, 4:2,14). There is no way Peter could comprehend this connection. It is purely for the listeners.

Let us summarize this passage. First, regarding Jesus and his disciples. The reader has equated Peter’s rebuke with Satan’s temptations. In this particular

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<sup>631</sup>It should be noted that the statements by the family and the scribes as well are in the form of a ὅτι clause, implying insider information to the audience.

<sup>632</sup>8:11; 10:2; 12:15 all contain πειράζω. Mark is trying to indicate that the Jewish leaders are enticing Jesus just as Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness in 1:13 (καὶ ἦν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τεσσαεράκοντα ἡμέρας πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανα). However, there is an interesting exception, the scribe in 12:28, who knows that Jesus replied well to the testing of his fellow-scribes (ἰδὼν ὅτι καλῶς ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν). Then, following Jesus’ instruction to him regarding the greatest commandment, his response is unique in the Gospel, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ γραμματεὺς· καλῶς, διδάσκαλε. It takes a scribe, one seemingly cut off from Jesus, to equate Jesus’ words with his role as teacher. Jesus’ response to him is on a par with the most gracious in the gospel, οὐ μακρὰν εἶ ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>633</sup>J. M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1982), 93.

<sup>634</sup>This epistemological dilemma is further augmented by the pericope which is interrupted by Jesus’ discussion with the scribes. 3:19b-21 and 3:31-35 are sandwiched by Jesus’ parable. If we use it as an interpretive key, the attitude of Jesus’ family, “he is beside himself” (ἐλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη, 3:21) puts them in close company with the scribes and Satan. Then, Jesus applies his new standard for family membership not upon blood-relationship but upon “doing the will of God” (3:35).

confrontation Peter, and the other disciples in general, have attempted to dissuade Jesus from his suffering and death. This, in part, has to do with their differing opinions of Jesus' messianic role. More decisively, the dispute is with "two understandings of eschatological existence as a whole."<sup>635</sup> Jesus is seeing the world through divine eyes and the disciples see through their own limited human perception (ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, 8:33). However, the twist to the narrative comes when human perception is equated with demonic thought. At this point, Peter's rebuke of Jesus is of the same order as Satan's temptation in the wilderness. Furthermore, the disciples' thought process has much more in common with the Jewish authorities than with Jesus.<sup>636</sup> In the lengthy discourse in Mark 4, Jesus has told his disciples (and readers) that Satan himself is the devourer of the Word (4:15) and he is also found to be directly connected with the confusion of men's minds. The shocking revelation is that the basis for the disciples' dullness is not stupidity but demonic thinking; the hard-heart problem (6:52; 8:17). Thus, a human-oriented perspective is in outright opposition to God.<sup>637</sup>

Second, we must keep in mind that our methodology does not focus upon the plotting within the text as much as it does on the effect of the meta-narrative on the listeners. Thus, the key issue for us is not to focus upon the disciples' (mis)understanding but upon how the listening audience may react to Jesus' rebuke of Peter and his teaching of messianic suffering. This passage may be the best example from which we can recreate an audience's hypothetical reading-effect. Shiner describes the process,

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<sup>635</sup>Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark*, 100.

<sup>636</sup>The disciples' failure to understand the two "feedings" is due to the hardening of their hearts (6:52; 8:17) a phrase used in reference to the authorities (3:5; 10:5). Jesus knew of the common traits of his disciples with the Jewish leaders when he warned the disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod" (8:15).

<sup>637</sup>H. D. Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," *Jesus and the Historian: Written in Honor of Earnest Cadman Colwell*, ed. F. T. Trotter (Louisville: Westminster, 1968), 124, "It is the work of Satan to try to understand Jesus' Messiahship while disregarding his passion and crucifixion."

The audience inclusive effect is clearly at work in the beginning of this segment and tends to increase audience identification with the disciples. Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" The "you" is emphasized by contrast with the earlier "Who do people say that I am?" The question seems intended to elicit a confessional response. The audience may not yell out the correct answer, but the question leads one's listeners to make a confessional answer, whether it is consciously formulated or not. Perhaps it is no more than the fact that we compare in our mind the various responses to who Jesus is to the answer we consider to be correct. By giving the audience a task to fulfill, to answer the question about Jesus' identity, the performer makes the audience active participants in the narrative and thus increases their level of identification. The audience does what the disciples are asked to do.<sup>638</sup>

Then, the reader thunders out Peter's proud confession, Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός. The audience responds and as we have seen, ancient listeners might react vocally to such an affirmation if given the opportunity.<sup>639</sup> Yet the reader will cause an abrupt stop to that process. The passage thus far has been dominated by dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. But now, the reader directly addresses the audience with his own commentary on the event as he connects Peter's confession with a command (ἐπετίμησεν) to silence (8:30). Moreover, this third-person interjection speeds up the pace of the story as the reader moves from actual-time in first-person dialogue to an accelerated story-time demanded by the summary of Jesus' command. This transition by the reader might be vocally communicated to the audience by the lack of a natural pause between Peter's confession and Jesus' command, inhibiting the audience's own response.

In a reading-event, a pause or the lack of one can alter the meaning of the reading.<sup>640</sup> The best way to explain the lack of pause in Mark is to contrast the reading-

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<sup>638</sup>Shiner, "Disciples and Death," 10.

<sup>639</sup>Cf., Chapter 3 of this thesis, The Effect of the Audience on the Shaping of the Text.

<sup>640</sup> Quintilian observed that many things that had to do with reading must be accomplished in actual practice, such as when to take a breath, when to interject a pause into a line, and where the sense begins or ends (*Inst. Or.* I, viii, 1). Cicero as well unites the issue of pause and meaning. For he taught against readers relying on written punctuation, asserting that the end of a sentence "ought to be determined not by the speaker's pausing for a breath, or by the stroke interpreted by a copyist, but by the constraint of the rhythm" (*Orator*, lxviii, 228).

Augustine was well aware of the fact that inappropriate pauses could change the meaning of

effect of the Markan confession with its Matthean parallel.<sup>641</sup> In Matthew's gospel, Peter's confession is immediately followed with Jesus' blessing upon Peter (16:17-19). This first-person discourse by Jesus slows down the pace of the story and allows the listener adequate time to vocalize his/her response. Rather than immediately closing down the discussion and moving on, Jesus is elaborating upon it. As Shiner points out, "Applause at this point does not interrupt the flow of the narrative at all, and in fact enhances the meaning of the following line, "And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon bar Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my father in heaven.'"<sup>642</sup> By outwardly applauding or inwardly agreeing with the Matthean confession, the listeners express their own recognition of its truth and earn for themselves a share in the blessing which follows.<sup>643</sup>

Now, returning to our Markan account, the audience is not allowed to ponder over the impact of Peter's confession since our reader immediately interjects his own reader commentary, "and he warned (ἐπετίμησεν) them not to tell anyone about him" (8:30). The reader again speaks in third person reader commentary regarding the suffering of the messiah, Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν (8:31). It is not until Jesus calls (προσκαλεσάμενος) the disciples and the crowds together that the reader has Jesus speaking in the first person, again slowing down the story.<sup>644</sup> Now, the reader gives the listeners time to ponder over their commitment to

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texts. This was discussed in Chapter 2, The Role of the Reader in the New Testament and the Early Church.

<sup>641</sup>The Lucan version of Peter's confession dramatically changes text's effect, since the rebuke of Peter by Jesus is eliminated.

<sup>642</sup>Shiner, "Death and Disciples," 11.

<sup>643</sup>Quintilian adds, "Our rhetoricians want every passage, every sentence to strike the ear by an impressive close. In fact, they think it a disgrace, nay, a crime, to pause to breathe except at the end of a passage that is designed to call forth applause" (*Inst. Or.* 8.5.14).

<sup>644</sup>Notice how the reader then instructs that being behind Jesus is not always a bad place to be. Only under His terms, self denial and not our own. Notice 8:33 (ὑπαγε ὀπίσω μου) vs. 8:34 (εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν).

Jesus. And we should not neglect that the opening call to commitment is shaped with the recurring audience-inclusive, *τις* (8:34), *ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν* and *ὃς δ' ἂν* (8:35), *ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν* (8:38), *τινες ὧδε . . . οἵτινες* (9:1).

## 2.4 THE READER, THE CROSS, AND THE AUDIENCE

### 2.4.1 ANOINTING FOR BURIAL

The Markan tendency to intercalate narrative material provides the interpretative framework of the anointing at Bethany episode.<sup>645</sup> Just as the two anointing scenes of 14:3-9 and 16:1-8 bracket the passion narrative, the plot of the leaders (14:1-2) and their recruitment of Judas (14:10-11) establish the perimeter of the anointing at Bethany (14:3-9) and set the pericope in a theological framework. In other words, the reader wants his audience to experience the “beautiful” act of the unnamed woman in light of the heinous acts of deception (*ἐν δόλω*, 14:1) and betrayal (*παραδίδομι*, 14:10,11) which surrounds it. Additionally, the effect of the intercalation is that it connects two events which beforehand had been temporally and spatially<sup>646</sup> unrelated.

However, our reading model assumes that the structural irony<sup>647</sup> depicted in the form of intercalation would be much more difficult to hear than verbal strategies which connect the passages. In 14:1, the chief priests and the scribes were seeking (*ἐζήτουν*) a way to kill Jesus. Then, following the anointing pericope, Judas similarly seeks (*ἐζήτει*, 14:11) an opportunity to betray Jesus. The reader has directly connected the acts of Jesus’ enemies with his own circle of followers. Furthermore, he places emphasis upon the pleasure which the chief priests and the scribes gain upon “hearing” (*οἱ δὲ*

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<sup>645</sup>James R. Edwards, “Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives,” *NovT* 31 (1989), 193-216; Tom Shepherd, “The Narrative Function of Markan Intercalation” *NTS* 41 (1995), 522-540.

<sup>646</sup>Both pericopae contain their own temporal and spacial identifications. Each therefore constitutes a distinct narrative segment. Cf. Edwin K. Broadhead, *Prophet, Son, Messiah: Narrative Form and Function in Mark 14-16* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 29-50.

<sup>647</sup>G. Van Oyen, “Intercalation and the Irony in the Gospel of Mark,” *The Four Gospels*.

ἀκούσαντες ἐχάρησαν; 14:11) that one of Jesus' disciples is now their "insider." In the midst of this secretive plotting, the reader connects a passage where Jesus is concurrently "having his body anointed beforehand, for burial" (14:8). What the Jews thought they were initiating in secret was already well underway in Jesus' agenda. The existence of a second level interpretation to the events is revealed. Therefore, the verbal irony alerts the audience to a meaning beyond what is narrated.

An interesting twist is introduced in the second half of 14:2, "Not during the feast, or the people may riot." This passage is introduced via a γάρ clause, giving it the force of insider information shared with the listening audience. The Jewish leaders are conveying their beliefs that at this time the people are willing to lash out against anyone who might threaten the safety of Jesus. Seemingly, they would sacrifice themselves, just as the disciples soon will do during the garden arrest.<sup>648</sup> However, the fickleness of the crowd's position will be poignantly brought out later by the reader as they are stirred by the chief priests to shout out "crucify Him," not once but twice (15:13, 14). The people demand Pilate to release the insurrectionist Barabbas (Βαραββᾶς μετὰ τῶν στασιαστῶν, 15:7) rather than Jesus. The reader repeatedly tells the audience that Jesus is a threat to the way mankind envisions the world. The people in the story want to eliminate the enemy they see while Jesus desires to remove the greater threat which they cannot even conceive, their hard hearts.

In the actual anointing pericope (14:3-9), the reader tells his audience of three main actors: Jesus, the unnamed woman who pours expensive perfume over Jesus' head, and the unidentified observers who reproach the woman for what they regard as her frivolous act. As we have observed previously, there is a careful crafting by the reader to establish Jesus' point of view as normative.<sup>649</sup> The unnamed woman enters

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<sup>648</sup>See below for discussion of 14:43-50.

<sup>649</sup>Peterson ("Point of View' in Mark's Narrative") states, "Mark's ideological standpoint is identical with that of his central character, Jesus, with whom he shares the power of knowing what is in the minds of others" (97-121). For an enlargement of this perspective, see Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 47-50. Kingsbury illumines how Mark's narrative creates a tripartite concept of reality, with

the scene unannounced. She lavishly anoints Jesus, with expensive perfume. The reader interjects an emotional marker as the unidentified observers<sup>650</sup> angrily (δέ τινες ἀγανακτοῦντες) point out the monetary waste of her act in comparison to the good it might accomplish in aiding the poor. The action moves from conversation ("But there were some who said to themselves indignantly, 'Why was the ointment thus wasted? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor'" 14:4-5a) to condemnation ("And they reproached her" 14:5b). Then the reader, through Jesus' voice, interprets the events. As Jesus speaks<sup>651</sup>, surprisingly, he does not merely protect, but he memorializes her. Nowhere in the entire Gospel are there more favorable words. Jesus has spoken and the audience knows how Jesus appraises the situation.

However, our reader does not make agreement with Jesus an easy proposition. In Jesus' day, it was proper to think in terms of provision for the poor. It was customary on the evening of the Passover to remember the destitute with gifts.<sup>652</sup> Furthermore, the disciples are acting in a manner appropriate to Jesus' previous instruction regarding the poor and the kingdom's overall responsibility towards them.<sup>653</sup> Jesus' own ministry, particularly his miracles, has been focused upon relieving

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the Narrator/Jesus/God holding the same value system that is normative for the gospel story.

<sup>650</sup>The passage is somewhat ambiguous as to the people present. For at best it only qualifies that a portion of the people were angry (ἦσαν δέ τινες ἀγανακτοῦντες). Nevertheless, the larger context is about one disciple, Judas, who is specifically identified in the intercalated passage in 14:10-11. Furthermore, Βηθανία has been a place where Jesus and the disciples have been together previously (11:1), as is the Mount of Olives (11:1; 13:3, 14:26). The reader has tied together several previous stories about the disciples and will follow with several more. It seems inconceivable that the reader would not want his audience to recognize these as the same men.

<sup>651</sup>The words, "ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν" always serve as an introductory formula to a surprising response by Jesus (cf. 9:23, 39; 10:5, 18, 38, 39; 11:29; 12:17; 14:6, 62). Boomershine, *Mark, the Storyteller*, 99.

<sup>652</sup>Lane, *Mark*, 493. Lane goes on to detail that it was also the practice to give as charity one part of the second tithe normally spent in Jerusalem during the feast.

<sup>653</sup>Cf. Feeding miracles (8:1-10); First will be last (9:35-37); Cup of cold water (9:41); especially the Rich Young Ruler (10:21), "And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow

the misery of poverty, sickness, and the injustice of the social order upon the destitute. Even the words of the narrative echo a previous episode when Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of compassion upon the children (10:13-16).<sup>654</sup> In that incident, the reader reports that Jesus was angry (ἠγανακτήσεν, 10:14) with the disciples for their improper response to the needs of one of society's lower classes. Now the reader tells his listeners that the disciples are modeling Jesus' righteous indignation by being angry (ἀγανακτοῦντες, 14:4) towards the woman's wasteful action.<sup>655</sup> As a whole, Jesus taught the disciples that the coming kingdom will bring about a role reversal between the rich and poor, with the first becoming last and the last becoming first. It appears as if the disciples have adopted this new teaching, for in the anointing pericope they quote Jesus' own command to the rich young ruler in their rebuke of the unnamed woman.<sup>656</sup> The audience hears that the poor are the disciples first priority. Finally, from what the reader has revealed to the audience, the disciples are acting out of loyalty to Jesus' previous instruction.<sup>657</sup>

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<sup>654</sup>Cf. Boomershine, *Mark, The Storyteller*, 96-100 for numerous parallels in content and structure in the rebuke of the disciples in 10:13-16 and 14:6-9.

<sup>655</sup>The actual wording of 14:4 is ἦσαν δὲ τινες ἀγανακτοῦντες πρὸς ἑαυτούς. Literally, it means "some were being angry with themselves." cf. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1979), 77. Black says that πρὸς ἑαυτούς represents the ethic dative in Aramaic, and the only way to make sense out of the passage without straining the preposition is to translate it, "Some were indeed vexed." Also cf. Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 810-811. Gundry cites many Semitisms in the pericope which would further substantiate Black's conclusion. Additionally, V. Taylor, *The Gospel of St. Mark*, 432, cites numerous other parallel constructions of πρὸς ἑαυτούς in Mark (cf. 1:27, 4:41, 8:16, 9:31, 12:7, 14:3).

<sup>656</sup>The words of the disciples in 14:5, καὶ δοθῆναι τοῖς πτωχοῖς are a quote of Jesus' words to the rich young ruler in 10:21, καὶ δὸς τοῖς πτωχοῖς.

<sup>657</sup>It is important to note that the other gospels change the moral aspect of this pericope altogether. Matthew attributes these reactions explicitly to the disciples. If Luke 7 depicts the same event, the dialog is between Jesus and a Pharisee, later addressed as Simon. John to Judas Iscariot. Mark omits all names along with John's side note about Judas' greedy motives. Mark, takes this one step farther, as he has fashioned the story in a manner that does *not* give the readers any indication that the thinking of the disciples is morally inappropriate. Just that it differs radically from Jesus' thinking.

As the reader tells the story, the audience must be surprised as Jesus defends the woman over against his disciples' stern reproach (ἐνεβριμῶντο) of wastefulness. As the disciples have followed him, they have heard his teaching on the poor. Jesus has corrected them in the past, and now the disciples must be convinced they stand in agreement with Jesus regarding society's outcasts. Yet, they are still wrong, as far as Jesus is concerned.<sup>658</sup> Although the audience knows they should align themselves with Jesus and the woman, the reader has made that extremely difficult.<sup>659</sup> The disciples' response appears correct, yet they are still rebuked, unable to grasp the eschatological implications Jesus placed upon such an extravagant act. Furthermore, they are socially humiliated since this rebuke takes place in the house of a leper in front of a woman. One can almost imagine that the audience's body-language would provide feedback to the reader. David Rhodes demonstrates how the relationship of Jesus and the disciples is always troubling for the audience.

To the disciples, Jesus' actions and expectations occur without preparation or direction . . . they are expected to understand something about the rule of God but have never been told in a straightforward way what it is . . . they are simply not prepared for the unpredictable, overwhelming consequences of following Jesus.<sup>660</sup>

This becomes the audience's identification dilemma. They must choose Jesus, yet human logic and an innate sense of fairness make that difficult.<sup>661</sup> Inclusive dialogue

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<sup>658</sup>Here, Jesus' point is not that the observers were involved in "bad work" as they desired to assist the poor. Rather, he was reinforcing the good work (καλὸν ἔργον) of the unnamed woman because she was involved in eternal matters of life which could only be performed at one point in time.

<sup>659</sup>Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JR* 57 (1977), 392.

<sup>660</sup>Rhodes and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 90-92.

<sup>661</sup>Robert C. Tannehill, "Reading It Whole: The Function of Mark 8:34-35 in Mark's Story," *Quarterly Review*, 1982, 67-78. Though Tannehill speaks about this "unreasonable" problem in another context (8:34-35) his words correlate well to our text, "The temptation for the interpreter is to reduce this paradox to a commonplace in order to make it reasonable. Then 8:35 seems to say that sacrifice will bring a reward later, a statement which contains little surprise or tension. But the speaker's choice of words in 8:35 shows that he wishes to be paradoxical. He wishes to force his hearers to face the conflict between his requirement and the normal and reasonable concern to preserve one's own life" (69). In "The Disciples in Mark," Tannehill adds these remarks, "Paradox, a conflict in language, reminds the reader that the

accentuates the audience's dilemma, πάντοτε γὰρ τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν καὶ ὅταν θέλητε δύνασθε αὐτοῖς εὖ ποιῆσαι, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε. (14:7). The repetition of the second person pronouns invites the audience to participate in the difficult decision. Moreover, the two-fold repetition of the adverb πάντοτε moves the story out of the story world into the real world of the audience. Interestingly, there is no indication in the story that the woman comprehends the magnitude of what she has done. It is the reader, through the voice of Jesus, who elevates her actions to be seen as an anointing for burial.<sup>662</sup> It is only through Jesus' perspective that we can comprehend his death as the quintessential act of giving, even above caring for the poor. Further, the reader is conveying that unless the audience integrates Jesus' death, his anointing for burial, into their understanding of the gospel, they may find themselves doing good work (καλὸν ἔργον, 14:6) but in opposition to the mind of God.

#### 2.4.2 GETHSEMANE: A PROLEPTIC VIEW OF THE CROSS

Several issues converge in the Gethsemane passage where the reader shifts how the audience may perceive the suffering of the Messiah. First, with the exception of his cry from the cross, this is the only time when Jesus discusses his suffering in a direct, first person manner.<sup>663</sup> Up to this point in the narrative, Jesus' emotions<sup>664</sup> have been expressed through reader commentary. Furthermore, Jesus has consistently referred to

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positive alternative indicated by the author persistently conflicts with what the people assume is right and reasonable. So the positive alternative remains a mystery and a challenge " (396).

<sup>662</sup>Taylor (*The Gospel According to St. Mark*) says, "Anointing for burial was not the woman's purpose but the interpretation Jesus puts upon her action" (533).

<sup>663</sup>S. E. Dowd, *Prayer, Power, and the Problem of Suffering* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988), 153.

<sup>664</sup>Prior to 14:32, references to Jesus' emotional make-up has been limited to 1:41 (being filled with compassion and being angry); 3:5 (with anger, being grieved); 6:6 (amazed at their unbelief); 6:34 (having compassion); 8:2 (having compassion); 10:14 (angry); 10:21 (love). Thus, the narrator has only related to the reader how Jesus interacts with the situations of others, not his own situation! Furthermore, from this point on in the Gospel, both the narrator and Jesus are silent regarding Jesus' personal feelings, with the exception of 15:34, "καὶ τῇ ἐνάτῃ ὥρᾳ ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, Ἐλωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι; ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνεύμενον Ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;"

his mission in a detached, indirect sense, speaking of his own death circum-locutionally as he employs third person "Son of Man" sayings.<sup>665</sup> Thus, in this typical fashion, the reader utters "he began to be greatly distressed and troubled" (14:33). Then, shockingly, the reader interjects in the voice of Jesus, "My soul is very sorrowful (περίλυπος), even unto death" (14:34). The audience encounters not just emotional markers but the first person emotional response of Jesus.<sup>666</sup> Now, in Gethsemane, we find Jesus' emotional state being described in terms of deep anguish<sup>667</sup> reinforced by his own words, "My grief is enough to kill me."<sup>668</sup> This is a new view of Jesus. The words are so descriptive and draw such emotion that one might envision Jesus hanging from the cross rather than kneeling before the Father in prayer.

Additionally, it is in the midst of prayer that the details of his pain are revealed. The reader first provides his own commentary to the audience as he says, "he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him." Before the audience hears the actual prayer of Jesus, they are told how it is to be understood. The reader will be the audience's guide for interpreting the prayer. Then the audience hears Jesus' first person soliloquy, "'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will'" (14:35-36). Up to this point, the reader has kept Jesus emotionally detached from his impending death. Now, it abruptly surfaces as the audience witnesses Jesus not just teaching about his death but actually experiencing his own suffering. This is even more insightful when one looks

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<sup>665</sup>Cf. 8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33-34, 45. This is not to detract from the christological importance of the "Son of Man" saying but they also structure the passion predictions with the absence of emotional involvement.

<sup>666</sup>Just a few verses prior to Gethsemane, in the Last Supper pericope, when Jesus predicts that "one of you will betray me" it is the disciples who become sorrowful (λυπέω 14:19), not the one being betrayed. Though the words are only cognates, they do express the irony of the disciples' unwarranted sorrow versus Jesus' Gethsemane experience.

<sup>667</sup>Notice how Mark has prefaced Jesus' words of direct discourse in 14:43 with indirect discourse in 14:33, καὶ ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν to give the reader two doses of Jesus' condition.

<sup>668</sup>H. Swete, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 342, "His words recall Psalm 42:6,11; 43:5, but his sorrow exceeds the Psalmist's; it is ἕως θανάτου, a sorrow which kills." See also Jonah 4:9.

ahead to the cross. For there, the reader returns to tell his story of Jesus from a distant, third person perspective, concealing Jesus' physical pain at the cross. At no place in his death scene does the reader provide any commentary on his physical suffering.

The reader's words may remind the audience of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah. There is a common structure to Jesus' own rebuke of Peter, οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων (8:33) and Jesus' own prayer, ἀλλ' οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σὺ (14:36). In the first, Peter attempted to eliminate the tension between the mutually exclusive concepts of Messiah and suffering being put forth as the divine plan (8:32). Jesus firmly rebukes (ἐπιτιμάω) Peter for his appraisal of the situation and is told he is "thinking like men." Now, in the garden, a similar problem arises for Jesus. He will have to make a conscious decision to choose God's will over his own. We are not to mistake the importance of this event. "Thinking like God" is as much a matter of the will as it is a cognitive function. Jesus is being tempted to reject the divine plan for his own.<sup>669</sup>

The reader has held back the personal travail of Jesus until this moment in the story. With the theme of suffering and temptation coalescing in this pericope, we find again, just as in the original confrontation with Satan (1:12-13), this conflict is not to be interpreted as a one-time occurrence. The reader is disclosing that Jesus' temptation to "think like men" has always been confronting him, in every decision and every action from the initial demonic encounter in the wilderness to his death cry from the cross.<sup>670</sup>

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<sup>669</sup>For this pericope to be read as temptation, see R. Brown, *Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), Vol 2, 1045; R. S. Barbour, "Gethsemane in the Tradition of the Passion," 236-238; D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1984), 78 and C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: S.P.C.K, 1966), 61, 67-68, "He is at grips with the mystery of the devil. He is entering upon the decisive struggle with evil."

<sup>670</sup>The concept of the temptation pervading all of Jesus' ministry originates in the temptation of 1:12-13. K. Kuhn, *New Light on Temptation, Sin, and Flesh in the New Testament*, 112, "When the Markan account of the temptation of Jesus limits his exposure to *peirasmos* to forty days, it is due to an intentional limitation. That which can be truly said of Jesus' entire life on earth is here changed into a vignette." Another piece of evidence may be found in the imperfect tense of the verbs in 14:35-36. They may indicate more than just the three occurrences of prayer in this pericope. For Mark is telling us that he "continually prayed" (προσηύχετο) and "continually said" (ἔλεγεν), Abba Father...

And here, at this point, the reader has presented Jesus as approachable by the audience. His guard is down, so to speak, and they are invited in to overhear Jesus pray, and struggle just like us.

Once again, Jesus' experience of temptation is not kept at arms length by the reader. Rather, the "grieving unto death" becomes a first hand ordeal not only for Jesus but also for the audience. They see and hear the reader impersonate Jesus as he separates himself from the disciples (14:35). They watch him fall to the ground. And the words which he speaks express distress and trouble. They can sense his frustration with the sleeping disciples yet simultaneously hear him speak words of warning (14:37-38) which go typically unheeded. They are told that this occurs not once, not twice, but three times with the same words (καὶ πάλιν ἀπελθὼν προσηύξατο τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον εἰπὼν, 14:39). The adverbial repetition provides the reader with markers for emphasis, deepening the emotional response of the audience.<sup>671</sup> The disciples may be present to witness this event, yet they provide no comfort and are perceptually ignorant of the real battle being waged as they themselves are trapped by the earthly constraints of sleep (πάλιν ἔλθων εὔρειν αὐτοὺς καθεύδοντας, 14:40). Finally, the only response of the disciples throughout the passage to Jesus' travail comes in the form of the reader commentary, "and they did not know how to answer him" (14:40).

### 2.4.3 JESUS' ARREST

Aural clues abound in the decisive moment between Jesus and his soon to be fleeing disciples (14:43-5). The reader brings a temporal adverb (εὐθὺς) which has consistently pushed along the story.<sup>672</sup> Then he interjects a genitive absolute (αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος) preceded by the adverb ἔτι. The reader is connecting the Gethsemane event with this one as one continuous episode. In Gethsemane, there was a constant stream of

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<sup>671</sup>14:39, 40; again πάλιν; 14:41, still λοιπὸν.

<sup>672</sup>Quintilian says, "No one will deny that some portions of our speech require a gentle flow of language, while others demand speed" (*Inst. Or.* 9.4.130).

first person dialogue which essentially slowed down the story time to equal the discourse time - the time it takes a reader to tell the story to his audience. But now the pace escalates as the reader takes over, summarizes the actions, and speaks for all except Jesus.<sup>673</sup> There will be little time for the audience to think and reflect during this encounter.

Earlier reader commentary tells us that this is a carefully crafted plan on the part of Judas, as "he was looking for an opportunity to betray him" (14:11). He had consulted with the chief priests and obviously received their approval as they assigned their own men to the task. Moreover the reader tells his audience that Judas has even prepared the troops with a sign (σύσημον). Thus, the disciples<sup>674</sup> stand toe-to-toe against an armed crowd.

Now, our concern is how the reader's presentation may effect the audience's understanding of the event. Though the disciples may not know the extent of Judas' involvement, the audience certainly recognizes his opposition to Jesus' agenda.<sup>675</sup> The reader introduces him as one of the twelve (εἷς τῶν δώδεκα, 14:43) and then that name of honor is quickly contrasted with his descriptive name, ὁ παραδιδούς.<sup>676</sup> Furthermore, the

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<sup>673</sup>Judas does speak in the passage (14:44). However, the dialogue was given (δεδώκει, pluperfect) previously, taking it outside of the time of the arrest.

<sup>674</sup>As in previous pericopes (cf. 4:35-41), the participants in the arrest are not named as the disciples. They are called εἷς δέ [τις] τῶν παρεστηκότων. The perfect participle of παρίστημι becomes almost a technical term for bystander in the rest of the book (cf. 14:69, 70 referring to Peter's jury in his courtyard trial; 15:35, 39 referring respectively to the mockers at the cross and the centurion). The classical Greek expression εἷς δέ τις "a certain one" makes the swordsman singular and has even been taken as a circumlocution for saying the narrator knows who it is but refrains from naming him (V. Taylor, *St. Mark*, 559). The argument is also put forth that the swordsman is not a disciple, but one of the arresting crowd who accidentally cuts off the ear of an associate (Gundry, *Mark*, 860).

<sup>675</sup>From the story's perspective, it is not important to portray Judas as evil incarnate. Nor is it of any value to compare Peter's denial to Judas' betrayal, as if one is a lesser evil than the other. It has already been established by the reader that anyone who stands in opposition to Jesus is in league with Satan (8:33).

<sup>676</sup>The verbal linking of Judas the person with Judas the betrayer is made with every occurrence of his name in the gospel of Mark. His introduction in 3:19 appears in the initial list of the Twelve, καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς δώδεκα . . . καὶ Ἰούδαν Ἰσκαριώθ, ὃς καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτόν. The next time his name is mentioned, just following the anointing pericope (14:10), it reads, Καὶ Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώθ ὁ εἷς τῶν δώδεκα

reader says that the crowd with swords and clubs came “with him” (μετ’ αὐτοῦ) which throughout the story has been a euphemism for discipleship.<sup>677</sup> Thus, the audience hears the ironic overtone, one of the twelve is in league with the enemy.

Reader commentary says someone “drew a sword” (σπασάμενος τὴν μάχαιραν) and cut off the ear of a slave of the high priest. The unidentified swordsman’s bold attempt to thwart the arrest would certainly be told in an animated fashion by our reader. Moreover, the listening audience might audibly cheer for the disciples as they have finally overcome their paralyzing fear and stood firmly for Jesus against his adversaries. They seem more than willing to fulfill their death-pledge made to Jesus just moments before, ready to do battle for their leader.<sup>678</sup> Given the vividness and seriousness of the scene, the personal sacrifice of the disciple(s) must be taken as genuine. Yet, with emotions at the breaking point, the reader makes an abrupt break in the action. He ignores the sword-play and refrains from any comments on the severed ear or the possible retaliation by the mob. Rather, he has Jesus answering (ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς) Judas’ deception and his disciples’ aggression with a question, “Have you come out as against a robber (ληστής), with swords and clubs to capture me?” (14:48). These ideologically charged words refocus the attention from the disciples’ bravado to the voice of Jesus.

The Greek quote begins with the phrase, Ὡς ἐπὶ ληστήν, “as against a robber.” Knowingly, the reader has interrupted the action, slowing down the story time with direct discourse. Now, the voice of Jesus speaks in the story directly to his accusers.

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ἀπήλθεν πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς ἵνα αὐτὸν παραδοῖ αὐτοῖς.

<sup>677</sup>E.g., 2:25; 3:14; 4:36; 5:18, 24, 37, 40; 14:33. Other similar constructions: οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν; 4:10; περὶ αὐτὸν; 3:32, 34.

<sup>678</sup>Peter’s pledge to the death (14:31) is an ideal line to be delivered orally. It begins with an emotional marker describing how the reader should emphasize the words, “vehemently” (ὁ δὲ ἐκπερισσῶς ἐλάλει). It then contains a first person dialogue between Peter and Jesus of a promise of faithfulness until death (οὐ μὴ σε ἀπαρνήσομαι), and ends with reader commentary which includes the other eleven in the pledge (ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ πάντες ἔλεγον).

The disciples simply overhear his show-stopping words leveled at the armed crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me" (14:49-49). We should not underestimate the effect of the overheard word. Just as the disciples overhear Jesus, so does the real audience. The question seems out of place, forcing all eyes away from the three fold use of the sword (14:43, 47, 48) onto the teaching. Jesus is returning to his didactic method, causing the audience to focus on his emphasis, he did *not* come as a revolutionary (ληστής).

How would the reader render Jesus' words? Jesus' use of ληστής would be verbally linked by the reader to Jesus' earlier temple action, Οὐ γέγραπται ὅτι 'Ο οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; ὑμεῖς δὲ πεποιήκατε αὐτὸν σπήλαιον ληστῶν (11:17). As Jesus was driving out the moneychangers, he was pointing out the corrupt nature of temple practice. The quotation could be used by the reader to remind his audience of the temple activity in Jeremiah's day, when the temple became the place of security against its pagan oppressors, in spite of the people's abominations (Jer 7:10). In the pre-exilic time, people were not as deeply concerned in personal faithfulness as in the inviolability of the temple precinct. Jeremiah shouted out

Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers for ever. (7:4-7)

Then, Jeremiah concludes with the words which Jesus quotes in his own temple condemnation, "Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers (σπήλαιον ληστῶν, LXX) in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the LORD" (7:14).

In Jesus' use of the quote, however, he takes it out of the realm of possibility and states emphatically, "You have made it a den of insurrectionists" (ὑμεῖς δὲ πεποιήκατε αὐτὸν σπήλαιον ληστῶν). In both temple speeches, Jeremiah's original and Jesus' re-

application, it's the hearers who are being condemned for insurrection (ληστῆς) against God.<sup>679</sup> Further, the audience-inclusive language of ὑμεῖς implicates the reader's audience as well. Thus, one of the charges for which Jesus will be crucified is the very crime which people have been guilty of throughout human history, dethroning God's agenda and crowning their own.<sup>680</sup>

Furthermore, this brief statement has stopped the action and makes an implicit connection between this teaching<sup>681</sup> and the flight of the disciples. The first person dialogue slows the story-time down to the same level as the real-time of the audience. And the audience and disciples hear together, Jesus has *not* come as a revolutionary and does not see overthrowing Rome as part of his agenda. Now, all parties comprehend that Jesus has come to do exactly what he has said; to die, and most profoundly to die a shameful death, with no immediate results, except submission to the Father's will. Additionally, the reader's commentary of the disciple's attack against the armed crowd expresses to the audience that indeed, just moments before the disciples were more than willing to die honorably in the line of fire, possibly as revolutionaries themselves. But now, they stand aligned with a cause from which Jesus has clearly disassociated himself. Then the reader couples Jesus' rhetorical question with his next remark, ἀλλ' ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαί. This statement gives an air of authority to Jesus' words as if the events about to unfold possess a divine blessing initiated long ago.

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<sup>679</sup>The same idol-like worship practice was condemned with the early Israelite trust in the magical power of the Ark (I Samuel). (For ληστῆς, cf. M. Hengel, *The Zealots*; R. A. Horsley, "Ancient Jewish Banditry and the Revolt Against Rome, A.D. 66-70," *CBQ* 43, "Josephus and the Bandits," *JSJ* 10 [1979], S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*).

<sup>680</sup>Note the depiction of his death scene, Καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο ληστές, ἓνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἓνα ἐξ εὐωνύμων αὐτοῦ (15:27).

<sup>681</sup>Once again, Jesus is depicted as teaching. The retrospective comment in 14:49, ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ διδάσκων, coupled with the key incident in the temple in 11:17, καὶ ἐδίδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, Οὐ γέγραπται ὅτι Ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; ὑμεῖς δὲ πεποιήκατε αὐτὸν σπήλαιον ληστῶν.

Finally, the audience encounters these ominous words, “And they all forsook him and fled” (καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἔφυγον πάντες).<sup>682</sup> Desertion has become a reality and in the midst of a crowd, Jesus is alone. The reader’s voice most certainly will linger over the last word, Πάντες, as a deafening silence creates its own dramatic effect upon the audience. Just a few moments before in the reading event, the audience cheered inwardly if not vocally for the actions of the disciples. Now, the reader has not left time for the audience to make a mental or emotional shift as he shockingly interjects, “they all deserted him and fled.”<sup>683</sup> In this instance, Πάντες draws in the audience with similar effect to the second person plural pronoun, ὑμεῖς. Thus, Jesus’ prediction of the disciples’ desertion (14:27) and its fulfillment at his arrest (14:50) serve as excellent examples of direct address as the real audience hears these words personally; anyone who clings to self-interests which clash with Jesus’ agenda will ultimately find themselves guilty of being a ληστής against God.

#### 2.4.4 “MOCK” TRIAL(S)

Once again, the Markan method of bracketing material highlights the sense of the ironic as these trials take place. Jesus first stands alone before the highest Jewish tribunal (14:53-65) and later before Pilate, the ultimate Roman authority in Jerusalem (15:1-15). Nestled in the midst of these two life threatening trials, Peter is being cross-examined by a servant girl (14:66-72).

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<sup>682</sup>This of course fulfills Jesus’ prophetic statement, “for you all will fall away” (Πάντες σκανδαλισθήσεσθε, 14:27).

<sup>683</sup>The use of ἀφίημι is quite interesting. It carries such a wide range of meanings with a Markan focus upon forgive-ness rather than forsaken-ness. Moreover, the first two incidents of reader commentary about the disciples is found in the calling of Andrew and Peter (1:18) and James and John (1:20). In the first we find καὶ εὐθὺς ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ. Ironically, there they rejected their livelihood (nets) and followed him, knowing nothing about him. In the second reader comment, James and John leave their Father (καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν Ζεβεδαῖον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ μετὰ τῶν μισθωτῶν ἀπῆλθον ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ). The clear verbal ties to discipleship are overwhelming. And just the opposite can be said for their desertion. Now they have discovered his messianic intentions and categorically reject him.

The chief priests finally have Jesus, as Judas found the “opportunity to betray him.” The reader tells his audience that as Jesus is brought before the human judicial body, Peter “followed him at a distance” (ὁ Πέτρος ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ, 14:54). The separation of subject and verb with the insightful prepositional phrase would give the reader an opportunity to describe Peter’s follower-ship as a hint to his disciple-ship. Moreover, the reader’s repetition of participles; sitting (συγκαθήμενος) and warming (θερμαινόμενος) in describing Peter’s action must include a vocal sense of puzzlement as the disciple now rests with the guards (μετὰ τῶν ὑπηρετῶν) in the home of Jesus’ enemy.

Then Jesus’ trial begins. It is pushed forward by reader commentary as he explains that the ruling council (Οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ ὅλον τὸ συνέδριον) were seeking testimony against Jesus (14:55), yet found none. These human efforts to trap Jesus fail miserably as “Some stood up and bore false witness against him . . . yet not even so did their testimony agree” (14:56). The failed attempt of the Sanhedrin to convict Jesus in 14:53-65 is portrayed by the reader as a comedy of errors. Especially since the conspiracy against Jesus did not just begin but has been progressing since the early collusion of the Pharisees and the Herodians (3:6). With years of pre-trial preparation, prearranged testimony, and predetermined verdict, these men do not even seem capable of carrying out an orchestrated lie. Laboriously, the reader informs his audience of the deceptive acts at work. The repetition of failure to find testimony (μαρτυρία, 14:55, 56, 59) would certainly echo in the ears of the audience. Then, the decisive act of perjury is communicated in the same phonetic word family (ἔψευδομαρτύρουν, 14:57). From our reading model we could establish that throughout this on-going direct address, the reader would maintain eye contact with the audience as he communicates the corporate hatred against Jesus.

This judicial travesty continues with an interjection by the high priest, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” (14:60). The audience might be hard pressed not to laugh at the arrogance of the question as the

irony borders on satire. In the face of witnesses failing to corroborate one another's testimony, the high priest asks Jesus to respond in this courtroom caricature. As a fitting response, Jesus stands silent before the tribunal and the audience may feel a momentary sense of relief, as Jesus has avoided another desperate attempt by his opponents to kill him (3:6; 11:18; 12:12; 14:1). He will have to be released for lack of evidence. Then the high priest places his question in a form to which Jesus is willing to respond, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (14:60). For the first time in the Gospel, Jesus answers a question about his messianic identity unambiguously, "I am."<sup>684</sup> Jesus further elaborates his response with his statement that the "Son of Man" will return as their judge. Ironically, the Judge of the Universe is the one who testifies against himself.

A closer look at Mark's final Son of Man statement will reveal the reading-effect of this passage. The question in 14:61 (σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ;) is posed by the High Priest while Jesus' answer is expressed by a second-person plural verb (ἔψαθε). One obvious explanation is that Jesus is addressing all the accusers present in the proceedings not just the High Priest. However, our reader may be directing his words to the real world audience.<sup>685</sup> Three observations which may support Jesus' words as directed to the extra-narrative audience. First, none of the other Son of Man

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<sup>684</sup>Mark 14:62 reads "I am" (Ἐγὼ εἰμι). Matthew 27:11 reads "You have said so" (Σὺ λέγεις) and Luke 22:70 states "You say that I am" (Ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι). Both seem to soften the Messianic claim Mark is making. The textual variants of Mark 14:62 found in (Q, f<sup>13</sup>, 565, 700, 2542, Or) read, Σὺ εἶπας ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι. This presents the interpreter with an interesting set of problems. Reading Mark 14:62 as "you say I am" certainly explains the other synoptic renderings of this passage. On the other hand, Jesus' stark answer "I am" would be the more difficult reading, commonplace in the Markan material. Additionally, in these hard readings, the usual pattern of both Matthew and Luke is to soften the words of Jesus. In conclusion, the stronger textual evidence which points to Ἐγὼ εἰμι cannot be discounted. This makes the passage even more important for Markan Christology. For the first time in Mark, the "Son of Man" phrase does not serve as a qualification or corrective to mistaken messianic perception (contra B. Witherington, *The Christology of Jesus* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990], 269). Rather, it is an amplification that the Messiah is in fact the Son of Man standing in their presence.

<sup>685</sup>It has been argued elsewhere that the Son of Man words in 14:62 are the narrator's comments to the readers of the gospel. Cf., Norman Perrin, "The High Priest's Question and Jesus' Answer (Mark 14:61-62)," in *The Passion in Mark: Studies in Mark 14-16*, ed. Werner Kelber (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 92; Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, 162 and *Let the Reader Understand*, 117-119.

statements within the gospel have clear uptake by characters in the story.<sup>686</sup> It seems as if only the listening audience is enlightened by the reader commentary on these remarks. An exception to this Markan pattern at this point in the story seems highly unlikely. Second, Jesus' use of the second-person plural (ὄψεσθε) may function much like the audience-inclusive effect which arises from Mark's use of the second-person plural pronoun, ὑμεῖς. Third, the quotation is a composite scriptural reference to Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1. In similar fashion to the Son of Man statements, "scripture quotations in Mark operate at the discourse level to provide interpretive guidance for the reader."<sup>687</sup> Thus, this confessional statement may be designed for the audience impact, to be understood in their listening experience rather than seen to further enrage the trial members.

This mockery of a trial closes as the high priest calls upon the council for a verdict. However, the reader's wording is quite revealing, "You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" (ἠκούσατε τῆς βλασφημίας. τί ὑμῖν φαίνεται; 14:64). Note three issues. First, the decision is based upon what the mock-jury heard, continuing in the book-level theme of aural mis-perception by the story's characters. Second, the reader subtly reinforces his human perception dilemma as the high priest asks "τί ὑμῖν φαίνεται;" φαίνω is a *hapax legomenon* within the accepted Markan text.<sup>688</sup> However in Matthew, it occurs thirteen times, with two primary meanings. First, in the sense of "appearing" as in an angelic presence (e.g., Matt 1:20; 2:13, 19) or second, how one can misrepresent themselves, as when the Pharisees pray before men (e.g., Matt 6: 5, 16, 18). Thus, in our Markan question, though the high priest is asking the jury for a decision, it may be the reader is simultaneously asking the audience, "how does this appear to you (ὑμῖν), humanly speaking of course, based upon what you have heard?"

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<sup>686</sup>2:9-11, 27-28; 8:31-32, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 61-64.

<sup>687</sup>Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 119. For details, see 87-89.

<sup>688</sup>It does occur in 16:9, ἐφάνη πρῶτον Μαρίᾳ τῇ Μαγδαληνῇ,

The verdict: “And they all condemned him as deserving death” (οἱ δὲ πάντες κατέκριναν αὐτὸν ἔνοχον εἶναι θανάτου). This brings us to the third and final issue worth noting, the audience-inclusive effect from πάντες. If any listener does not align himself with Jesus’ earlier confession, Ἐγὼ εἰμι, he will be declaring himself guilty with all (πάντες) who have condemned Jesus to death.

The decision is sealed with the shameful attack against the person of Jesus, “And some began to spit on him (note the onomatopoeic ἐμπτύειν), and to cover his face, and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophecy!’” Ironically, again in the midst of Jesus’ silent defense, the audience recalls the prophetic words from Jesus’ thrice-repeated passion prediction (8:31, 9:31 and especially 10:33-34 with the words), “the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him.” The opponents demand prophecy and the audience hears fulfillment.

#### 2.4.5 DEATH BY SHAME

What elements of Jesus’ death will an oral approach reveal which a text centered approach may pass over as seemingly insignificant? And as the audience listens to the re-enactment of the cruel event, what keys do we have that might assist us to determine how they experienced Jesus’ final moments?

In 15:1, the adverb εὐθὺς quickly transitions the audience from Peter’s denial to the handing over (παρέδωκαν) of Jesus to Pilate. Next, the reader portrays Pilate in the second trial narrative (15:1-15) in a somewhat sympathetic manner, even though he is the person who orders Jesus’ flogging and ultimately delivers him over (παραδίδωμι, 15:15) to be crucified.<sup>689</sup> First, when Jesus refuses to respond to Pilate’s initial question

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<sup>689</sup>Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Harvard University Press, 1980), 96, “As betrayal needs a betrayer, so a trial needs a judge. And that is where his life in narrative interpretation begins . . . for Pilate was generally abominated, is already in the gospel accounts being given an unhistorical character, thoughtful, even compassionate.”

or to the accusations of the chief priests (15:3), the reader reports Pilate's response, ὥστε θαυμάζειν τὸν Πιλάτον (15:5). This reader commentary about Pilate's wonderment informed the audience that Jesus' behavior caused even one of the most brutal men in Judean history to pause and reflect upon these events.<sup>690</sup> Pilate is not to be portrayed with the same flat character of the chief priests. For though he serves as judge in this trial scene, the reader depicts him more as an advocate on Jesus' behalf. Contrastingly, the Jews, knowing full well Pilate will not give Jesus the death sentence for blasphemy, must unrelentingly push for a trumped up charge of sedition. Then, the reader interjects his commentary on the actions of the chief priests as they as are said to accuse (κατηγοροῦν) Jesus of many things/charges (πολλά, 15:3). In the previous scene, the failure of the Sanhedrin to find any basis for charges against Jesus is established and their only evidence comes from Jesus' own words. Here, the reader is telling the audience that the accusers bring many charges against Jesus, knowing they are false. The reader reinforces this as Pilate poses a second round of questions to Jesus, ἴδε πόσα σου κατηγοροῦσιν (15:4). The duplicity of the Jewish leaders is firmly entrenched. Moreover,

It must be considered highly ironical that having branded Jesus as a blasphemer because he failed to correspond to the nationalistic ideal, the council now wanted him condemned by the pagan tribunal on the allegation that he made claims of a distinctively political nature.<sup>691</sup>

Likewise, reader commentary has already informed the audience of the volatility of the feast days and the possibility of riot (14:2). It is possible that a threat of riot (insurrection) exists if Jesus is not found guilty.<sup>692</sup> The irony of this situation is that Pilate must condemn Jesus for fear that he himself might appear as an insurrectionist in

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<sup>690</sup>Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark*, 180-183.

<sup>691</sup>Lane, *Mark*, 550.

<sup>692</sup>Matthew 27:24; The Evangelist John throws another twist into the insurrection theme. For the Jews to finally convince Pilate to pass the death sentence, they end up showing themselves to be "spiritual insurrectionists" against God Himself as the Chief Priest answers Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

collusion with Jesus against Rome. In the midst of the appearance of insurrection (Pilate), the possibility of insurrection (Jews), and the pardon of a convicted insurrectionist (Barabbas), Jesus is condemned of a crime of which no one believes him to be guilty.

A second reader commentary regarding Pilate follows the explanation of the festival tradition of prisoner release. The reader says that Pilate understood (γὰρ ἐγίνωσκεν) that "it was out of envy (διὰ φθόνου) that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him" (παραδίδωμι, 15:10). Three initial thoughts may come to mind for the audience. First, this short but powerful reader commentary summarizes "the social game which has been transpiring throughout the entire narrative."<sup>693</sup> From the first appearance of the chief priests (11:18)<sup>694</sup>, their honor before the people has diminished as Jesus' has increased. Second, Pilate is shown to be perceptive on this issue of political intrigue and human motivation as everyone else in the story misses the mark regarding the divine realm. Third, Pilate certainly had his own agenda, and betrays it as he condemns an innocent man to death. However from the reader's portrayal of Pilate, his wonderment (θαυμάζω; 15:5, 15) and his knowledge (γινώσκω; 15:10) serve more as a foil to highlight the evil intentions of the Jews.

At this point it might be worthwhile to survey the larger context, from arrest to crucifixion. How might the audience be affected by the presentation of the crucifixion narrative as a whole? Surprisingly, they may be distanced from the physical violence of the crucifixion as it is performed by individuals who are represented by unnamed third person pronouns all connected by a series of conjunctions:<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>693</sup>Anselm C. Hagedorn and Jerome H. Neyrey, "It was out of Envy That they Handed Jesus Over (Mark 15:10): The Anatomy of Envy and the Gospel of Mark," <http://www.nd.edu/~jneyrey1/envy.html>.

<sup>694</sup>However, Jesus speaks of the chief priests earlier in the story during his passion predictions (8:31; 10:33) as the ones who will deliver him over to the gentiles.

<sup>695</sup>John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ* (Missoula, MN: Scholar's Press, 1973), 55, "One of the most noticeable characteristics of Mark's style is the frequent and almost *monotonous* use of the *καί* parataxis. Continually pericopes (80 of 89) begin with *καί* and sentences are joined with *καί* rather than by

And the soldiers led him  
and they called together the whole cohort.  
And they clothed him in a purple cloak,  
And they began to salute him,  
“Hail, King of the Jews!”

And they struck his head with a reed,  
and spat upon him,  
and they knelt down in homage to him.  
And when they had mocked him,  
and put his own clothes on him.  
And they led him out to crucify him.

And they brought him to the place called  
Golgotha (which means the place of a skull).  
And they offered him wine mixed with  
myrrh, but he did not take it.  
And they crucified him,  
and divided his garments among them,  
And it was the third hour,  
when they crucified him.  
And with him they crucified two robbers,

Οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται ἀπήγαγον αὐτὸν  
καὶ συγκαλοῦσιν ὅλην τὴν σπεῖραν.  
καὶ ἐνδιδύσκουσιν αὐτὸν πορφύραν  
καὶ ἤρξαντο ἀσπάζεσθαι αὐτόν,  
Χαῖρε, βασιλεῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων

καὶ ἔτυπτον αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν καλάμῳ  
καὶ ἐνέπτυσαν αὐτῷ  
καὶ τιθέντες τὰ γόνατα προσεκύνουν αὐτῷ.  
καὶ ὅτε ἐνέπαιξαν αὐτῷ,  
καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ.  
καὶ ἐξάγουσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα σταυρώσωσιν αὐτόν.

καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸν Γολγοθᾶν τόπον,  
ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον Κρανίου  
Τόπος.  
καὶ ἐδίδουν αὐτῷ ἐσμυρισμένον οἶνον·  
ὃς δὲ οὐκ ἔλαβεν.  
καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτόν  
καὶ διαμερίζονται τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ,  
ἣν δὲ ὥρα τρίτη  
καὶ ἐσταύρωσαν αὐτόν.  
Καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο ληστές,

It must be understood that this is the expected form of biblical narrative<sup>696</sup>, with *καὶ* serving a literary purpose of keeping the narrative flowing. Nevertheless, these verses encompass the climax of the story and it is communicated in an almost monotonous matter-of-fact style; seemingly with no individual being given hands-on responsibility for the brutality. Interestingly, the reader gives far more attention to the

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subordinate clauses or the use of participles. Matthew and Luke consistently rework this aspect of Mark's text."

Bryan (*A Preface to Mark*) says, "The Crucifixion is narrated with brief, blunt realism. Indeed, as we have observed, Mark seems at times to emulate the detachment of a military report" (133).

<sup>696</sup>A.T. Robertson (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934]) says, "Paratactic sentences are very common in the Sanskrit, Homer, and Hebrew. The *κοινή* shows a decided fondness for the paratactic construction" (426). See also J. Jeremias (*The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981]) where he states, "[Mark] allows pericope after pericope to begin monotonously with *καὶ*. That is an established characteristic of Palestinian historical writing. From Genesis to I Maccabees every pericope in the Palestine historical books with relatively few exceptions begins with 'and'" (174).

time<sup>697</sup> and the place of the crucifixion than to the actual event itself, καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτόν.<sup>698</sup> The reader provides little commentary about the crucifixion itself which might emotionally charge the audience.<sup>699</sup> No information is given about the nail placement, the position of feet, the style of cross, Jesus' writhing in agony, nor even the reporting of blood.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>697</sup>Time references: It was the third hour (15:25); At the sixth hour. . . until the ninth hour (15:33); And at the ninth hour (15:34). Place references: to the place Golgotha . . . Place of a Skull (15:22).

<sup>698</sup>The other gospels agree in the brevity of the depiction of the event,

Mark 15:24	And they crucify him	καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτόν
Matt 27:35	When they crucified him	σταυρώσαντες δὲ αὐτόν
Luke 23:33	They crucified him	ἐκεῖ ἔσταύρωσαν αὐτόν
John 19:18	They crucified him	ὅπου αὐτόν ἔσταύρωσαν

<sup>699</sup>This certainly is not the only explanation for not lingering over the actual crucifixion in graphic details. Martin Hengel observed this anomaly as he addressed the issue of first century crucifixion and simply explains it as the literary convention of the day, "No ancient writer wanted to dwell too long on this cruel procedure" (*Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977], 25). Later, he reiterates that "crucifixion was widespread and frequent but the cultured literary world wanted to have nothing to do with it and as a rule kept quiet about it" (38). Brown comments on the laconic fashioning of the gospel passion narratives in *Death of the Messiah*, "The relative scarcity of references to crucifixion in antiquity and their fortuitousness are less a historical problem than an aesthetic one, connected with the sociology of literature."

Both scholars state their conclusions with certainty, as if the issue can be summed up as a self-evident truth; the first century literary world did not document the act of crucifixion because of its horrific nature. This observation has become the accepted answer to explain the sparsity of crucifixion accounts in extant literature. However, there are other compelling factors which might just as adequately explain this historical absence rather than constructing a hypothetical agreement of writers who boycott documentation of crucifixions due to its shame or horror. First, this form of death sentence was almost exclusively carried out on people of no historical importance, namely slaves and rebels. Historians, therefore, should not expect to find documents transcribed and preserved for 2 millennia for unimportant individuals. Furthermore, literary silence in the documents of antiquity would be expected regarding evidence of state supported torture, especially texts of Roman origin (Conversation with R. Brown [26 March 1998] and *Death of the Messiah*, [Vol 2, 946]). Moreover, it is essential to note that since Mark and the other gospels were composed to be heard, what effect does the sociology of ancient literary theory regarding Roman historiography have upon gospel oral traditions?

With this in mind, scholarship would be hard pressed to explain the existence of such documentation rather than its absence. Secondly, crucifixion, as barbarous as it was, was employed by Rome exactly for its abhorrent nature; to discourage slaves and rebels from seditious acts. Crucifixion's restraining value upon the lower classes was found in its visual effect upon eye-witnesses and in the ensuing story's graphic oral transmission. The horror of Rome's public spectacle of crucifixion was designed to protect the empire's stability from insurrection but never to create a new literary genre which would be inaccessible by the illiterate people it attempted to control.

<sup>700</sup>With all the violence (explicit and implied) it should be pointed out that prior to the passion narrative, the word "blood" (αἷμα) is only used in Mark with reference to the woman in 5:25,29. Its only

The reader seems to pass over the events quickly. Not so much neglecting their existence, since the details of crucifixion are probably well known to all who hear the story. Yet, the Markan story may limit the audience from locking on to the graphic picture of a tortured death. What does this accomplish? First, the reader focuses the audience's attention on the shame and humiliation which Jesus receives.<sup>701</sup> There are three groups of people who mock Jesus while he is on the cross. First, the reader tells his audience that the general category of "the ones who passed by" (οἱ παραπορευόμενοι) were blaspheming him. Blasphemy (βλασφημέω) would never be described as their actions except by the omniscient reader who is interpreting the event as he sets the tone for each subsequent mocking. Moreover, the description of the mockers' body language (κινούντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν) are housed in the language of Psalm 22:7-8, allowing the observant listener to make a prophetic connection.

Then the reader presents the mocking in the first-person voice of the passers-by as the cacophony of voices deriding Jesus receive more attention than the pain of the crucifixion. Next, the actions of the chief priests and the scribes are introduced with the adverb, ὁμοίως, making a connection between their words and their immediate predecessors. Ironically, now the words of Jesus' accusers are in perfect agreement. The description "the same way" is not exactly clear, as to whether it refers to their body language, their words, or a combination. Yet the reader commentary indicates that their action is mocking (ἐμπαίζοντες) him to one another (πρὸς ἀλλήλους), and the listening audience is allowed to overhear privileged conversation. Again, their

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reference in the Passion Narrative is found in 14:24, with Jesus' words, "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." It is at this vital point in the Gospel's closing passages that Jesus expresses the full extent of his mission. The surprising reference to blood in this passage and its absence at the crucifixion should alert the audience to this paradox. It also allows the audience to focus on the importance of the Last Supper words of Christ. This may prevent the blood reference from being subject to interpretation based only on the physical death on the cross. Rather, Mark forces the reader to define "blood" by its usage in the Last Supper pericope, as it takes on metaphorical and symbolic salvific use.

<sup>701</sup>For a recent reappraisal of "shame" being the core of the crucifixion, cf., Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (Grand Rapids: IVP, 2000).

mocking is found in first-person dialogue. Finally, the ones being crucified (οἱ συνεσταυρωμένοι) with him were insulting (ὠνείδιζον) him. The focus of the scene is overwhelmingly on the mocking and shame. The reader's approach may be leading the audience to look below the surface and conclude that Jesus' death should not be defined in the category of martyrdom<sup>702</sup> or mere human pain.<sup>703</sup>

Following the mocking scene, the reader then narrates the death of Jesus. Yet again, he appears to minimize the actual death as it is rendered simplistically, ἐξέπνευσεν (15:37). Now, the reader will focus the audience's attention upon several other events surrounding the death. First, the cry of Jesus. It seems plausible that the reader would have dramatized the cry of Jesus, ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι; According to Quintilian's oratory instruction, "It is essential to speak with force, energy, and pugnacity, that violent themes should be expressed in violent rhythms to enable the audience to share the horror of the speaker."<sup>704</sup> Moreover, the text contains a vocal marker (ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) reminiscent of the powerful displays which took place during earlier exorcisms (1:26; 5:7).<sup>705</sup> Following this great cry, the reader inserts direct discourse in the form of a translation of Jesus' Aramaic words into Greek. The importance of the inserted translation should not be minimized. On one level, it serves as an aid to cross ancient language barriers. For it is quite probable that members of the

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<sup>702</sup>I am not using the word martyr in a pejorative sense. A martyr to a first century Jew was someone who was an example and even to an extent, vicarious (cf. C. K. Barrett, "Mark 10:45: A Ransom for Many" in *New Testament Essays* (London: SPCK, 1972); D. Seeley, *The Noble Death* (Almond Press, 1990); and J. Pabee, *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985). Cf. Sam Williams, *Jesus' Death as a Saving Event* [Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1975] for contrary point of view). However worthy a martyr was in the first century, the evangelists do not place their death on a par with Jesus.

<sup>703</sup>Cf. 14:35-36. In Gethsemane the narrator introduces the reader to a proleptic content of this suffering. There, alone, abandoned by his sleeping disciples, Jesus prays, suggesting to the Father that he does not think the cross is a good idea. Nevertheless, he submits himself to God's will.

<sup>704</sup>*Inst. Or.* 9.4.126.

<sup>705</sup>There is another place where the reader pairs up the two words φωνή and βοάω, in the prophetic quotation in 1:3, φωνῇ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. Interestingly, Mark's use of φωνή always occurs in divine speech: Scripture quotation (1:3); The Father (1:11; 9:7); demons (1:26; 5:7); Jesus (15:34, 37).

audience would not have been conversant in Aramaic. Coupled with the lack of language skills, the foreign sounds would have been articulated in a shout, adding to the possibility of distortion. Additionally, it is one of only two places in the gospel<sup>706</sup> where the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus are preserved, adding an air of authenticity to his final statement (15:34).<sup>707</sup>

However, if we take seriously our oral model, we must remember that the listening audience also encountered the Aramaic cry aurally, just as the on-lookers at the cross. They could just as easily have misunderstood these words as they were depicted by a demonstrative reader.<sup>708</sup> But, the reader's translation (ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον) prevents the listening audience from making the same aural mistake as the bystanders (τινες τῶν παρεστηκότων, 15:35-36) who misunderstand Jesus' Aramaic cry of Ελωι ελωι as one directed towards Elijah. Moreover, only the listening audience has the interpretive key of Psalm 22 against which to hear the death cry. Additionally, not only does the reader give the audience the correct way to hear the cry, but the audience also understands that the confusion of the bystanders can be attributed to a listening (ἀκούσαντες) and seeing (ἴδε) problem (15:35). The participants caught inside the story world do not hear or see correctly, as they assumed Jesus was crying out for

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<sup>706</sup>Cf. also, 5:41, ταλιθα κουμ, ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον· τὸ κοράσιον, σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε.

<sup>707</sup>Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 375; Edward Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1970), 353. Both Hooker and Schweizer are unconcerned with the historicity of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. Schweizer says, "This passage presents the search for faith which knows that God is real even in times when the believer feels forsaken and when the resources of thinking and experience have been exhausted" (353).

<sup>708</sup>This issue is often overlooked by modern scholars since for us the voice of Jesus is fixed in a text and compared letter by letter. One can not aurally misunderstand a written text. For example, A. Y. Collins, "From Noble Death to Crucified Messiah" *NTS* 40 (1994), 499, "The words were given in Aramaic to prepare for the misunderstanding of some of the bystanders who conclude that Jesus is calling Elijah. Their misunderstanding appears to be deliberate, since the similarity between the two relevant words is not close." Collins' conclusion makes sense in a textual environment but an audience listening to a reader cry out the words of Jesus could easily mistake spoken words. Cf. also Hooker, *St. Mark*, 376. "The quotation is given in Aramaic, though the confusion with the name Elijah is possible only in Hebrew." Cf. T. Boman, "Das Letzte Wort Jesu," *Stud Theol* 17 (1964), 103-119 for details. Matthew recognizes this dilemma when he reworks the cry with the words, "Eli, Eli" versus Mark's "Eloi, Eloi."

deliverance; the arrival of the redeemer of the righteous sufferer, Elijah. Finally, the presence of the translation prevents the audience from ever wishing they were actually present at the cross. Being with Jesus, either during his life or more powerfully at his death was not an advantage but actually may have prevented them from understanding the meaning of the events. Profoundly, those who listen to the events as they are interpretively shaped with insider information in the reading-event from an omniscient reader are really the benefactors of Jesus' cry and become the "insiders" of the Jesus story.

The next reader commentary which will help the audience interpret Jesus' cry comes in the form of the torn temple curtain (15:38).<sup>709</sup> The juxtaposition of the tearing of the curtain (τὸ καταπέτασμα) with Jesus' death allows the audience to view two spatially separate events as intimately connected.<sup>710</sup> Now, the audience sees the significance of the death through the reader commentary as they hear the connection of Jesus' death with the temple veil tearing. A subtle yet profound sense of vindication arises for Jesus' temple-cleansing action in chapter 12 and as substantiation for his prophetic words regarding the temple destruction in chapter 13.

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<sup>709</sup>Numerous references about this event cited in Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 894-895.

It would appear that this verse interrupts the flow of the tightly woven narrative. For there are numerous verbal connections, such as the repetition of Jesus' cry (φωνῆ 15:34, 37) to the bystanders reporting of the cry (φωνέω, 15:35) and the locative comparison of the bystanders (τῶν παρεστηκότων, 15:35) to the centurion (ὁ παρεστηκώς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ, 15:35, 39). Even the same word ἀφίημι is used with different meanings (in 15:36 means "wait" while in 15:37 means "to release, to give up.") As these verbal and thematic threads link this section into a carefully crafted unit, they simultaneously highlight the reader's insertion of 15:38. Yet, it seems that this observation arises more from visual inspection than oral/aural reception

<sup>710</sup>That of course is assuming that the temple curtain being referred to here is primarily physical not solely symbolic. For example, H. L. Chronis, "The Torn Veil: Cultus and Christology in Mark 15:37-39," *JBL* (1982), calls the temple curtain a "cipher for theophany" (110). "Standing in the presence of the dying Jesus, he feels himself to be standing in the divine presence." H. M. Jackson, "Death of Jesus in Mark and the Miracle of the Cross," *NTS* 33 (1987) moves in a similar direction as he presses the text to function as a metaphor. For him the breath/spirit of the dying Jesus (ἐξέπνευσεν) "rends the outer curtain of the temple and that is what the centurion saw." This seems unlikely for several reasons. First, miraculous acts have not been a part of Jesus' work since the cursing of the fig tree (11:14). Even the description of the resurrection in Mark is carefully toned down. Submission to the will of God and to the fulfillment of scripture has been the set agenda. Second, the connection with the rending (σχίζω) of the veil is more closely associated with Jesus' baptism in 1:10.

Finally, the audience encounters the centurion. This verse begins with a circumstantial participle describing the nature of the centurion's perception, seeing (ἰδὼν) these events unfold. The reader's description of the centurion is aurally reminiscent of the earlier bystanders who misunderstood Jesus' last words.<sup>711</sup> The reader also places him in the same location with a sense of double meaning. It is possible to understand the phrase, ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ, as a simple locative reference, as if the centurion stands in the vicinity of the bystanders, facing Jesus. However, the reader has made it clear that all the people present at the crucifixion are heaping insults upon him, even the men crucified with him. Moreover, the adjective ἐναντίας has already been employed by Mark meaning "against, opposed to (6:48)" and is always used in contexts of hostility in the remainder of the New Testament.<sup>712</sup> The centurion, who was the commander of the men who viciously mocked Jesus in the praetorium and then crucified Jesus may not just be in the same location but might also be another in the delegation of scoffers; possibly the most hardened of them all.

With that in mind, the reader now makes a connection between the perception of the centurion (seeing, ἰδὼν) and Jesus' death (15:37, 39).<sup>713</sup> The result is the first human to confess Jesus' true identity. It is the witness of Jesus' death, not his wonder-inducing miracles or his authoritative teaching which conquers the human perception dilemma. This has been the goal of the reader. To have people confess what the reader has

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<sup>711</sup>15:35 τινες τῶν παρεστηκότων and 15:39 ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ.

<sup>712</sup>Matt. 14:24; Acts 26:9, 27:4, 28:17; 1 Thess. 2:15; Tit. 2:8. Cf. Boomershine, *Mark, The Story-Teller*.

<sup>713</sup>The phrase ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν carries with it some subtle aural characteristics. First, this reader commentary does not use the same vocabulary employed throughout the story for Jesus' death (ἀποκτείνω, 8:31, 9:31; θάνατος; 10:33). Rather this euphemistic word, ἐκπνέω, connects what the centurion saw in 15:39 with what he heard as a bystander in 15:37; ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφείς φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν. Thus, his confession is based upon both the hearing and seeing senses which are connected earlier in 4:12 and 8:18. Second, the word carries a wonderful sense of onomatopoeia as Jesus expels his last breath. Demetrius discusses this when he says, "Onomatopoeic formation also produces vividness. If Homer has said 'drinking', he would not have intended the sounds of dogs drinking" (Demetrius, *On Style*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. Doreen Innes [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995], 220).

provided to the audience via insider information; what God has spoken (1:11, 9:7), what the demons realize (1:24, 34; 3:11; 5:7); that Jesus is the Son of God.

As the cry is heard, its literal meaning is hard to take at face value. On the surface, the listener may hear a man suffering unjustly or view the abandonment of the Son by the Father, both of which are true. But if that is the totality of the listening experience, they have limited their comprehension to perceiving life, just as the people in the story, through the constraints of human thinking. The story is emphasizing that what "we see" is not the true essence of what is unfolding before us. Thus, what sustains Jesus and makes his cry comprehensible within the larger Markan context is his faith in God and his belief that reality is based exclusively upon the divine perspective. The audience is being asked to trust in the same manner as Jesus, not in the circumstances as they appear but in the divine will which stands behind them.

Moreover, the audience may see that physical pain is not the worst agony one can experience. The crippling effects of human shame and divine separation are torment of a much higher order. Running parallel with that idea, humanity's constant request of Jesus to relieve physical pain throughout the early chapters of Mark begins to diminish in importance. Miracles, for the sake of purely relieving physical pain, are seen as nothing more than a spiritual narcotic, numbing the pain but never addressing the problem. The Markan Jesus will not permit this pseudo-spirituality to be associated with orthodox Christianity. Thus, the reader hears a shout of victory within Jesus' cry of dereliction.<sup>714</sup>

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<sup>714</sup>Cf. John Pobee, "The Cry of the Centurion - A Cry of Defeat" in *The Trial of Jesus*, ed. E. Bammel (Naperville, IL: Allenson Inc., 1970). In this article, Pobee argues that "the centurion's words amount to the admission of the failure of all for which he as a representative of Rome government stood. The cry of the centurion is, indeed, a cry of defeat" (101).

## 2.5 THE READER, THE ENDING, AND THE AUDIENCE

The textual problems of the Markan ending are diverse yet it seems at the present time that scholarly opinion from a variety of theological perspectives may have reached a consensus in favor of 16.8 as the best choice for the end of the gospel.<sup>715</sup> Detailing the arguments for each of the textual possibilities is outside the scope of this thesis.<sup>716</sup> It should be noted that ending the gospel with ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ is unusual<sup>717</sup> and the fact that several different endings were added by the early church shows that it was perhaps regarded as incomplete, even by the other evangelists. The suppositions to the rationale for the variety of Markan ending are just as varied as the textual options; the text was never finished, the conclusion was lost or destroyed, or the conclusion was deliberately suppressed.<sup>718</sup> However, some of these proposals arise from modern reading assumptions. For example, early in this century, Enslin argued that if the ending was either lost or destroyed, it would have been at such an early date that not only was it not recopied, but also that no one was sufficiently familiar with the ending to restore it from memory.<sup>719</sup> That concept assumes not just a modern reading model but also an anachronistic idea of composition, where an individual and not a community had ownership of a story. There are also numerous scholars who argue that Mark could not stand complete without a resurrection appearance. Therefore, it must

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<sup>715</sup>C. C. Black, *The Disciples According to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate* (JSNTSup, 27; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 35.

<sup>716</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 226-229; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: UBS, 1994), 102-107.

<sup>717</sup>The possibility that Mark ended with ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ has been demonstrated many times: P. W. Van der Horst, "Can a book end with GAR? A Note on Mark 16:8," *JTS* 23 (1972), 121-124; L. J. D. Richardson, "St. Mark 16:8," *JTS* 49 (1948), 144-45. Nevertheless, Metzger (*The Text of the New Testament*) argues that "16:8 does not represent what Mark intended to stand at the end of his gospel" (228).

<sup>718</sup>These summaries are found in C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 470.

<sup>719</sup>Thanks to Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder*, 187 for this reference to M. S. Enslin, "ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ, Mark 16:8," *JBL* 46 (1927), 68.

have had one at some point.<sup>720</sup> Again, that assumes a reading model in which the text is the sole source of information in a reading-event. But, as we have seen, there was an ancient expectation that the readers themselves would supplement the material in an oral presentation. Additionally, the listening community played a vital role of feedback in the reading-event. Thus, this thesis will put aside the text critical problems of the Markan ending and follow the caution of T. A. Burkill who concisely addresses the interpreter's responsibility to the text, "The primary duty of the exegete is to elucidate the gospel as it stands, not as he thinks it ought to be."<sup>721</sup>

We will begin with some initial observations about the reading-effect of 16:1-8. First, the story completes without resolution. This has been driven in part by the theme of prophecy and fulfillment. The story ends with three unresolved prophecies<sup>722</sup>, (1) the post-resurrection meeting in Galilee (14:28), (2) the disciples' proclamation of the gospel and their corresponding suffering for Jesus (13:9-13), and (3) Jesus' baptizing with the Holy Spirit.<sup>723</sup> How does the recurring role of women in the close of Mark impact its resolution? Throughout the narrative, minor characters have provided an

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<sup>720</sup>N. T. Wright and Ben Witherington in personal conversations. C.f. also C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Mark 16:1-8," *SJT* 5 (1952), 406. Moreover, though 1 Cor 15:3-7 may be a kerygmatic guide, the NT as a whole does not necessitate a resurrection appearance. For the sermons of Acts 2:24 and 13:33-34 only contain the promise of a resurrection not the actual appearance. Also, is it fair to have Matthew, Luke, and John set the agenda for Mark?

<sup>721</sup>*Mysterious Revelation: An Examination of the Philosophy of St. Mark's Gospel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 5.

<sup>722</sup>There is a fourth, the Coming of the Son of Man, but that one was never intended to take place within the narrative time of the story (cf. 13:24-27).

<sup>723</sup>These last two prophecies may be linked, since there are only two times in the Gospel where the phrase Holy Spirit occurs (though different in form: 1:8 ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ; 13:11 τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον). This may imply that in part, Markan baptism with the Holy Spirit may involve standing faithful when one is delivered up to councils. (It is worth noting the verbal and situational parallels between persecution in chapter 13 and Jesus' trial narratives in 14-15).

Of course, other theological tensions are left unresolved at the end of the story, such as how can the church's mission go forward without a resurrection appearance? This tension in the early church may have been a prime motivator in giving rise to additional endings to the gospel as a whole. Persecuted people are being asked to believe and to suffer for Jesus' sake, not based upon believing by seeing, but by believing *without* seeing the risen savior.

immense amount of data to the audience regarding a proper response to the person of Jesus.<sup>724</sup> Once the disciples left the story, as a group in 14:50, and finally Peter in 14:72, the story's hopeful resolution (not the avoidance of Jesus' death but the discovery of his identity and a corresponding faith) is grounded in the minor characters of Simon of Cyrene, the centurion, the women, and Joseph of Arimathea. Furthermore, throughout Mark, many of the minor characters were women. Thus, the reader may be collapsing all of these previously faithful characters into these women and then placing the hopes of the audience upon their response to the resurrection news.

Second, there is extensive reader commentary in 16:1-8 but, as we will see, it may have a diverse reading-effect upon an audience. For example the women, who are called by name three times (15:40, 47; 16:1)<sup>725</sup>, were portrayed favorably at the crucifixion<sup>726</sup> as the reader used words which equated the women with the characteristics of a disciple; διακονέω (15:41; cf. 1:13, 31; 10:45) and ἀκολουθέω (15:41; cf. 1:18; 2:14; 8:34; 10:52). Later the reader tells the audience that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body of Jesus was laid (ἐθεώρουν ποῦ τέθειται;

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<sup>724</sup>Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus*.

<sup>725</sup>It is possible that the repetition of their names may be an indicator that they were well known to some of the original flesh-and-blood readers/audience. There might be much more at stake in the naming of these three women. For in the references, we find, Mary the mother of James the Younger and Jesus (15:40), who later is called "Mary the mother of Jesus" (15:47) and "Mary the mother of James" (16:1). Crossan ("Mark and the Relatives of Jesus," *NovT* 15 [1973], 81-113), Kelber (*Oral and Written*, 103), and Boomershine (*Mark, the Storyteller*, 238-40) all have identified this Mary as the mother of Jesus. The only other time the names James and Jesus are associated with Mary in the gospel is in the Nazareth story. There they are explicitly the brothers of Jesus, the son of Mary (6:3). This may function as a form of restoration for Jesus' mother, who in 3:21, 31-35 is depicted as calling Jesus, ἐξέστη. This is contra to Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand*) who concludes, "[Since] Mary is called 'the mother of James and Jesus' in the final scenes of the Gospel suggests that she is not regarded as 'the mother of Jesus.' Jesus' relationship with his family is still broken" (244). The text itself may imply a broken relationship but once the real life audience is brought into the interpretive picture, who probably was familiar with the family of Jesus, and the positive role the family had in the establishment of the early church, an estrangement from Jesus does not seem to be a plausible reading-effect.

<sup>726</sup>Essentially all women in Mark are presented in a positive light: Simon's mother-in-law (1:29-31); woman with issue of blood (5:25-34); Syrophenician woman (7:24-30); widow (12:41-44); woman with alabaster jar (14:3-9). The only other named woman is the notorious, Herodias (Ἡρωδιάς; 6:19, 22).

15:47) thus making them the only eyewitnesses to Jesus' death (cf. 15:40), to his burial, and to the resurrection announcement (16:6-7).

However, in the closing moments of the story, the text includes an ambiguous emotional marker, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις. This will certainly aid the reader in rendering an interesting voice inflection and gestures in telling the story but may add confusion at the level of reader-effect, for how is the audience to react to this insider information? This confusion began earlier in the passage as the reader describes the women's distress (ἐξεθαμβήθησαν; 16:5), used previously to describe the turmoil of Jesus in Gethsemane (ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν; 14:34). The response of the young man (νεανίσκον) in the tomb begins with a negation of the same intense verb (μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε; 16:6), implying that their reaction was unnecessary or inappropriate.<sup>727</sup> The women's immediate response is flight (καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον; 16:8). Though it could be argued that fear is a natural response to numinous figures, the verbal connection (aorist participle and aorist main verb) is reminiscent of the disciples' desertion in Gethsemane (Καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἔφυγον πάντες; 14:50) and the unidentified naked man (ὁ δὲ καταλιπὼν τὴν σινδόνα γυμνὸς ἔφυγεν; 14:52), neither of which left a positive impact on the audience. Next, via the force of a double negative, the women are depicted by the reader as speechless (οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν), following a command to go and tell, which apparently originated with Jesus.<sup>728</sup> Finally, the reader uttered his last words in the form of insider information which will explain their silence, ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. The comments in 16:8 give the reasons for the women's actions in two consecutive γὰρ clauses, first fleeing and then remaining silent. Yet as the story ends, it gives rise to several unanswered

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<sup>727</sup>It is also reminiscent of comfort given to one experiencing a theophany (6:50).

<sup>728</sup>Previously in Mark the command ὑπάγω has only been heard from the lips of Jesus. Second person plural imperative references (ὑπάγετε): 6:38; 11:2; 14:13; 16:7. Second person singular imperatives references (ὑπάγε): 1:44; 2:11; 5:19, 34; 7:29; 8:33; 10:21, 52. Interestingly, the direct command to go and tell (ὑπάγε . . . καὶ ἀπάγγειλον) was given previously with great results, worded thus: καὶ πάντες ἐθαύμαζον (5:19-20).

questions. Did the women ever tell the disciples, did Jesus appear to them in Galilee, and why were the women afraid?

Third, dealing with Mark as a whole demands that one properly understand the impact of 16:1-8. Furthermore, if a prerequisite for understanding Mark holistically or his ending specifically hinges on a definitive answer, our labor may be in vain. For, as cited above, the data easily can move an audience from one position to another. This may be illustrated from the writings of Larry Hurtado who changed his stance regarding 16:8. He writes,

[S]ince early Christian tradition (e.g., 1 Cor 15:5) views the Twelve as influential witnesses to Jesus' resurrection and as leaders in the early church, it is difficult to imagine how Mark could have expected the first-century readers to see 16:8 as indicating that the Twelve were never informed of Jesus' resurrection [by the women.]<sup>729</sup>

Hurtado adds parenthetically, "This amounts to a change in my own understanding of 16:8 from that reflected in my commentary where I took the verse as indicating that the women temporarily disobeyed what the 'young man' commanded."<sup>730</sup>

Historically, defining the role/function of the women in the narrative has been problematic for commentators. Two schools of thought emerge from the debate. On one side we find scholars such as Weeden<sup>731</sup> and Kelber<sup>732</sup> who have determined that the text of Mark describes the disciples and the women in a negative light.<sup>733</sup> On the other side of the debate are their critics who say that they have exaggerated the negative

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<sup>729</sup>"Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark-and Beyond," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. R. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 23.

<sup>730</sup>"Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark -and Beyond," 23. The commentary reference can be found in *Mark*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), 283.

<sup>731</sup>Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*.

<sup>732</sup>We have encountered a number of Kelber's works previously. Yet his most clearest writing on this matter is *Mark's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

<sup>733</sup>These men do not stand alone. Cf. Joseph B. Tyson, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark," *JBL* 80 (1961), 261-268; David J. Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction," *JBL* (1972), 491-500.

portrayals in the Second Gospel.<sup>734</sup> They contend that the passages are more grey than the black and white that Weeden and Kelber have allowed. Malbon argues that “the disciples [and women] are not simply the ‘bad guys’, rather they are fallible followers of Jesus?”<sup>735</sup> Tannehill adds his criticism this way, “The composition of Mark strongly suggests that the author, by the way in which he tells the disciples’ story, intended to awaken his readers to their failures as disciples and call them to repentance.”<sup>736</sup>

It seems that this impasse is more methodological than interpretive. For the negative school is talking about what a text says, while its positive counterpart is discussing what a text does. While Weeden and Kelber are limiting their observations to the story, their critics are applying these story level observations to the audience reading-effects. They seem to be talking past one another.<sup>737</sup>

Is there a way out of this interpretive circle, where a methodology prohibits one from making a decision regarding a story’s effect until its meaning is clear? As demonstrated earlier, stories and events often affect people previous to them understanding the logic or meaning.<sup>738</sup> If that is true, Dwyer is correct when he says, “too much attention has been paid to the silence [of the women] and too little attention

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<sup>734</sup>Cf. esp., Robert C. Tannehill, “The Disciples in Mark;” Joanna Dewey, “Point of View and the Disciples in Mark,” *SBLSP* 1982, 97-106; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark,” *Semeia* 28 (1983), 29-48, idem, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

<sup>735</sup>Malbon, “Fallible Followers,” 33.

<sup>736</sup>Tannehill, “The Disciples in Mark,” 393. Malbon slips into the same reading scheme when she says, “I read the data Kelber collects for ‘discipleship failure’ as evidence of Markan pastoral concern for the difficulty of true discipleship” (*Narrative Space*, 179, n. 26). Notice her methodological shift from story level to effect level.

<sup>737</sup>Kelber responds to these critics in “Apostolic Tradition and the Form of the Gospel” in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed., Fernando Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), esp. 29-30. He does report that the core issue for his critics rests in their perception that Mark is principally written for his reading audience with a “pastoral, pedagogical” objective.

And surprisingly, both schools take their incompatible findings and use them to reconstruct the function of Mark in its original setting. Weeden and Kelber, polemically; Malbon and Tannehill, pastorally.

<sup>738</sup>Cf, Chapter 1, Fallacy 2: Modern Objectivity verses Ancient Subjectivity.

to the awe. The silence is a function of wonder, subordinate to it, and not the main feature of the narrative."<sup>739</sup> If so, then possibly we are asking some of the wrong questions, or at least we are demanding more of a resolution from the text than Mark is willing to give. And, if Mark's ending is more focused upon reader-effect than on delineating a literary meaning, maybe we would be better off asking (1) what clues are present which would help a reader present the passage, *καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδέν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ?* and (2) how can an oral approach contribute to understanding this historically unsettled passage?<sup>740</sup>

First, how might the text direct the reader? A starting point would be to examine the function of the two rapid fire *γάρ* clauses in 16:8, *εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις* and *ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ*, both serving as insider information carrying emotional markers. Comments introduced by *γάρ* are almost always used to explain confusing or surprising events which have been reported in the previous sentence.<sup>741</sup> Moreover, since their function is to answer anticipated questions, these comments usually occur in the middle of a literary unit in the story. Yet in addition to 16:8, there is another instance where the reader's comment comes at the end of his story; Jesus' walking on the water (6:45-52).<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>739</sup>Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder*, 192. F. W. Synge ("Mark 16:1-8," *ThSAf* [1985], concurs when he says, "that it is likely that the possibility never occurred to Mark that any reader of his narrative would pay more attention to the frightened women than to the vision which took their tongues away" (72). J. Lee Magness (*Sense and Absence: Structure and the Suspension in the Ending of the Gospel of Mark* [Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1986] puts it this way, "The presence of the discourse about the women 'Go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you in Galilee; there you will see him' overcomes the absence of their words and overcomes any narration about their report by speaking their words for them in the readers' mind" (115).

<sup>740</sup> The best contributions to understanding the end of Mark's Gospel are Magness, *Sense and Absence*; Thomas Boomershine and Gilbert Bartholomew, "The Narrative Technique of Mark 16:8," *JBL* 100 (1981), 213-223; Thomas Boomershine, "Mark 16:8 and the Apostolic Commission," *JBL* 100 (1981), 225-239; Norman Peterson, "When is the End Not the End? Literary Reflections on the Ending of Mark's Narrative," *Interp* 34 (1980), 151-166.

<sup>741</sup>1:16, 22; 2:15; 3:21; 5:8, 28, 42; 6:17, 18, 20, 31, 48; 9:6, 34; 10:22; 111:13; 14:2, 40, 56; 15:10; 16:4.

<sup>742</sup>This insight is credited to Boomershine, "The Narrative Technique of Mark 16:8," 213-223. Boomershine does discuss a second clause which comes at the end of a story, the plot of the authorities (14:1-2). However, I have chosen to minimize the value of this clause since it falls at the end of the story only because it is interrupted by the intercalation of 14:3-9, the anointing of Jesus.

In the first case, the γὰρ comment of 6:52 gives some insight into the disciples' amazement (καὶ λίαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐξίσταντο) described in the preceding verse; first that they did not understand the significance of the loaves, and then because their hearts were hardened. But since there has not been any previous discussion of the meaning of the loaves, or of the disciples' response to the feeding, ending the story with the γὰρ clause raises as many questions as it answers.<sup>743</sup> Thus, from the reader's standpoint, this passage may be instructing him to convey to his audience that he has a secret which he is withholding, at least for the moment. The audience is dependent upon the reader in 6:52 and even more so for an explanation at the end of the story.

Next, how do the emotional elements contained within the successive γὰρ clauses direct the reader in his presentation? Three emotional responses are reported in 16:8: fear (ἐφοβοῦντο), astonishment (ἐκστασις), and trembling (τρόμος). The closest verbal parallel to 16:8 is the response of the woman with the flow of blood who comes to Jesus φοβηθεῖσα καὶ τρέμουσα (5:33). The parallel is not simply in word usage but in the origin of the emotional response. Insider information tells us that the origin of the fear comes on several fronts. First, her insight into the event, εἰδυῖα δὲ γέγονεν αὐτῇ seems to be closely connected with her fear. Earlier she is said to know (ἔγνω τῷ σώματι) that the blood in her had dried up (5:29). So, is her fear solely connected to the healing? But earlier in the passage, when Jesus realized that power left him, says, "τίς μου ἦψατο;" Then he is said to have kept looking (περιεβλέπετο) for the one who did this, compounding the issue for the woman wishing for anonymity. Is she fearful of the healing or does her fear arise as a response to the words of Jesus?<sup>744</sup> Thus, the fear of

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<sup>743</sup>This is in agreement with Quesnell's redactional analysis (*The Mind of Mark* [Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1969]) which says that the comment heightens the mystery surrounding the loaves. Further, Quesnell presents that the enigma of the loaves is heightened by 8:14-21. See also above in this chapter, 3.3.2 Boating and Feeding Fools for an elaboration of this dilemma.

<sup>744</sup>This is not the only occurrence of fear based upon the words of Jesus. See the following passages:

9:32: οἱ δὲ ἠγνόουν τὸ ῥῆμα, καὶ ἐφοβοῦντο αὐτὸν ἐπερωτῆσαι.;

10:32: οἱ δὲ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἐφοβοῦντο.

11:18: Καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ ἐζήτησαν πῶς αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν· ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ αὐτόν

the women in 16:8 may be similarly linked to the words of the young man, especially with his emphasis upon his promise being the words of Jesus, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν (16:7). R. H. Lightfoot proposed that the purpose of the Markan ending was to emphasize the appropriateness of holy fear, in response to God's revelation in the resurrection. He goes on to say, "I desire to suggest . . . that it may be exceptionally difficult for the present generation to sympathize with St. Mark's insistence on fear and amazement as the first and inevitable and, up to a point, the right result of revelation."<sup>745</sup>

Finally, the closing words may contain direction for the reader regarding the length of pauses to insert between the clauses. Quintilian advises his students thus,

The ear, after following the unbroken flow of the voice and being carried along down the stream of oratory, finds its best opportunity for forming sound judgment on what it has heard, when the rush of words comes to a halt and gives it time for consideration . . . It is this point that excited the eager expectation of the audience.<sup>746</sup>

Elsewhere, he has said,

Who, for example can doubt, that there is but one thought in the following passage and that it should be pronounced without a halt for breath? *Animadverti, iudices, omnem accusatoris orationem in duas divisam esse partes.*<sup>747</sup> Still the groups formed by the first two words, the next three, and then again by the next two and three, have each their own special rhythms and causes a slight check in our breathing.<sup>748</sup>

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12:12: Καὶ ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν κρατῆσαι, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸν ὄχλον, ἔγνωσαν γὰρ ὅτι πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὴν παραβολὴν εἶπεν.

<sup>745</sup>R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (London: Oxford University, 1962), 97.

<sup>746</sup>*Inst. Or.* 9.4.61-62. In another place, Quintilian states, "The second essential for clearness of delivery is that our language should be properly punctuated, that is to say, the speaker must begin and end at the proper place. It is also necessary to note at what point our speech should pause and be momentarily suspended and when it should come to a full stop. . . . But stops themselves vary in length, according as they mark the conclusion of a phrase or sentence. . . . Correctness of punctuation may seem to be but a trivial merit, but without it all other merits of oratory are nothing worth" (*Inst. Or.* 11.3.36-39).

<sup>747</sup>"I note, gentlemen, that every speech for the prosecution falls sharply into two divisions."

<sup>748</sup>*Inst. Or.* 9.4.68.

Quintilian then details the means for employing different pauses in a reading based upon grammatically breaking down a sentence into what he calls, *commata*, *cola*, and periods. A *commata* “may be defined as the expression of thought lacking rhythmical completeness. A *colon*, on the other hand, is the expression of thought which is rhythmically complete, but is meaningless if detached from the whole body of the sentence.”<sup>749</sup> His definition of a sentence is twofold. First, it must consist of one thought, rounded to a close. Second, citing Cicero, a sentence’s length should be limited to the “compass of a single breath.”<sup>750</sup>

Thus, a reader must be concerned with both the text’s sense and its presentation. For a reader’s purpose, the question is whether to close each clause in 16:8 with a full stop or with only a minor pause?<sup>751</sup> From our earlier discussion, we noted that the function of the *γάρ* clause is to answer questions raised by the previous statement. In each clause in 16:8, the reader is describing the women’s behavior in a manner which raises a question and demands an explanation. According to first-century rhetoricians, the reader would naturally pause long enough to give his listeners a chance to feel the women’s emotions and to ask why did they flee?<sup>752</sup> In view of this, it is probable that the reader came to a full stop prior to giving each explanation. Additionally, it does seem realistic that the result of the closing words is intentionally vague. With two *γάρ*

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<sup>749</sup>*Inst. Or.* 9.4.122-123.

<sup>750</sup>*Inst. Or.* 9.4.124-125.

<sup>751</sup>Boomershine (“The Narrative Technique of Mark 16:8,” 220) has argued that *καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ* should be understood as two short independent sentences rather than reading *ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ* as a dependent clause (*colon*) in a compound sentence. His argument, though cogent, falls short of convincing. And as we will see, it is not necessary to argue for a full stop by the reader.

Even though *γάρ* is a coordinating conjunction, its presence does not necessitate a minor pause since the editors of the UBS text often precede a *γάρ* clause with a period. For example, 4:25; 5:8; 6:17, 31; 7:10; 8:35, 36; 9:6, 41; 13:18; 14:7.

<sup>752</sup>Quintilian says, “The full periodic style [full stop] is well adapted to the exordium of important cases, where the theme requires the orator to express anxiety, admiration or pity” (*Inst. Or.* 9.4.128s).

The words attributed to the ancient rhetorician Demetrius help examine the reading-effect, “not every point should be punctiliously treated with full details, but some should be left for the hearers to comprehend and infer for themselves” (*On Style*, 222).

clauses in rapid succession, Mark could have added additional information for clarity. In contrast to the usual clarifying function of most narrative comments with γάρ, the use in 16:8 seems to raise more issues than it answers, encouraging reflection back to earlier elements in the story and forward into a dialogue with the listening community.

Now to our second question, how might an oral approach clarify an audience's reaction to Mark 16:8? In part, this is a methodological question as it addresses one's presuppositions. Specifically, our oral approach assumes that the Markan puzzle of 16:8 cannot be solved by solely relying on the text but we must include the aspects of the audience's cultural and knowledge base. First, it assumes an on-going dialogue between the reader and his audience, even after the closing line is spoken. The last verse of the text may describe the women's silence but in a reading-event, silence would not reign for long, for the text demands an explanation. And how will the reader be received by the listening audience in a post-reading discussion? I would say, with authority. For throughout the reading-event, the reader has been heard as omniscient, relaying insider information about the divine realm. Further, it is through this reader that the predominately illiterate audience has access to the mind of God (8:33). His reading of the text and his understanding of Mark will play a vital role in the impact Mark plays in the community. Our oral approach assumes that Mark's impact does not fade once the story is over. Rather, the application of Mark's message lives on long after the story's final line is delivered.

Second, as we have argued earlier, the listening community placed their own controls upon the effect of the story. Since the community itself has been shaped by the story, it can easily recognize and reject any serious innovation(s) which will diminish the story's capacity to house and communicate its traditions in a faithful manner. Thus, it may be argued that a novel reading or one which contradicts the community traditions would be rejected. Quite frankly, that would be one more piece of evidence discrediting Weeden's argument that the shaping of the Markan narrative is a polemic against the Jerusalem church's leadership. For the history of the early church almost

exclusively paints the disciples as heroes not heretics. So it seems inappropriate to believe that an unprecedented reading such as Weeden's would have survived in a first-century community.

These community controls placed upon the reading event can be further defined. In antiquity, it was unusual for a solitary reader to master a text on his own. Quintilian observed that many facets of the reading-event could only be taught in actual practice; when a student was to take a breath, at what point to add a pause into a line of verse, and where the sense begins or ends.<sup>753</sup> In order to avoid misunderstandings, readers sought out advice about punctuation of texts and became proficient with a text as they worked in harmony with a more skilled reader.<sup>754</sup> Thus, community controls also encompass a learned community as they pass on an accepted tradition of the reading event.

Third, we should take note of the community's knowledge base since there are historic facts which should not be discarded just because they were not narrated.

Bauckham puts it this way,

The point at which Mark stops telling the story is not the end of the story . . . Readers [listeners] know what is to follow, because Jesus in Mark's narrative has predicted it, and in this last passage of Mark's narrative they are reminded by the young man's words to the women (16:7) of Jesus' predictions.<sup>755</sup>

However, this knowledge base should not be limited to the promise of restoration (14:28), the proclamation of the Gospel (13:10; 14:9), and the return of the Son of Man (13:14-27; 15:62). It is generally accepted that oral stories about Jesus circulated widely, so the community knew much more about the Jesus-event than what

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<sup>753</sup>*Inst. Or.* 1.8.1.

<sup>754</sup>Parkes, *Pause and Effect*, 11. Besides the numerous citations of Quintilian on this matter (see above), Parkes reports that Marcus Cornelius Fronto, a second century orator, replied to a request by Volumnius Quadratus by promising him "You shall have the works of Cicero corrected and punctuated" (Fronto, *Epistolae ad amici*, 2.2.). The context of the quote makes it clear that he was personally marking the copies.

<sup>755</sup>Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 294.

is communicated in the Markan narrative. For our purposes we will call this reading grid oral-intertextuality, where the Markan understanding of 16:8 is likely influenced by the community's faith-facts already in place.<sup>756</sup> Moreover, an audience's reaction to 16:8 would also be impacted by common knowledge which existed in the community. For example, it would be difficult to be living in a faith-based/faith-teaching community anywhere in the Roman Empire in the years immediately following the writing of Mark and not know that the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Thereby, a portion of Jesus' prophetic words in chapter 13 have become fulfilled. Also, the community would be forced to interact with the reality that the apostle Peter ascended to a leadership role in the early church. Thus, it is probable that discipleship restoration in Galilee via a meeting with the resurrected Christ was not to be understood as a future hope but as a past reality. The addition of these historic facts to the reading-event directly impacts the audience's appraisal of the women's silence. For at some point, they must have obeyed the command of the young man. Reading their silence in an absolute sense or a purely negative fashion would be non-sensical. In essence, many of the unresolved tensions in the Markan story may become moot for the ancient listeners. This serves as support for the argument that the story does not hinge on a resolution of the ending, for the audience already knows how the story ends. Rather, Mark's concerns are much more pastoral. A specific example might be stated this way; if Jesus can restore Peter to a place of leadership in the church, what can happen to others who have denied the Lord? Pedagogically speaking, Mark points his audience in the direction that failure and Jesus' corresponding grace are a vital means of shaping disciples.<sup>757</sup>

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<sup>756</sup>For a discussion of Matthew as a reading grid for Mark, cf., Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 228-266. Fowler argues that it is impossible for a reader to separate oneself from the influence of intertextuality (232-243). Nevertheless, he valiantly attempts to disengage one's reading of Mark from a Matthean influence, which attempts to soften Mark's harshness.

<sup>757</sup>Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 293. Bauckham then draws the next logical conclusion, that Mark is not engaged in a polemic against the Twelve, which would amount to a crass reduction of Mark's theology of discipleship to some kind of ecclesiastical power struggle.

### 3 A CHRISTOLOGICAL COMMUNITY CREATED VIA STORY

The story of Mark is a community forging event; reader and audience are the hammer and anvil but often exchanging their roles as each directly impacts the other. Frequently the reader takes the lead as he directs the drama but his thoughts never wander far from how the story will impact the people in front of him. Throughout the course of the reading-event, he has laid before his audience listener clues to move them through the incongruities of Mark and together they arrive at a new, transforming view of the situation. Thus, as the audience assumes the role of a partner in their experience of the story, several observations can be made. First, the audience and the reader experience the story together and are then shaped by a shared vision. Their relationship has become one based upon mutually-held values which become instrumental in forming a community of believers. For example, in this chapter we highlighted how the reader carefully communicated irony to the audience. With reference to how irony works, Gail O'Day says, "this creation of community is a result of the performative aspects of irony. To speak of irony as performative means that irony does not just say something, it does something as well."<sup>758</sup> Arthur Sidgwick reiterates the affective value of employing irony when he says,

the object of the highest expression is not to represent a fact or feeling to a passive percipient, to record it (so to speak) on a dynamometer of feeling, but to make him [*sic*] really see, by stimulating his imagination. If you wish to produce the effect, you cannot do it by mere word; you must get the hearer's imagination to help.<sup>759</sup>

Ostensible language can accurately communicate truth. However, it can never have the affective and participatory results which are intimately refined as a reader and an audience wrestle together to find God's mind in the midst of story, even an ironic story such as Mark.

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<sup>758</sup>O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, 30.

<sup>759</sup>Arthur Sidgwick, "On Some Forms of Irony in Literature," *Cornhill Magazine*, 22 (1907), 499.

This leads directly into the second connection between the reader and members of the audience. This listening community is not just better informed about who God is, but shaped for a purpose. The case may be argued that the ironic nature of the gospel and the surprise ending causes the story to live on long after the reader utters the last words. The audience joins the disciples as the recipients of Jesus' parabolic insight. The key phrase, "To you ('Υμῶν) has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables (4:11)" was to be heard as a communication between the reader and his audience rather than solely as a private teaching between a master and his disciples. Thus, the story of Mark creates a bond between reader and audience, calling them into an ever increasing number of newly appointed members of the 'Υμῶν community. Markan discipleship is not seen as a mimic of the 12 men who walked with Jesus but a call to think as the reader does, whose voice is synonymous with Jesus'.

#### 4 POSTLUDE

In a study of any magnitude, decisions of scope must be made to limit the investigation so it can come to a close. But regrettably, these same parameters also precluded me from touching on areas which this thesis stimulated. Allow me to mention two. First, how might an oral/aural approach to the scriptures illuminate the Synoptic Problem? Dunn says,

[T]he assumption, almost innate to those trained within western culture, that the Synoptic traditions have to be analyzed in terms of a linear sequence of literary editions, where each successive version is an editing of its predecessor, simply distorts critical perception and skews the resultant analysis. The transmission of the narrative tradition has too many oral features to be ignored.<sup>760</sup>

To date, this complex problem has been explained primarily by assuming a literary relationship among the gospels, adopting the view that the early evangelists placed scrolls/codices side by side, as we might today.<sup>761</sup> However, if the first century cultural practice was to memorize texts because of the difficulty in handling first-century manuscripts, one would begin to ask different questions to explain the nature of the

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<sup>760</sup>"Jesus in Oral Memory," 105. Later, Dunn says "however, it would be improper to ignore the fact that in a good number of cases . . . the more natural explanation for the evidence is not Matthew's or Luke's literary dependence on Mark, but rather their own knowledge of oral retellings of the same stories (or, alternatively, their own oral retelling of the Markan stories). We really must free ourselves from the assumption that variations between parallel accounts can only be explained in terms of literary redaction."

Staley (*The Print's First Kiss*) argues in his introduction that issues such as inerrancy, intertextuality, and even the Synoptic problem might be related to the problems raised by the internalization of print (3).

<sup>761</sup>Burton Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 322-323. Mack's paints Mark's author in a colorful but anachronistic fashion. "Mark's gospel . . . was composed at a desk in a scholar's study lined with texts and open to discourse with other intellectuals. In Mark's study were chains of miracle stories, collections of pronouncement stories in various states of elaboration, some form of Q, memos on parables and proof texts, the scriptures, including the prophets, written materials from the Christ cult, and other literature representative of Hellenistic Judaism." Raymond Brown [*Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1994)], depicts a more realistic first century writing scenario as he describes the creation of the Gospel of Peter, "GPet [Gospel of Peter] was not produced at a desk by someone with written sources propped up before him but by someone with a memory of what he had read and heard (canonical and non-canonical) to which he contributed imagination and a sense of drama" (Vol 2, 1336). Though Brown is discussing the origin of the discrepancies between GPet and the Synoptics, his mechanics of authoring a text are more historically accurate than Mack's.

relationship between Mark, Matthew, and Luke due to the fluid nature of oral storytelling.<sup>762</sup> Importing word-for-word references from our electronic age and requiring a similar expectation to be placed upon the Markan author/reader in his utilization of written material is anachronistic.

In the introductory remarks to the book *A History of the Synoptic Problem*, Dungan points to the cultural biases which lay somewhat dormant in relation to the synoptic problem. His opening remarks pay tribute to the ethnically and culturally diverse graduate class which gave birth to his book.

I saw first hand how the cultural backgrounds of the students—they included Asians, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Irish, and one American—could predispose toward a particular hypothetical solution. I dare say that this aspect of the Synoptic problem is still unknown to my white, Euro-North American, male colleagues, who pay little heed to the cultural assumptions influencing their scholarly work.<sup>763</sup>

In a private communication triggered by this comment, I asked Dr. Dungan if he thought an oral approach to the Synoptic Problem might be fruitful. He responded, "I have found little inclination among my peers to take a purely oral approach seriously since it is so foreign to them. So I have given up trying to make the case; too uphill."<sup>764</sup>

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<sup>762</sup>Dunn does this as well with reference to Q. He says, "But in the other three-quarters the verbal parallel [between Matthew's Sermon on Mt and Luke's Sermon on Plain] is much less close, so much so as to leave a considerable question as to whether there is evidence of any literary dependence. In most cases much the more plausible explanation is of two orally varied versions of the same tradition. As before, the evidence does not determine whether one or other (or both) has simply drawn directly from the living oral tradition known to them, or whether one or other has borrowed in oral mode from the Q document. Either way the evidence is more of oral dependence than of literary dependence."

<sup>763</sup>*A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 1.

<sup>764</sup>Personal correspondence dated 21 August, 1999. Dr. Dungan did seem to indicate a personal interest in the enterprise, especially when I asked if any of his non-Western students felt comfortable with a non-literary approach. He said,

The answer to your question is "yes." I had two Nigerian students and both had no problem with completely oral transmission, creation of variant texts, with little or no need for anything in writing. The great "Ife Corpus" (their master narrative of ethics, creation poetry, rituals, law, and sagas) typically takes young boys 14 years or so to memorize. Not that they have a hard time memorizing. One student told me that when some British missionaries paid a visit to their village, someone decided to put on a Shakespeare play in their honor. One person who could read

There is a second area of interest which my thesis parameters left untouched and it arises directly from my personal goals as I entered post-graduate work. On one hand, my desire was to become a scholar. On the other hand, that first premise was for the purpose of making me a better churchman. Much of this research is a preamble to how I yearn to see the scriptures affect the church. More and more scholars are blazing the trail to have scriptures read and even dramatically presented to churches in a variety of settings. The impact of hearing large passages in addition to short liturgical readings is beginning to be felt. On several occasions I have had the opportunity to dramatically deliver the Passion Narrative of Mark's Gospel and the audience response has been quite powerful.

Yet this impact is not limited to a church setting. While Dr. N. T. Wright was on a lecture tour of the U.S., I had an opportunity to share with him the ideas I was pondering during the early stages of my dissertation. On one hand, he did not envy my need to design a method in which I could discuss a first-century reading-event, with proper controls. On the other hand, he reminisced about a meeting of the Pauline Studies group of the Society of Biblical Literature. During one secession, several scholarly papers were delivered regarding the rhetorical structure of Galatians. Dr. Wright described the papers as interesting but predictable, as was the discussion which followed each presentation. Then, David Rhoads came out, dressed as the Apostle Paul and orally delivered the Book of Galatians. "The room was different," Wright said, "And the discussion about the Biblical text was lively and animated." May it always be so.

In a scholarly venue, I have encouraged students in New Testament classes to refine their interpretive skills with new goals; not simply an exegesis paper but a

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English read the play to a group of actors *once*. After that most of them had their parts memorized...as well as the others. And it was in Victorian English -- which none of them could understand.

twenty-first century reading-event. It has become a wonderful learning experience for students and teacher alike.

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