

# STORY AS HISTORY HISTORY AS STORY

The Gospel Tradition  
in the Context  
of Ancient Oral History



SAMUEL BYRSKOG

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in the Context of Ancient Oral History*

BY

SAMUEL BYRSKOG



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*For Michael and Jessica*



## Foreword

In 1961 Birger Gerhardsson published his standard work *Memory and Manuscript* on how the Torah was handed down in its written and, above all, its oral form in pharisaic-rabbinic Judaism, and the consequences of this for the transmission of the gospel tradition in early Christianity. This work criticized the form criticism that had originated in Germany at the end of the first world war and which was rooted in the older folkloristic research influenced by romanticism. In his book Gerhardsson contests the view that had prevailed for decades: an anonymous, collective and at the same time uninhibitedly “creative” transmission of the Jesus tradition, most of which emerged as later creations of the communities. This in my opinion revolutionary work did not at that time receive the attention it deserved. It was reprinted in 1964, and in the same year Gerhardsson published a small study, *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*. This important study was out of print for almost 35 years, until W. B. Eerdmans and Dove Booksellers published a reprint of both studies a little over a year ago, in 1998. The scholarship can still learn much from this superb work.

Having received a Humboldt research fellowship in Tübingen, a highly talented Gerhardsson student, Samuel Byrskog, who has already written an excellent monograph on Matthew (*Jesus the Only Teacher. Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community* [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994]), has now taken on his teacher’s major subject, working from a completely different angle and at the same time in another area. He examines very thoroughly the question of the significance of eyewitness accounts and oral tradition in the ancient literature, a subject which has been severely neglected in New Testament research up to now. Byrskog deals in particular with this subject as it relates to Greek and Roman historians, studying it against the background of “oral history”, which has become an independent branch of research in the last decades, and, linked closely to this, against the background of narrative research, which is not confined strictly to narrative fiction, as many people believe. In this un-

usual work the author carries on with and often confirms his teacher's approaches in a different field and in a completely new manner. Current research, today often appearing to be worn out and sometimes tending only to repeat old theories, will be provided with new stimuli. It could even stimulate research on the early church, which, as far as I can see, has dealt very inadequately with the ubiquitous subject of "oral history", eyewitness testimony and oral transmission. Oral transmission among the rabbis is only a conspicuous exception, on which the sources have given us particularly detailed information and which is close in time to the early church.

Basing his study on a very wide spectrum of sources, the author demonstrates with great clarity that oral tradition and eyewitness testimony imply not simply faithful transmission, but rather that faithful transmission and theological interpretation, that is, history and faith, must not necessarily conflict. Their connection to one another is, on the contrary, of a positive nature in the entire early Christian literature, not only in the gospels, but also in the Acts of the Apostles and in most of the letters.

In the introductory sentence of Plato's dialogue "Phaedo", rendering both Socrates' farewell speeches and his "passion story", Echecrates' question to his friend Phaedo also points to a problem in New Testament transmission:

Ἄυτός, ὃ Φαίδων, παρεγένου Σωκράτει ἐκείνη τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἢ τὸ φάρμακον ἔπιεν ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ, ἢ ἄλλου του ἤκουσας;

Ἄυτός, ὃ Ἐχέκρατες.

"Were you, Phaidon, there yourself with Socrates, on the day when he drank the poison in the prison, or did you hear about it from someone else?"

"I was there myself, Echecrates!"

Martin Hengel

## Preface

The present book constitutes, to a significant extent, a convergence of personal and academic interests and experiences. It seeks to explicate some of the dynamics involved as people of antiquity sought ways to commemorate and conceptualize the past within their various modes of existence. As I have repeatedly realized during the course of this study, my early experience of hearing the texts of Scripture being read aloud and interpreted anew in the peculiar context of the tight communities on the country-side of northern Sweden, has left a deep and lasting impression on me. The worship of these groups never allowed the texts of Scripture to remain texts unto themselves, but fostered a sense of ongoing dialogue across the centuries, a dialogue between the reality of the past and the reality of the present. The texts were living texts, one believed, carrying the voices and experiences of ancient people and challenging the believers to interpretation and application. It has been strange but rewarding to discover what seems to be the basic human need to locate our own different stories within some broader perceptions of the past.

The academic setting moulded these experiences into various forms of questioning and analytic models. The theological seminaries of Örebro (Sweden) and Rüschlikon (Switzerland) gave me invaluable tools for how to work with ancient texts in a disciplined fashion without losing myself in complicated strategies of literary models. During my early years as a student at Lund university, I was introduced to the vast field of oral tradition and transmission. These years determined in large measure my academic interests and mode of inquiry. The present work employs and develops insights of my dissertation *Jesus the Only Teacher*, which was researched, written and defended in Lund. The memories from the tight communities in northern Sweden have remained with me through the years; and I do not wish for a moment to deny their influence on what I have done and what I am doing in this book. The scientific work with Scripture will always, it seems, be inextricably intertwined with our own different life stories!

I am grateful to the different institutions and people that have helped me and stimulated the present work. The Humboldt foundation sponsored a year of research at the Evangelical Faculty of Tübingen university. Its understanding for the conditions of scientific work is a rare asset to the international scholarly community. The staff and colleagues in Tübingen facilitated my stay and work there in every way they could. In addition, the Department of Religion and the Faculty of Arts of Göteborg university offered me the ideal conditions of research and writing. Rarely is a scholar employed at a state university given such freedom! A generous grant from the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences financed the final preparations of the manuscript for publication.

Much of this work has been developed and written in the wonderful setting of a small village outside of Lund. I have enjoyed the company of friends and colleagues at Lund university. In particular, it has been a true privilege to share my thoughts and feelings about this work – and many other things – with professor Birger Gerhardsson. I have learned much from him through the years.

It was professor Martin Hengel who invited me to Tübingen and encouraged me to work in the field of oral history and ancient historiography. I have benefited immensely from his broad knowledge of the ancient sources. He and his wife Marianne Hengel were always ready to open their home for enjoyable seminars and conversations. His keen interest in the topic of the present investigation gave me the courage to carry on. I feel especially honoured by his recommendation of this study for publication and by his willingness to contribute a foreword.

I am also grateful to Mr. Georg Siebeck for his invitation to publish the present volume in the series of WUNT and for his kind arrangements in Tübingen. Ms. Ilse König has, in addition, patiently shared her professional advice during the course of preparing the manuscript for publication.

My deepest thanks go to my family. Angela, my wife, is a true companion in life. She has given us two children, Michael and Jessica. I have seen them grow and develop, being reminded again of how history becomes story and how our stories will be filled with the memories of the past. To them I dedicate this book.

Revingeby, December 1999

Samuel Byrskog

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## Abbreviations

I have used the abbreviations listed in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998), pp. 555–579. For sources and periodicals not included there, I have used Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 9 vols. and index compiled by Ronald E. Pitkin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), I, pp. xvi–xxxix, and Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (revised and augmented by Sir Henry Stuart Jones; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), pp. xvi–xlv. In addition, the following abbreviations occur:

AASF	Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae
<i>Ad Brut.</i>	Cicero, <i>Epistulae ad Brutum</i>
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
AIARS	Acta Instituti Atheniensis Regni Sueciae
<i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Annales</i>
<i>AnS</i>	<i>Ancient Society</i>
<i>Antid.</i>	Isocrates, <i>Antidosis</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Apologeticus</i>
ASA	Association of Social Anthropologists
ASLG	Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Gottingensis
ATS	Altertumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien
CCR	Cambridge Companions to Religion
CCS	Cambridge Classical Studies
CCWJCW	Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200
<i>ClassQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CMG	Corpus Medicorum Graecorum
CompNT	Companions to the New Testament
<i>Conf.</i>	Augustin, <i>Confessiones</i>
CR	Colloquium Rauricum
<i>CR:BS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
CSMS	Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature
CSOLC	Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Cultures
<i>De Inv.</i>	Cicero, <i>De Inventione</i>
<i>De Leg.</i>	Cicero, <i>De Legibus</i>

<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
EEM	East European Monographs
EevT	Einführung in die evangelische Theologie
<i>Ep. Mor.</i>	Seneca, <i>Epistulae Morales</i>
ESH	Exeter Studies in History
<i>FrGrHist</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
GAB	Göppinger Akademische Beiträge
GüT	Gütersloher Taschenausgaben
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
HF	Historische Forschungen
<i>Hipp. victu acut.</i>	Galen, <i>In Hippocratis de victu acutorum</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Historiae</i>
<i>Hom. in Luc.</i>	Origen, <i>Homiliae in Lucam</i>
HSCL	Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HZ	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>JAF</i>	<i>Journal of American Folklore</i>
JC	Judaica et Christiana
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
JRASup	Journal of Roman Archaeology. Supplementary Series
KBANT	Kommentare und Beiträge zum Alten und Neuen Testament
KHVLÅ	Kungliga humanistiska vetenskapssamfundets i Lund årsberättelse
KNT	Kommentar till Nya Testamentet
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
MAAAS	Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences
MQSHI	McGill-Queens Studies in the History of Ideas
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NTR	New Testament Readings
NWA	Neue Wege zur Antike
OCM	Oxford Classical Monographs
OPSNKF	Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
<i>Panathen.</i>	Isocrates, <i>Panathenaicus</i>
<i>Paneg.</i>	Isocrates, <i>Panegyricus</i>
PhM	Philological Monographs
PNTC	The Pelican New Testament Commentaries
PP	Päpste und Papsttum
<i>Ps.-Cl. Hom.</i>	<i>Pseudo-Clementine Homilies</i>
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
PU	Philologische Untersuchungen
<i>RevPh</i>	<i>Revue de Philologie</i>
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SPNT	Studies on Personalities of the New Testament
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter

TTS	Trier theologische Studien
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TUMSR	Trinity University Monograph Series in Religion
TVG	Theologische Verlagsgemeinschaft
UALG	Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte
<i>Vir.</i>	Jerome, <i>Liber de viris inlustribus</i>
VL	Vetus Latina
WdF	Wege der Forschung
WZKMUL	<i>Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig.</i>





# Introduction

## A. Defining the Problem

### 1. Story as History – History as Story

“Story as history – history as story”, a seemingly strange pair of phrases. Story is story and history is history, one is accustomed to think today. The two should not be mingled, lest one fuses the narrative and fictional world with the extratextual and real world.

The initial impulse of the present study arose from a somewhat confusing frustration with the methodological paradigms that force a sharp distinction between the two. To read narrative texts both as “mirrors” reflecting self-contained worlds and as “windows” opening up to extratextual and diachronic levels of history is often considered to be a violation of proper hermeneutical conduct. Methods or perspectives easily become power structures, I realized, oppositional and eclectic, enslaving the scholars in labels which disqualify the attempts toward more comprehensive approaches. Ancient texts, some people say, are to be seen merely from one conceptual viewpoint at a time; other conceptual perspectives are to be left aside for the moment or, at the best, permitted to figure as obscure and remote shades, all in the name of scientific objectivity. How easily we become the victims of our own methodological vigour!

It is a matter of course that the gospel narratives present stories with inherent dynamics representing the “inner texture” of the fiction.<sup>1</sup> Narrative and rhetorical criticism has provided valuable and lasting results in this direction, which are to be fully affirmed. But by the same token, the gospels are historical documents reflecting the socio-cultural matrix of

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the term “narrative” in a broad, untechnical sense, for any oral or written text that explicitly or implicitly mediates some kind of plot. I do not distinguish it sharply from the term “story”, though the latter often carries more of an aspect of what is signified – the content – while the former stands for the signifier.

the time. The traditional methods, such as form- and redaction criticism, coupled with more recent attention to sociology and cultural anthropology, have provided ample evidence of the “intertexture” as well as the “social and cultural texture” of the gospels.<sup>2</sup>

Precisely this double character of the gospel narratives calls for a more comprehensive approach. They are, *as stories*, filled with diachronic dimensions. History is intrinsic to them precisely as stories. It was partly this insight that caused Hans W. Frei, as a development of Erich Auerbach’s suggestions, to employ the famous and influential label “realistic narrative”.<sup>3</sup> The gospel narratives are not like fictions telling a story in such a way that the narrative setting in place and time can be replaced by another place and another time without effecting a significant loss as to the characteristic plot of the story; no, they are, as stories, uniquely bound to the past as a once and for all event. Without that decisive, diachronic dimension they might be good stories, but not Gospel stories. In addition, they are, despite Frei’s influential hermeneutical program, more than inherently “realistic narratives”. Already Justin Martyr, as we all know, conceived of the gospels as “reminiscences”,<sup>4</sup> memoirs of the past; the theme of “remembrance” was central to them. And as we realize today, they are – when we, as modern hearers/readers, approach them from the horizon of the authors – the outcome of the redactional composition of traditions which had been transmitted over a period of time. The Lukan prologue even encodes this extrafictional dimension of pastness into the narrative, thus focalizing at the very beginning around the author’s work with the traditions from history.<sup>5</sup> We have a story, but it is story as history.

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<sup>2</sup> The expressions “inner texture”, “intertexture” and “social and cultural texture” are taken from Vernon K. Robbins’ version of socio-rhetorical criticism. He explains them most fully in his books *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, pp. 7–94, and *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, pp. 44–191. See further below *Introd.*, B:2.

<sup>3</sup> Frei defines this label as concisely as possible: “Realistic narrative is that kind in which subject and social setting belong together, and characters and external circumstances fitly render each other” (*The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, p. 13).

<sup>4</sup> For texts and discussion, see Abramowski, “Die ‘Erinnerungen der Apostel’ bei Justinus”, pp. 341–353; Hengel, *Earliest Christianity*, pp. 27–29.

<sup>5</sup> Coleridge omits Luke 1:1–4 in his attempt to account for the beginning of the Lukan narrative. “Lk. 1.5–25 is the beginning of the beginning”, he asserts (*The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, p. 28). As it seems, in Coleridge’s notion of narrative criticism, the focalization around the reception of extrafictional material from the past is external to the story – Coleridge employs the term “narrative” – proper (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 215–216, 232–233).

Likewise, the history that is reported in the gospel narratives, *as histories*, is put within the framework of synchronic relations emerging as a coherent story. The time is over when the gospels were regarded as mere collections of formal units, as “Perikopenbücher”, like beautiful pearls held together only by the thread of the necklace. Today we see the necklace as a piece of art in itself; and the individual pearls, no matter how beautifully designed each of them appears to be, are closely related to make up a compositional and semantic whole. There are historical items; there is history, but history has become story; it has become present.

## 2. Kerygma as History – History as Kerygma

This problem of story versus history has to do with the problem of the present versus the past and is as such somewhat reminiscent of the theological discussion of an earlier, German generation of scholars. History has always been an allusive object of study! As against the early form-critical school represented by Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann, we can also speak of “kerygma as history – history as kerygma”.

Of course, we detect a substantial difference here from today’s concern, which arose primarily from modern literary considerations.<sup>6</sup> There was, to be sure, certain literary aspects involved in the old form-critical approach as well, especially in its sustained insistence on “Gattung” and “Sitz im Leben”. This provided a means to move from the text to the extratextual world of the communities.<sup>7</sup> But the old debate was primarily a theological one, where the role of the past in the early church was felt to be problematic; scholars of the form-critical school ignored or rejected it altogether. And the early form-critics certainly worked diachronically with the texts, because their object was ultimately not a literary item in itself, but the theology of a community.

Nevertheless, there are interesting similarities. It is vital to realize that both approaches represent perspectives with related inherent presuppositions.<sup>8</sup> No method, no approach, is ideologically neutral! Both are in es-

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Vorster, “Kerygma/History and the Gospel Genre”, pp. 87–95. However, as I have already indicated, and as will be evident throughout the course of the present study, I do not agree with Vorster’s strict distinction between “real world” and “narrated world” as far as ancient “realistic narratives” are concerned.

<sup>7</sup> That move was usually rather one-dimensional – one “Gattung” correlated to one “Sitz im Leben” – and has as such been revised. Cf. Sellin, “‘Gattung’ und ‘Sitz im Leben’”, pp. 311–331.

<sup>8</sup> This is rarely realized in the modern debate on literary methods. But cf. the recent

sence to be seen as perspectives that diminish the role played by past history, either in a literary work or in a community. The discourse is the story of a gospel narrative; the kerygma was the story of the early church. The discourse of the story and the kerygma of the church lack inherent relations to history in its pastness. The present time of the story, or the present time of the community, is the all-determining factor. As Dibelius acclaimed: “das Kommende, dessen sie gewiß waren und das sie in nächster Zukunft erwarteten, war doch viel herrlicher als alles Vergangene!”<sup>9</sup> Yes, “history is swallowed up in eschatology”, even, “history is identical with eschatology”, the retired Bultmann lectured.<sup>10</sup> What remained for Bultmann was “die Geschichtlichkeit” of the individual, which means, as he said a few years later, “nicht seine Abhängigkeit von der Geschichte, sondern die Tatsache, daß der Mensch je seine eigene Geschichte hat, in der er sein wahres Wesen zu verwirklichen hat”.<sup>11</sup> History in its pastness is absorbed by the present existence and vanishes as an extra-existential reality. As we shall see in the next chapter, Dibelius was more nuanced than Bultmann when it came to the gospel tradition. But generally speaking, whatever was before the discourse, whatever was before the eschatological belief of the community, was of little or no importance.<sup>12</sup>

Not many scholars of today maintain the same view as the early form-critics did. It was perhaps not by accident that Germany was the home of the form-critical approach. Germany was also the country of the pure “historicism” of the eighteenth century;<sup>13</sup> and it was here that the reaction against that kind of “historicism” was most intense. British scholarship, generally speaking, never quite committed itself to this reaction, as C. H. Dodd pointed out already in 1937.<sup>14</sup> It is significant that as late as in

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comments of Morgan, “The Bible and Christian theology”, pp. 124–125 (on Barth and Bultmann *vis-à-vis* reader-response approaches and speech-act theory).

<sup>9</sup> Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, pp. 37, 136.

<sup>11</sup> Bultmann, “Das Verständnis der Geschichte”, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> It is another matter that both these perspectives deal with something that occurred within what is past history from the viewpoint of the modern researcher, either with a story embedded in a certain cultural matrix or with a community influenced by the religious ideas of the time. Here the interaction of past and present – with its “Vorverständnis” – in creating meaning is also indeed an intriguing challenge to scholarship; but it is beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

<sup>13</sup> See below Chap. 1, A:1.

<sup>14</sup> Dodd, “The Gospels as History”, pp. 122–123. Dodd elaborated the broader implications of his article a year later, in *History and the Gospel*.

1985, C. F. D. Moule, in a Festschrift to Werner Georg Kümmel, Bultmann's student and successor in Marburg, finds it necessary to insist that the synoptic gospels were intended to be ancillary to, and only part of, the full Christian kerygma. There was a sincere historical interest in Jesus, and the material emerging from that interest was essential and integral to the kerygma, but not the whole of it, according to Moule.<sup>15</sup> Even in Germany the situation was to change. Hans Conzelmann was one of the few among Bultmann's followers who held on to the kerygma as the decisive element of theology,<sup>16</sup> but at the same university in Göttingen Joachim Jeremias insisted strongly on the historical Jesus as the all-important matter.<sup>17</sup> As is well-known, there was an early return to past history among Bultmann's own students.<sup>18</sup> In his famous lecture delivered on 20 October 1953 to a group of former Bultmann students, Ernst Käsemann, at the time professor at the university of Göttingen, became known for initiating a new quest back to history, back to the historical Jesus.<sup>19</sup> The early Christians, he argued, were engaged in a warfare on two fronts. "Das Evangelium steht immer in einem Zweifrontenkrieg", he insisted.<sup>20</sup> They contended, on the one hand, against an enthusiastic docetism and, on the other hand, against an historicizing doctrine of *kenosis*. From that perspective he deemed it strange that we in the New Testament find any writings like the gospels, explaining it by the need to maintain the tension and connection between the "once upon a time" of history and the "once for all" of eschatological reality. Only the Lukan author, with his historicizing tendency, falls out of this pattern.

More recent scholarly work around the world has now been labelled a "third quest".<sup>21</sup> This label implies that Albert Schweitzer initiated a first quest already before the early form-critics made their impact, and that Käsemann initiated a second quest as a reaction against the dominating view of the early 1950s. "And the pursuit of truth – historical truth – is

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<sup>15</sup> Moule, "The Function of the Synoptic Gospels", pp. 199–208.

<sup>16</sup> Conzelmann's emphatic statement is famous: "Ich glaube ... dennoch darauf bestehen zu müssen, daß der 'historische Jesus' kein Thema der neutestamentlichen Theologie ist" (*Grundriss der Theologie*, p. 16).

<sup>17</sup> This is perhaps most evident in his *Neutestamentliche Theologie*.

<sup>18</sup> I am speaking here of history as a past matter to be distinguished from history as receiving its meaning from the present existential circumstances of the individual person. In that latter regard, as we just noticed, history was indeed important to Bultmann.

<sup>19</sup> Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus", pp. 125–153.

<sup>20</sup> Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus", p. 134.

<sup>21</sup> Neill/Wright, *Interpretation of the New Testament*, pp. 379–403; Wright, *Christian Origins*, pp. 83–124.

what the Third Quest is all about”, Thomas N. Wright says in a sense which goes far beyond what Käsemann ever intended.<sup>22</sup> Yet, despite the various differences, scholars cannot avoid the impression, it seems, that *the kerygma, the story of the present Lord, remains, after all, intrinsically linked with the Jesus of the past.*<sup>23</sup>

### 3. The General Problem at Hand

This book is not another attempt to defend the reliability of the gospel tradition.<sup>24</sup> It has rather been triggered and challenged by the lack of nuanced reasoning concerning concepts such as “past and present”, “tradition”, “transmission”, “history”, “historicity”, “reliability”, “objectivity”, “subjectivity”, etc.<sup>25</sup> Even the “third quest”, in all its emphasis on history, has its own agenda and master narrative.<sup>26</sup> The present study has emerged within the framework of the scholarly discussion of recent as well as former times as sketched above;<sup>27</sup> and it has been much informed by various attempts to overcome the inherent dichotomy of the literary and theological spectrum concerning story versus history. *It has the general purpose of better understanding the dynamics involved behind the past in the present and the present in the past as the gospel tradition evolved.*

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<sup>22</sup> Wright, *Christian Origins*, p. 87.

<sup>23</sup> The book of Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, which rejects the theological value of the Jesus of the past, is surprising in its almost total neglect of European scholarship. Johnson is not alone in his neglect, to be sure, but one wonders how it is possible to write chapters on topics such as “history challenging faith”, “the limitations of history”, “what’s historical about Jesus?”, etc., without informing the readers that these matters were intensely debated by leading European philosophers and theologians already about half a century ago. I understand Johnson’s arguments and thesis as an American reaction against the American Jesus seminar aimed for a broad American audience, but I fail to see that they bring a new dimension to the international scholarly debate of this century.

<sup>24</sup> Cf., e.g., the comprehensive survey by Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*.

<sup>25</sup> A laudible exception is Meyer, “Objectivity and Subjectivity”, pp. 546–560, 564–565. Cf. also Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, pp. 43–49.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Moxnes, “The Historical Jesus”, pp. 135–149.

<sup>27</sup> Our Old Testament colleagues have been struggling with similar issues. It suffices to mention Barr, “Story and History”, pp. 1–17; Roberts, “Myth *versus* History”, pp. 1–13. The more recent turn of the debate concerning Israelite historiography is seen in the work of Van Seters, *In Search of History*. Further literature is surveyed in the volume edited by Millard, Hoffmeier and Baker, *Faith, Tradition, and History*, and in the study of Nielsen, *The Tragedy of History*, pp. 13–18.

In a previous study dealing with the transmission of the Jesus tradition in the Matthean community, I tried – somewhat boldly – to combine insights of recent literary theories with models of sociology and cultural anthropology, stressing the need to see the transmission of traditions about the past within the social and existential situation of the transmitters.<sup>28</sup> But I did not, as yet, find a comprehensive way of integrating these matters into a conceptual and methodological whole. This study does not aim at that grand task, but *it looks for a more comprehensive approach than the mere accumulation and combination of a number of variegating approaches and perspectives taken from literary and historical disciplines.*

## B. Towards a Synthesis

There have been several attempts, of course, to overcome the alleged dichotomy between story and history, the present and the past. I have selected three of them as they relate to recent scholarly research of exegetical character and have stimulated my own thinking significantly: those by Ulrich Luz, Vernon K. Robbins and Francis Watson.

### 1. Ulrich Luz

As for the use of narrative criticism, with its potential links to the diachronic dimensions of a story, I was already at the time of preparation for my previous study much influenced by the various publications of Ulrich Luz.<sup>29</sup> The extreme forms of reader-oriented literary studies never gained full acceptance in the scholarly world of German-speaking Europe, and Luz, in his work on the Matthean narrative, consistently clinged to the author as an historical figure with certain literary and theological ambitions.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See especially the brief methodological discussion in Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 27–31. Cf also Byrskog, “Matthew 5:17–18”, pp. 557–571; Byrskog, “Slutet gott, allting gott”, pp. 85–98.

<sup>29</sup> The major study is, of course, Luz’s commentary on Matthew, three volumes of which have been published to date. See, e.g., Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, II, pp. 64–68. The discussion of interest here is also put to use also in several other publications, e.g., “Geschichte”, pp. 595–604; “Die Wundergeschichten”, pp. 149–165; “Eine thetische Skizze der matthäischen Christologie”, pp. 221–222; *The theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 143.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. his review of Howell’s study in *TLZ* 117 (1992), cols. 189–191.



While the author perceived by Luz indeed wished to create a comprehensive narrative, that narrative is made up of written and oral traditions – Matthew is an exponent of his community and a close follower of Mark and Q, according to Luz – and its story contains intrinsically a historical dimension that is directly and indirectly transparent for the present time of the community. History is history in its pastness, but as such it is transparent for the present. Methodologically Luz thus combines a narratological approach with the more traditional work of form- and redaction criticism. Yet one needs, it seems, to distinguish between the intrinsic past historical dimension of the story and the author’s sensitivity to past history as he actually composed his story. In that latter work, Luz’s author, while being faithful to tradition, betrays little or no awareness of the problem inherent in the addition of fictional elements, the reason being, Luz explains, that they had already been fused with reality in the living, oral transmission of the community.<sup>31</sup> The collective oral synthesis of the present, one might say, thus absorbed the “otherness” and pastness of history within the present time of the community. So in a sense, story is history, while history is story only at the cost of its objectifying pastness.

The admirable contribution of Luz lies, in my view, partly in the consistent attempt to relate story and history. In the German speaking part of Europe, he was among the pioneers in his use of the insights from literary theories, especially narratology; and by the same token, his insistence on relating narrative criticism to the extrafictional aspects of a story, taking seriously the role of the real author and the real hearers/readers, makes him a pioneer within the paradigm of the narrative practitioners themselves.<sup>32</sup> His studies also teach us that one cannot speak of story and history without distinguishing between the historical dimension inherent within the story, the gospels as “realistic narratives”, on the one hand, and the role of past history in the process of composing the story, on the other hand, that is, between the intratextual and the extratextual function of past history. Moreover, as to the dynamics behind the past in the present and the present in the past as the gospel tradition evolved, Luz’s reference to some kind of oral modes of transmission promises a context where the two may somehow concur.

These important insights also raise issues for debate. One wonders, to begin with, how an author who evidently regarded the past history as a

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<sup>31</sup> Luz, “Fiktivität und Traditionstreue”, pp. 153–177.

<sup>32</sup> The extreme forms of reader-oriented versions of narrative criticism are now, it seems, being abandoned more and more, even by biblical scholars. Cf. already Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*.

vital ingredient of the story itself and adhered faithfully to tradition could ignore the pastness of the traditions in his own creative enterprise of composing that same story, in Luz's view adding freely, as an exponent of a larger community's collective memory, various fictional elements with no roots in factual history. Does this not imply, after all, a strange rift between the intratextual and the extratextual function of past history in the conception of the author, between a "realistic narrative", in the terms of Hans W. Frei, and a "historical narrative"?<sup>33</sup> And is there not an unresolvable tension even within the extratextual function of past history in the author's apparent faithfulness to tradition, on the one hand, and his allegedly unreflective use and addition of fictional elements, on the other?

A second point of debate is Luz's use of orality. What are the dynamics within an oral mode of transmission that legitimize Luz's explanation as he refers to a complete fusion of past and present, history and fiction, within the community? Are there any at all? Luz accepts the notion of Wolfgang Rösler,<sup>34</sup> that the consciousness of fictivity is conditioned by the existence of a culture of literacy, because oral cultures have no notion of private reading and no notion of genre, and thus no notion of fiction.<sup>35</sup>

This position, as presented by Luz, is questionable for several reasons. To begin with, its simplified attitude to the concepts of truth and fiction in oral cultures should be clear already from the utterances of some early Greek singers. "You sing of the fate of the Achaeans excellently well, how much the Achaeans did and suffered and how much they toiled, as if you had been present yourself or heard it from someone else",<sup>36</sup> Odysseus says to the bard Demodocus (*Od.* 8:489–491),<sup>37</sup> and "we know how to speak many false things like real things, and we know, when we wish, to

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<sup>33</sup> Luz' view is very similar to Hans Frei's "realistic narrative". Also Frei distinguishes a "realistic narrative" from what we normally call a historical account. Something might be "realistic or history-like" within the narrative without being historical according to the criteria of almost universal modern consent. Cf. e.g., Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Rösler, "Die Entdeckung der Fiktionalität", pp. 283–319.

<sup>35</sup> Luz, "Fiktivität und Traditionstreue", pp. 162–164, 174–175.

<sup>36</sup> λίην γὰρ κατὰ κόσμον Ἀχαιῶν οἶτον ἀείδεις, ὅσσ' ἔρξαν τ' ἔπαθόν τε καὶ ὅσσ' ἐμόγησαν Ἀχαιοί, ὡς τέ που ἢ αὐτὸς παρεῶν ἢ ἄλλου ἀκούσας.

<sup>37</sup> Latacz, professor of Greek philology, comments: "Die Reputation des *oral poet* bemißt sich also nach dem Autentizitätsgrad seiner Darstellung. Unter Autentizitätsgrad ist dabei nicht nur objektive Faktenwiedergabe verstanden, sondern darüber hinaus auch 'stimmige' Wiedergabe der *Faktenwirkung*" ("Zu Umfang und Art der Vergangenheitsbewahrung", p. 168).

utter true things”,<sup>38</sup> the Muses of the “prehistoric” Olympus sing for the shepherding Hesiod (*Theog.* 27–28).<sup>39</sup> While the ancient fiction as a genre must be measured by categories that are beyond our modern notions of true and untrue, as Rösler does teach us, one cannot escape the impression that the singers were aware of certain boundaries concerning to what extent the poetry represents what they perceived of as the true reality.<sup>40</sup> Not everything that was sung was considered true, as one would have expected if there was no notion of fictional elements at all; and yet, not everything was considered false, as one would have expected if poetry was measured solely in its function of representing reality. Even in oral cultures there might indeed occur a subtle awareness of questions concerning what is true and what is false, and this awareness lends itself to some non-generic notions of fictionality.

Moreover, with Luz’s view it is unclear if there existed any notion of fiction at all in antiquity, because private reading was a rare thing even in ancient settings of literacy. It is impossible to verify an extensive practice of private reading in Greek antiquity, as Rösler acknowledges.<sup>41</sup> The normal procedure was reading aloud to others.<sup>42</sup> Although he exaggerates the implication of his insight, A. K. Gavrilov has quite recently pointed out that the well-known silent reading of Bishop Ambrose was considered an obstacle precisely because he read privately in the presence of others (*Aug., Conf.* 6:3).<sup>43</sup> Reading was not to be done in privacy. Most people would thus hear rather than see the text, also in cases where a certain amount of literacy can be assumed.

And thirdly, we do have ample evidence from cultural anthropology that oral cultures possess a rich awareness of genres. Although that awareness is sometimes difficult to estimate due to the culture bound character of the genres, it is noteworthy that the genre definition of a certain

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<sup>38</sup> ἴδμεν ψεύδα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὅμοια, ἴδμεν δ', εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρῦσασθαι.

<sup>39</sup> Kullmann comments: “Auch wenn es den Begriff Fiktion nicht gibt, ist doch klar, daß von Hesiod nicht alles so geglaubt wird, wie es im Epos erzählt wird” (“Der Übergang von der Mündlichkeit zur Schriftlichkeit”, p. 73). For a different understanding of this passage, cf. Rösler, “Die Entdeckung der Fiktionalität”, pp. 296–297.

<sup>40</sup> There were of course various notions of truth, as especially *Theog.* 27–28 shows, with its interplay between ἔτυμα (corresponding to reality) and ἀληθέα (corresponding to what is revealed). For this distinction, see Simondon, *La mémoire*, pp. 112–115.

<sup>41</sup> Rösler, “Die Entdeckung der Fiktionalität”, p. 316 n. 92. At this point Rösler abandons his reliance on ancient texts and adduces modern theories of reading in support.

<sup>42</sup> See Balogh, “‘Voces Paginarum’”, pp. 84–109, 202–240.

<sup>43</sup> Gavrilov, “Techniques of reading in classical antiquity”, pp. 56–73.

culture can itself depend on the issue of “fact or fiction”. Jan Vansina, for instance, tells of genres in Rwanda where *ibitéekerezo* differs from the narrative *umugani* in that the one is supposed to be ancient “fact” and the other is “fiction”.<sup>44</sup> Elsewhere he goes so far as to claim that “for every functional type of written source in Europe one can find an equivalent oral source in Africa”.<sup>45</sup> Luz could, with Rösler,<sup>46</sup> have referred to Jack Goody’s and Ian Watt’s theory of homeostasis, according to which there exists a complete congruence between an oral society or group and its traditions.<sup>47</sup> But again, other experts in cultural anthropology, most significantly Ruth Finnegan in her numerous publications,<sup>48</sup> stress today the culture-specific character of each occurrence of orality, implying that while the preservative consciousness of transmission might be missing in one culture, it might be very strong in another.<sup>49</sup> One wishes then also, of course, a more subtle use of labels such as “oral culture” in locating the Matthean community, because granted Matthew was an exponent of his community, one suspects a significant “feedback” into the oral currency of that community from the kind of literacy which the author himself indeed betrays.

Finally, what is the conceptual whole that brings together into one comprehensive perspective the modified use of narrative criticism, on the one hand, and the traditional use of form- and redaction criticism, on the other? Is Luz not, after all, merely adding cumulatively various approaches from literary and historical disciplines without integrating them into one perspective? One receives the impression that for Luz it is his conception of the author as a real figure with literary and theological ambitions that holds together the various analytical measures; but when, at the same time, the author is regarded as an exponent of a larger group of people, the issue of authorial intentionality becomes confused and one lin-

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<sup>44</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 83.

<sup>45</sup> Vansina, “Once Upon a Time”, p. 443.

<sup>46</sup> Rösler, “Die Entdeckung der Fiktionalität”, pp. 304–306.

<sup>47</sup> Goody/Watt, “The Consequences of Literacy”, pp. 27–68.

<sup>48</sup> Most of her experiences and insights are represented in her recent guide to research practices, *Oral traditions and the verbal arts*. Her statement on p. 26 is significant: “Complementing the long tradition of classification and generalisation there is now a counter-trend towards exploring people’s own views and artistry rather than analysing through outsiders’ categories”.

<sup>49</sup> Even Goody admits this: “I do not wish for a moment to deny that in non-literate cultures some standardized oral forms are memorized in exact form” (*The interface between the written and the oral*, p. 176). But he considers this practice to be a rare phenomenon. See further below Chap. 3, B:4c.

gers between the author as a person with specific objectives and a person sharing the broader currencies of his community and socio-cultural context. It is perhaps significant that Luz now, in the third volume of his commentary on Matthew, seems to move away from the author, focusing more on the hearers/readers in the process of determining the meaning(s) of the text.<sup>50</sup>

## 2. Vernon K. Robbins

A more consistent attempt towards bringing together practices of interpretation that are often separated from one another has been developed by Vernon K. Robbins in a rather recent interdisciplinary agenda of analysis and interpretation called socio-rhetorical criticism.<sup>51</sup> Informed by new literary studies as well as sociology and cultural anthropology, Robbins seeks to establish an environment that cherishes a learned dialogue between the narratorial and social dimensions of language in texts.

Neither the author nor the hearer/reader of the text stands at the center of this approach, but the text itself and its rhetoric. A fundamental aspect of socio-rhetorical criticism is therefore the notion that a text has textures. These textures are not limited to the inner dynamics of the story, because a text is never only a language object unto itself, a mirror of its own world. Nor is it merely a window through which one looks at the outside world. It is both, a discourse with both mind and body, exposing the language border of its internal fiction as well as being a social product, possession and tool.<sup>52</sup> A text thus exhibits “webs” (cf. lat. *texere*, “to weave”) of signification or meaning and meaning effects, which communicate differently according to the different angles from which one approaches the text. The words of a text work in a complex way to convey meaning and meaning effects, because they are created as one relates them to other meanings, which is possible only partially. Socio-rhetorical criticism employs five different angles to explore multiple textures within texts: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideo-

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<sup>50</sup> Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, III, p. viii. Cf. also his SNTS presidential address “Kann die Bibel heute noch Grundlage für die Kirche sein?”, pp. 317–339, especially pp. 329–331.

<sup>51</sup> The approach has developed from Robbins’ intuitive use of it in *Jesus the Teacher*, originally published in 1984, to his more recent elaborations in *Exploring the Texture of Texts* and *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*. Robbins has put it to use also in a number of lectures and articles.

<sup>52</sup> See especially Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, p. 19.

logical texture and – added by Robbins most recently – sacred texture. Rhetoric is thus essentially socio-rhetoric, that is, it “provides a socially and culturally oriented approach to texts, forming a bridge between the disciplines of social-scientific and literary criticism”.<sup>53</sup>

Robbins’ interdisciplinary approach is certainly a welcome attempt at establishing a coherent methodological framework for an integrated interchange between studies with the focus on story or on history. Although one might be less optimistic than Robbins as to the genuine interdisciplinary openness inherent in the powerful paradigms of scholars, each scholarly work has nevertheless been given a conceptual forum for how to relate to a broader spectrum of analysis and interpretation. The prime attention to the text takes seriously that the text is the “place” where both author and hearer/reader meet, where implied author and implied hearer/reader are present, and where modern critics of various paradigms are on common ground.

The present study locates itself within this spectrum as an attempt to integrate the inner texture and the intertexture during the development of the gospel tradition. It assumes that each gospel narrative has an inner texture which stands in some kind of relation to a diachronic dimension of its intertexture, and thus relates primarily to that which Robbins calls historical intertexture. As for the location within the paradigms of modern scholars, this study has emerged, as indicated already, within the context of the tacit dichotomy existing, as it seems, between the acute attention to literary features in some recent Swedish research and the insistence on the importance of history in the rich exegetical tradition of the German speaking part of Europe. I have lived in both worlds. Also Europe is in need of the dialogue envisioned by Robbins!

While Luz pays some attention to orality as a matrix for conceptualizing the interaction between story and history, present and past, Robbins speaks of an oral-scribal intertexture, by which is meant the recitation, recontextualization, reconfiguration, narrative amplification and thematic elaboration of specific traditions that are handed on by word of mouth or written text. In reviewing Robbins’ interpretive analytics, Margaret E. Dean asks for closer attention to the oral and aural dimension of a written text.<sup>54</sup> One might indeed also reflect more on the possible differences and the subtle interchange between an oral and a scribal intertexture and the affects of the medium of the intertext on its integration in the text,<sup>55</sup> in

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<sup>53</sup> Robbins, “Social-scientific criticism and literary studies”, p. 277.

<sup>54</sup> Dean, “Textured Criticism”, pp. 79–91.

<sup>55</sup> Robbins is of course much aware of these spectra of problems. Cf., *e.g.*, his artic-

other words, on how an oral or a written tradition of past history affects the present story. There may be links between the oral-scribal intertexture and the historical intertexture, because history is perceived and accounted for differently depending on its medium. “Story as history – history as story”, the interaction of the two has, it appears, to do with the information technologies of ancient times.

### 3. Francis Watson

A third attempt to deal with the alleged distinction between story and history has been advanced by Francis Watson.<sup>56</sup> His primary concern is theological: he wishes to challenge and relativize the modern demarcation dividing biblical scholars from theologians and the Old Testament from the New Testament, thus redefining biblical theology.

The former line of demarcation involves, according to Watson, the dichotomy between historical-critical and narrative approaches to the gospels. In Watson’s theological program this dichotomy is disastrous, because theological interpretation must be oriented towards the extratextual truth which is textually mediated. Watson’s Christian understanding of the gospel stands at the center of this approach. The gospel narratives cannot be Gospel “if they merely preserve scattered traces of a historical reality qualitatively different from its narrative rendering”, and by the same token, “if they merely render an intratextual character whose extratextual existence is a matter of indifference”.<sup>57</sup> He classifies the gospel narratives instead as “narrated history”, using recent historiographical (Albert Cook) and hermeneutical (Hans-Georg Gadamer; Paul Ricoeur) theory to illuminate possibilities that could liberate gospel scholarship from its positivistic project of distinguishing history from story. History even takes priority over story. The very character of the gospel narratives betrays their intended backward reference; authentic narration about Jesus is a *retelling* of that which has taken place prior to the act of narration, so that the fictionalizing tendency of the story is subordinate to its historiographical function. That function is not to be understood in line with a naive view of history writing as pure description of “how it actually happened”. Some ancient historians used even the fictional for historio-

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les “Writing as a Rhetorical Act”, pp. 142–168; “Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures”, pp. 75–91.

<sup>56</sup> Watson, *Text and Truth*, pp. 9–12, 33–126.

<sup>57</sup> Watson, *Text and Truth*, p. 9.

graphical purposes; and just as fictional narratives are emplotted, so are historiographical ones; and just as fictional narratives may seek explanation in terms of transcendence, so do some historiographical ones. From this perspective, the past and the present in the gospel narratives are inextricably intertwined. As writings of history they are books about the past; as writings of that which is foundationally historic, “they are books about their own present and future, which are the present and future of this past”.<sup>58</sup> Closely linked to this discussion is Watson’s critique of those readings of the gospels that reject the concept of determinate meaning in texts either by deconstructing and converting any single meaning to a multiplicity of voices or by locating the meaning within the particular interests of the reading community. It remains possible to argue, says Watson, that texts have a “literal sense” dependent on “authorial intention”, because the speech-act theory of writing teaches us that a determinate communicative intention is always embedded in the text.

Watson’s theological thrust is his strength as well as his weakness. While it generates fruitful avenues of thinking for those biblical scholars who identify themselves as Christian theologians, it brings, in distinction to Robbins’ approach, little help to create an environment of debate with those who fail to accept the gospel narratives as Gospel. Watson chooses consistently one perspective – a Christian one – and that inevitably limits the relevance of his arguments for those cherishing a different kind of perspective. It is not without reason that “non-believing” biblical scholars have felt excluded by Watson’s previous publication.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, Watson argues his case with much insight and sophistication, producing far more than a mere apology for Christian theology. It is of prime importance, for the purposes of the present study, that he pays attention to historiographical theory as based on ancient history writing. Coupled with recent hermeneutical theory, it marks a most welcome ambition to locate any attempt to conceptualize the dynamics between story and history in the practices of the ancient historians. Luz, to be sure, emphatically insists that the Matthean story is miles away from the ancient history writings;<sup>60</sup> but, as Luz himself is aware of, it should cause more reflection that the Lukan author could easily relate a gospel narrative to some kind of history writing; and moreover, Luz’s conclusion is conceivable only if we accept his view that for the ancient historians truth con-

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<sup>58</sup> Watson, *Text and Truth*, p. 53.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. also the evaluation of Watson’s present book by Houlden, “Review”, pp. 211–213.

<sup>60</sup> Luz, “Fiktivität und Traditionstreue”, p. 175.



sisted in nothing else but the exact correspondence between what is narrated and what had happened.<sup>61</sup> Watson, as we have seen, works with a more dynamic concept, where historical truth might include elements of fiction. Although one might wish not to confuse this discussion with that of literary genre, Watson's view of historiography indeed brings out interesting phenomenological parallels to the gospel narratives worthy of further exploration.

Discussing writing as a communicative speech-act, Watson also brings into play the oral dynamics inherent in writing, regarding writing essentially as a way to superimpose a secondary code upon the primary one of speech. In this context, however, he pays little attention to the oral features appearing before the writing itself, between the historic(al) event and the writing. The secondary code of writing seems to be superior to speech, according to Watson, because it stabilizes and preserves, securing the stability which is required by historic status.<sup>62</sup> Where oral modes of communication prevail, the initiative lies entirely with the speaker, Watson argues, while in a writing the initiative is more evenly distributed between author and reader.<sup>63</sup> Yet, in antiquity people generally – early Christian authors included – preferred an oral mode of communication; and an oral performance and composition certainly did not locate the initiative of communication with the speaker only, but often included and interacted with the present audience – its comments and reactions. It is therefore hardly appropriate to focus too much on the writing itself as superimposing a secondary code on the oral medium of communication. Events of the past were already narrativized into present concerns in oral transmission and performance. And once they had been codified in a written text, that writing was not the end of orality as a decisive stabilizing imprint of the past; it was constantly re-oralized to serve again as an authoritative kind of text.<sup>64</sup> William A. Graham illustrates well the central importance of the oral and aural experience of religious texts in the life of religious communities of both Eastern and Western cultures. The spoken word of scripture is, according to Graham's conclusion, "the most important medium through which religious persons and groups through-

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<sup>61</sup> "Wahrheit ist also für einen Historiker nichts anderes als exakte Übereinstimmung des Berichteten mit dem Geschehenen" (Luz, "Fiktivität und Traditionstreue", p. 165).

<sup>62</sup> Watson, *Text and Truth*, p. 54.

<sup>63</sup> Watson, *Text and Truth*, p. 100.

<sup>64</sup> For the concept of the re-oralization of a text, see Mills, "Domains of Folkloristic Concern", pp. 231–241. See further below Chap. 3, B:5.

out history have known and interacted with scriptural texts".<sup>65</sup> The oral medium, it thus seems, provides a more decisive context. Here past and present, history and story, interact in a way which is at least as dynamic as within the written discourse itself.

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<sup>65</sup> Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, p. 155.

## Chapter 1

# Oral History: A New Approach

The studies by biblical scholars such as Luz, Robbins and Watson discussed in the previous chapter bring to attention significant factors involved in any attempt to overcome the dichotomy between story versus history, the present versus the past, in the study of the gospel tradition. Two items of special importance have emerged, namely orality and historiography. As indicated above, I fully endorse several aspects of the previous discussion of these items, while I remain critical of other points. These matters are now to be elaborated. How are the two items to be defined and how are they to be merged into a conceptual whole? Can we find a modern approach which avoids the pitfalls of anachronism inherent in many recent theories of orality and history, exhibiting instead a cultural sensitivity to the ancient way of relating the two?

The discipline labelled “oral history” provides such a framework, incorporating both orality and historiography. Its oral focus has to do first and foremost with a consistent attempt to listen to the living voices of those who were involved in and/or witnessed the events of interest. Its attention to historiography has to do with its insistence that one cannot limit the creation of history to the distanced and alleged objective work of professional historians, but must take seriously the historical character of the oral stories which the participants and/or eyewitnesses of historical events tell in all their subjectivity. Story and history are linked in a way which, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, is thoroughly reminiscent of what can be seen in several writings of the ancient Greek and Roman historians.

## A. The Decline and Revival of Oral History

The oral history approach constitutes an ancient art which became much neglected with the emergence of new concepts of historical truth and the attention to documentary evidence.<sup>1</sup> Hermann Strasburger, in his classical article “Die Wesensbestimmung der Geschichte durch die antike Geschichtsschreibung” from 1966,<sup>2</sup> rightly noticed the striking difference between the ancient and the modern historian. The latter deals mainly with “der *Sekundärarbeit* nach schriftlichen Quellen”, while the former “waren Meister in der durch den modernen Nachrichtenbetrieb verkümmerten Kunst der *Primärforschung*”.<sup>3</sup> Strasburger himself, and we as biblical scholars, are by the necessity of our profession and ancient object of study caught in the paradigm of searching mainly written documents in our attempts to understand the distant past. Indeed, we cannot change our own modes of thinking very much, but we can certainly become aware of its culture-specific limits, especially as we try to comprehend patterns of existence far away from our own time and cultural context. The ancient people evidently explored the past quite differently than we do ourselves; and they therefore related to it in a way which has very little to do with the modern, Western tendency of distant understanding and cognitive control.

### 1. The Professionalization of History

#### a. *Leopold von Ranke*

A significant factor in this decline of oral history was the professionalization of history during the late nineteenth century. The early impetus of this development came from the extremely influential Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886). Not even his most ardent critics have viewed him as anything less than one of the major figures in the creation of the professional, academic discipline of history, the father of modern European historiography.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henige illustrates the ancient roots of oral historical research generally by selectively surveying its use during almost three millennia, from Homer and onwards (*Oral History*, pp. 7–22).

<sup>2</sup> Now included in Strasburger, *Studien zur Alten Geschichte*, II, pp. 965–1014.

<sup>3</sup> Strasburger, *Studien zur Alten Geschichte*, II, p. 968.

<sup>4</sup> For the German discussion and the Rankean revival in Germany, see Mommsen, “Ranke and the Neo-Rankean School”, pp. 124–140.

Ranke was indeed familiar with ancient history writing, having devoted his now lost doctoral dissertation to Thucydides,<sup>5</sup> but he insisted, at least in theory,<sup>6</sup> on the modern ideal of objectivity, which meant the sustained attempt to impartially detect the past as it actually, or essentially, happened (“wie es eigentlich gewesen”) by placing it on a firm documentary and text-critical basis.<sup>7</sup> Oral history was thus of no fundamental relevance to Ranke.<sup>8</sup> Donald R. Kelley, a professor of history, brings attention to Ranke’s refusal to discuss the origin of society as an outcome of his conviction that the art of writing, which for Ranke was the basis of historical knowledge, is a comparatively late invention;<sup>9</sup> and Peter Burke, whose concern is cultural history, points out how Ranke’s programmatic ideal cut off a broad segment of historical reality. “At a time when historians were aspiring to become professionals, social and cultural history was excluded from the discipline, as defined by academics”.<sup>10</sup>

### b. Johann Gustav Droysen

Ranke never wrote any treatise on method as such, probably because he treated these issues in his seminars. But other historians of his time did. Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884) was one of them. His *Historik*, which was first presented as university lectures in Jena and Berlin between 1857 and 1883, though initially received with much scepticism and even rejected altogether, came to influence European historiography quite strongly. His relationship to Ranke was formal – they were university colleagues in Berlin – and essentially critical.<sup>11</sup> He rejected Ranke’s nar-

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<sup>5</sup> Was Ranke influenced by Thucydides when he coined his expression “wie es eigentlich gewesen”? Cf. ἐγὼ δὲ οἶον τε ἐγένετο λέξω in Thuc. II 48:3.

<sup>6</sup> Ranke combined the scientific attitude with a devotion to universal values. For an attempt to explain Ranke’s division of objectivity and subjectivity, see Krieger, *Ranke*.

<sup>7</sup> The famous old German expression “wie es eigentlich gewesen” appears in passing already in the “Vorrede” of the first edition of Ranke’s first work, which he completed while a teacher in Frankfurt an der Oder in 1824 and which led to his appointment to the university of Berlin: “Man hat der Historie das Amt, die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zukünftiger Jahre zu belehren, beigemessen: so hoher Aemter unterwindet sich gegenwärtiger Versuch nicht: er will blos zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen” (*Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker*, p. vii).

<sup>8</sup> Baum rightly notices that Ranke sometimes speaks positively of eyewitness testimony (*Lukas als Historiker*, pp. 98–100), but he neglects to see that the professionalization of history in fact made such statements peripheral to the historian’s task.

<sup>9</sup> Kelley, “Mythistory”, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Burke, “Ranke the Reactionary”, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Schleier, “Ranke in the Manuals on Historical Methods”, pp. 112–116.

row concentration on documentary sources and textual criticism and, most notably, developed a theory of cognition (“Verstehen”) which was lacking in Ranke’s works.

As historical material (“historische Materialien” or “geschichtliche Materialien”) Droysen distinguished between “Überreste”, “Quellen” and “Denkmäler”.<sup>12</sup> Yet his theory of cognition led also him to depreciate the historiographic value of the personal observation and/or participation. He criticizes Lessing’s opinion, for instance, that a historian can know with certainty only what he experienced himself: “Lessing erinnerte sich nicht, wie unendlich wenig man persönlich als einzelner sieht und hört und daß dies wenige noch obendrein höchst einseitig ist”.<sup>13</sup> Droysen is, on another occasion, eager to “save” Herodotus, the father of history, from being an eyewitness. He is a primary source (“erste Quelle”) of the Persian wars, because he was able to interpret them as an expression of the national freedom of Greece, not because he was a direct observer of them; “er selbst steht ihnen so fern wie wir heut den Freiheitskriegen”.<sup>14</sup> To sum up with Droysen’s own words:

“Denn die Geschichte ist nicht das erste beste Auffassen des Geschehenen, noch das Auffassen und Feststellen von beliebigen Einzelheiten, sondern ein geistiges Gegenbild des Geschehenen nach seiner Bedeutung, seinem Zusammenhang, seiner Wahrheit, wenn ich so sagen darf, das erste Verständnis derselben”.<sup>15</sup>

### c. *Ernst Bernheim*

Another manual on method was published a few years later by Ernst Bernheim (1850–1942), professor of history in Greifswald. His internationally reputed and initially much used *Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode* was first published in 1889, with further expanded editions, which from 1903 included the title *und der Geschichtsphilosophie*.<sup>16</sup>

He held Ranke in very high esteem,<sup>17</sup> much higher than he held Droysen,<sup>18</sup> and essentially transformed the working methods of the Rankean school into a systematic methodology. Despite the emerging scepticism against the scientific optimism of the nineteenth century, he affirmed

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<sup>12</sup> For comments, see Spieler, *Untersuchungen zu Johann Gustav Droysens “Historik”*, pp. 55–62.

<sup>13</sup> Droysen, *Historik*, p. 94.

<sup>14</sup> Droysen, *Historik*, p. 148.

<sup>15</sup> Droysen, *Historik*, p. 148.

<sup>16</sup> I have used the final 5th and 6th editions from 1908.

<sup>17</sup> Schleier, “Ranke in the Manuals on Historical Methods”, pp. 119–123.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the comments in his *Lehrbuch*, pp. 237, 245–246.

Ranke's objective idealism to be realized by strict attention to methods of source criticism.<sup>19</sup> He went beyond Ranke, as he says,<sup>20</sup> only in the sense that he included a sociological approach to historical interpretation. The stories ("Berichte") of the participants of history and/or eyewitnesses are not rejected by Bernheim, but their partiality and subjectivity must be controlled by a correlation of several witnesses.<sup>21</sup> They are thus to be stripped of their narrative characteristics, "weil sie selbst nur einen Teil der Ereignisse aus eigener Anschauung kennen lernen",<sup>22</sup> because the historian strives for analysis and genetic explanation.

#### *d. Some Implications*

The professionalization of history strongly affected the historian's understanding of his or her task. It segregated the historian in libraries and brought with it a tendency to reject other historians who participated in the events which they described, assuming that experience and involvement in the public world were incompatible with the ideal of strict objectivity.

Other historians could be referred to, and other manuals could be mentioned. It is true that the nineteenth century reflects a vast pluralism of historical approaches. The situation at the turn of the century was by no means uniform. George G. Iggers, an acknowledged expert on European historiography, illustrates well the criticism levelled against the Rankean conception of historical science by a new generation of historians who sought to include the methods of the various social sciences in historical study.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, the cumulative influence of Ranke, Droysen and Bernheim never vanished entirely and might have effected the surprisingly slow recognition of oral history as a discipline in its own right. Oral history still finds a somewhat sporadic appreciation in the agenda of some modern, professional historians. Certain hand-books fail to discuss it seriously.<sup>24</sup> Or the old view is repeated: "History is not a science of *direct* observation". Historical method proper is "a process *supplementary*

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<sup>19</sup> Bernheim, *Lehrbuch*, pp. 189–206.

<sup>20</sup> Bernheim, *Lehrbuch*, p. 238: "In wesentlichen Stücken sind wir allerdings über Ranke hinausgekommen".

<sup>21</sup> Bernheim, *Lehrbuch*, pp. 195–196, 413, 480–481.

<sup>22</sup> Bernheim, *Lehrbuch*, p. 413.

<sup>23</sup> Iggers, "The Crisis of the Rankean Paradigm", pp. 170–179. Iggers develops this discussion more fully in his most recent book *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 23–94.

<sup>24</sup> Cf., e.g., Torstendahl/Nybohm, *Historievitenskap som teori, praktik, ideologi*.

to observation, a process by which the historian attempts to test the truthfulness of the reports of observations made by others".<sup>25</sup>

The possible influence of the previous generations of historians on this persistent view gained strength through other factors. The historians were, of course, affected by their own cultural setting. One finds a preference among them to investigate distant matters long past. The ancient historians tended, by contrast, to concentrate on events that were more or less contemporaneous. One also faces today the enormous increase of written material. The spread of literacy and the refined technologies of printing have created circumstances where a large amount of written sources are available. The situation in antiquity was totally different. Ancient historians were often forced to rely on other kinds of sources. Written material was neither widely produced nor easily at hand. Moreover, in modern times there has been an increasing appreciation of the written word generally. Although the effect of literacy and printed texts on the human mind is extremely complex and far from regular, Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord issued a debate which reveals the modern, Western tendency to rank the written medium above other information technologies.<sup>26</sup> As it seems, it is the recording, the systematic writing down of the observation, that is of most value to the modern historian; the written word is often superimposed on the oral stories of eyewitnesses and informers.

## 2. Back to Reality: the Impact of the World Wars

It took two world wars to rediscover the historian as a participant in historical events, if I may generalize somewhat. Historians no longer remained in the universities; they now became directly involved, as historians, in the reality outside of the universities.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hockett, *The Critical Method*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>26</sup> Parry and Lord initiated the debate with their influential study of Yugoslavian bards. The results were put together by Lord, in his famous book *The Singer of Tales*, which issued what is now called "the Oral-Formulaic theory". For a concise survey of this theory, see Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition*. Foley gives his own modified view of the theory in the recent article "What's in a Sign?", pp. 1–27. Cf. also Boedeker, "Amerikanische Oral-Tradition-Forschung", pp. 34–53. Thomas provides a recent, balanced discussion of the influence of literacy, with some valid criticism of the "Parry-Lord thesis" (*Literacy and Orality*, pp. 15–51).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Schlesinger Jr., "The Historian as Participant", pp. 339–358.



Moving the attention beyond the European continent,<sup>28</sup> one notices a striking involvement in the wars among American historians.<sup>29</sup> Without the recognition of an official status, for instance, during the first world war historians volunteered to serve for thirty-two months on the National Board for Historical Service to assist the official Committee on Public Information. As peace came there appeared, significantly enough, an increasing emphasis on the theory that the important part of the past was that which could be explained in terms of the present. During the second war the historians' involvement was officially sanctioned. Arthur M. Schlesinger proposed in 1941 that a historian or archivist be attached to every wartime agency, and step by step his suggestion was carried out. It has been estimated that about half of the professional historians in the country between the ages of twenty-five and forty were eventually drawn into the project of recording and interpreting events of the war "without the usual perspective".<sup>30</sup>

The wars narrowed the scope of research to immediate objectives and alerted the historians to the complex nature of sources and interpretation. We are far removed from the peaceful libraries of Ranke; the wars had relativized the objective, impartial ideal of the segregated professional.

It was at this time, and in this American context, that the ancient art of oral history was revived and given a disciplinary status of its own. Paul Thompson, whose work we shall discuss more fully below, quotes the (American) Oral History Association declaration which traces the origin of oral history as a method of historical documentation back to 1948. In that year the Columbia university historian Allan Nevins began recording the memoirs of significant American persons.<sup>31</sup> His project was a project of political history, though its anticipations were of a different kind. As such the Columbian approach was attractive to both national foundations and local fund-givers, and from now on its status as a historical discipline was increasingly affirmed.

In different ways the second war caused a wider use of oral history in other countries as well. In Israel, of course, the systematic destruction of Jewish communities under the Nazis made the oral evidence from eyewitnesses vital. And Europe was not untouched by this tendency. "World War II appears to have been followed by a clearer caesura in European

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<sup>28</sup> For discussion of German historiography as related to the second world war, see Low, *The Third Reich*.

<sup>29</sup> The following section relies on Hockett, *The Critical Method*, pp. 248–254.

<sup>30</sup> Hockett, *The Critical Method*, p. 251.

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 59.

historiography than World War I", Iggers argues.<sup>32</sup> He is thinking of the new interest in empirical social sciences among the historians. In Germany the oral history movement had a late start. Nazism, it seems, had left a generation anxious to forget its past rather than to investigate it. But in Italy the study of the anti-Fascist wartime partisans initiated a focus on oral history. Documenting Fascism was also important for the development in the Netherlands. And with the ending of Franco's regime, oral history found footing also in Spain.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the sharp critique and objection of some professional historians,<sup>34</sup> the development of the last few years has shown that oral history now belongs firmly within the domain of historiography,<sup>35</sup> with natural interdisciplinary connections to sociology and cultural anthropology. From the 1970s this method of historical documentation has been extended into new fields: Indian history, black history, women's history, immigrant history, working-class history, family history, etc. It now has its own associations, journals and conferences, all over the world.<sup>36</sup>

It also has its own ideology, understanding the historian's task differently from Ranke, Droysen and Bernheim; it gives history back to the people in their own words. The oral historian, somewhat like Herodotus,<sup>37</sup> is not so much concerned with her or his own conception of how things actually have been as with hearing and documenting the living voice of the people themselves; s/he does not approach history so much as someone who holds a monopoly over interpretation as, with the words of Ronald J. Grele, "someone who cares about the pastness of the past" and "involves members of the public in the creation of their own history".<sup>38</sup> The professional historian, working at some distance, can provide no

<sup>32</sup> Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography*, p. 31.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 61–62.

<sup>34</sup> For some Swedish comments, cf. the critical remarks in Torstendahl/Nyblom, *Historievetenskap som teori, praktik, ideologi*, pp. 131, 199. Dahlgren seems more positively inclined, but refuses to see oral history as a historical discipline of its own, neglecting its inherent ideology (Dahlgren/Florén, *Fråga det förflutna*, pp. 205–209). Cf. also the comments of Ågren in Florén/Ågren, *Historiska undersökningar*, p. 69.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Schaffner, professor of history in Basel, thus concludes: "Innerhalb der Geschichtswissenschaft läßt sich somit ein ganzes Spektrum von Arbeitsmöglichkeiten mit Oral History ausmachen" ("Plädoyer für Oral History", p. 348).

<sup>36</sup> Excerpts of the most influential writings by practitioners in the field have been collected and edited by Perks and Thomson in *The oral history reader*.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Lang, "Herodotus: Oral History with a Difference", pp. 93–103; Murray, "Herodotus and Oral History", pp. 93–115; Stahl, *Aristokraten und Tyrannen im archaischen Athen*, p. 41 n. 71.

<sup>38</sup> Grele, "Preface", pp. vii, viii.

more no less but a context of possible patterns that may explain what is being told. In this sense, there is today a move across the centuries, a return to the ancient historians, with an openness to take seriously the personal observation and/or experience as valuable history in itself.

## B. The Theoretical Framework

The basic ideology of oral history is thus a “move from below”, a fundamental concern to liberate the oral evidence of witnesses of every variety from the powerful structures of professional paradigms that focus largely on the study of written documents. This ideology is amended with a theoretical framework which explains and legitimizes its manifold practice. For the purposes of the present study, that framework is of vital importance, because it brings into sharp focus values and conceptions about the past which have deep roots in the ancient, more or less intuitive, synthesis of story and history, present and past, and provides therefore a suitable theory for comprehending better that ancient synthesis.

While several contemporary scholars discuss the oral history approach, only Paul Thompson, one of its leading representatives, is to be presented here, because his views constitute the major guide-line of most oral historians. In the following chapters, we shall repeatedly refer back to his approach, occasionally supplementing it by referring to the discussion of other oral historians and asking ourselves how the oral history approach helps us to understand the ancient way of relating to the past. Since oral history and oral tradition are closely connected, we shall, in addition, discuss the relationship between the two by reference to the main handbook on oral tradition.

### 1. Oral History: Paul Thompson

With the publication of his book *The Voice of the Past* in 1978, Paul Thompson, research professor in social history at the university of Essex, made a pioneering contribution in presenting the first comprehensive introduction to oral history. The thoroughly revised edition from 1988 still constitutes the leading and most influential discussion of the theory as well as the practice of the discipline.

Oral history is not merely a method for how to collect information. Thompson sees much more:

“If the full potential of oral history is realized, it will result not so much in a specific list of titles to be found listed in a section of historical bibliographies, as in an underlying change in the way in which history is written and learnt, in its questions and its judgements, and its texture”.<sup>39</sup>

As with most methods, it carries within itself an ideological force; and this is a force which is totally different from the objective idealism of the nineteenth century and revitalizes ancient notions of how to search out and relate to the past.

A central feature is, as we saw, the “move from below”. Iggers, in his most recent book on historiography, speaks of and argues for a move from macro- to microhistory, where the subject matter of historical studies concerns the stories of individual people rather than the grand processes of the anonymous many.<sup>40</sup> This feature is evident throughout Thompson’s book and forms one of its central theses. He writes his book partly from a socialist perspective, because “the richest possibilities of oral history”, he insists already in the preface, “lie within the development of a more socially conscious and democratic history”.<sup>41</sup> It introduces “new evidence from the underside”, it brings “recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored”, thus enlarging and enriching the scope of historical writing and breaking through the barriers between the educational institution and the outside world, he later elaborates.<sup>42</sup>

“Oral evidence”, he says “by transforming the ‘objects’ of study into ‘subjects’, makes for a history which is not just richer, more vivid and heart-rending, but *truer*”.<sup>43</sup> Oral history thus brings new insights into what we may perceive as true or false, fact or fiction in history. Its social dimension is central to Thompson. He develops this discussion primarily in the chapter entitled “Evidence”,<sup>44</sup> which is the most important one for our purposes. To treat oral sources simply as documents ignores the special value which they have as subjective, spoken testimony. What we have in these sources namely – as well as in social statistics, newspaper reports, private letters, published biographies – are not the facts, but the social perception of facts; and what we receive through these sources therefore is social meaning. This is the kind of evidence which must be evaluated.

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<sup>39</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 72.

<sup>40</sup> Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 101–117.

<sup>41</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. viii. He repeats this emphasis towards the end of the book, pp. 264–265.

<sup>42</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>43</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 101–149.

The distinctiveness of oral evidence, with its social implication for concepts such as true or false, fact or fiction, comes from different reasons. The most obvious one, of course, is that it presents itself in an oral form. To a certain extent, this makes it more reliable than written documents. The historian senses the social clues of the speaker, the nuances of uncertainty, the humour or pretence, the dialect; s/he can, if necessary, challenge the speaker immediately. In general, however, neither oral nor written evidence can be said to be superior, according to Thompson; the specific context is decisive.

There is a further reason, however. The evidence of oral history is distinctive also because it is normally retrospective over a longer span of time. That characteristic brings the role of memory into focus. Remembering the past is a complex process of selection and discarding along durable traces established by a chemical process. Yet, what is essential in oral history is not the bio-chemical knowledge of the brain, but the recognition that the memory process depends largely upon individual comprehension and, most important, interest. Accurate memory is more likely when it meets social interest and need. A person involved remembers better than a disinterested observer. The recognition of this memory process implies that the “memorizer”, the informant, is of vital importance as a social and psychological being, because, as Thompson develops in a subsequent chapter entitled “Memory and the Self”,<sup>45</sup> memory is always subjective. We see the hidden truth behind the oral story only by taking seriously the informant’s own feelings about the past. Such attention to the uniqueness of each account of an eyewitness presents of course a problem for the historian and needs therefore to be coupled with a sense of its representativeness by a careful method of strategic sampling. It is precisely the uniqueness as well as the representativeness of each life story that is one of the deepest lessons of oral history.

In what sense then, according to Thompson, can we speak of true or false, reliable or unreliable, in regard to oral history sources? The query might itself be an improper one, because it gives wrong alternatives. Thompson urges the historian “to appreciate the complexity with which reality and myth, ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’, are inextricably mixed in all human perception of the world, both individual and collective”.<sup>46</sup> The historian always needs to sense how a question is answered from another person’s perspective. The misunderstanding often comes because s/he attempts instead to see patterns from another angle, from the long-range

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<sup>45</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 150–165.

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 135.

experience of several generations rather than from that of a single life cycle. Thompson quotes from Alessandro Portelli's article on the peculiarities of oral history, arguing that these so-called "false" and "untrue" statements, these "errors", sometimes reveal more than factually accurate accounts; the credibility of oral sources is a different credibility that takes into account not only facts, but imagination and symbolism.<sup>47</sup> They are indeed evidence, but evidence that moves beyond the purely factual. What people imagined happened may be as crucial to history as what did happen. Oral history is concerned with both, because the oral story and the oral history behind that story are inseparably linked.

Are we then at the end left with an inextricable mixture of story and history with no means to reach behind the subjective, imaginary and symbolic perceptions of the world? Not necessarily. Dominick LaCapra has brought out several arguments to show that the extreme documentary objectivism and the relativistic subjectivism do not constitute genuine alternatives in the historical craft.<sup>48</sup> And the discipline of oral history is not to be confused with an array of extreme literary and social theories which deny that truth and knowledge about the past are possible.<sup>49</sup> Keith Windschuttle, for instance, levels an engaged critique of the excesses within such a development;<sup>50</sup> and Richard J. Evans, even more recently, reveals well the inherent problems and contradictions of the disintegrative, post-modern theories.<sup>51</sup>

Thompson, it seems, belongs to a different scholarly paradigm. Oral history becomes oral tradition as the accounts are handed down by word of mouth to later generations; and the transmission betrays that this tradition, while indeed being subject to changes and suppression due to certain social pressures, cannot merely be seen as evidence of the present. Jack Goody's and Ian Watt's functional theory of dynamic homeostasis is exaggerated as a general dogma of the relationship between society and tradition, Thompson argues by reference to Jan Vansina, because social changes do often leave older variations and archaisms intact and suppressed items usually leave traces.<sup>52</sup> The story, one might say, is not merely a

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<sup>47</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 139.

<sup>48</sup> LaCapra, *History & Criticism*.

<sup>49</sup> The emerging interest in the New Historicism among New Testament scholars might, according to Moore, carry us into the the liminal zone between positivist historiography and postpositivist theory ("History After Theory?", pp. 289–299). Are we to locate the oral history approach within this "liminal zone"?

<sup>50</sup> Windschuttle, *The Killing of History*.

<sup>51</sup> Evans, *In Defence of History*.

<sup>52</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 147.

mirror of the present time of the narrative or a window to the author's time and situation, but also a flickering reflection of what happened before history became story.

Nor are we left with a mere reproduction of the oral sources, according to Thompson. A complete absence of the wider historical perspectives of an experienced historian "will lead to the creation of one-dimensional historical myths rather than to a deeper social understanding".<sup>53</sup> What is needed is an interpretation that emerges from a dynamic relationship and mutual discussion. In the chapter entitled "Interpretation: The Making of History", Thompson sets out to explain more fully how "to make history" from oral sources.<sup>54</sup> This endeavour can be approached either through biography or through a wider social analysis. The historian is faced with the painful choice of putting together oral history either through the single life story narrative, which as such might indeed be full of significant memories, or through a collection of eyewitness accounts around a theme, or through cross-analysis with ensuing arguments; sometimes a combination of all three is necessary. A tension will always remain, because the elegance of historical generalization flies high above the ordinary life experience in which oral history is rooted. In addition, the sources have to be evaluated in view of their subjective bias. This is done in basically three steps: by assessing the internal consistency of the interview, by cross-checking with other sources and by placing the evidence in a wider social context. One may push even further, interpreting the material through a certain kind of literary analysis. The historian seeks here to interpret the (half-conscious) meaning intended by the author from all the confused and contradictory clues of the oral account; and s/he examines the interview as a literary "genre" that imposes its own conventions and constraints on the speakers, looking at the interview both as a form of discourse as well as a testimony, both, we might say, as story and history.

## 2. Oral History and Oral Tradition: Jan Vansina

We have already referred to the Belgian scholar Jan Vansina; and it is at this point, as we seek to understand the story as history, that his extremely influential work is of interest. Building primarily on field work in African societies, he wrote already in 1959 his "historical methodology"

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<sup>53</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 186.

<sup>54</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 234–265.

*De la tradition orale*. His most recent, major contribution to the issue from 1985, *Oral Tradition as History*, is indeed more than a mere revision of his earlier study, being a new book in itself. His goal remains however the same, "to introduce the reader to the usual set of rules of historical evidence as they apply to oral traditions".<sup>55</sup> These rules form a single whole and constitute for Vansina the method of history.

We shall not display here the variety of rules laid out by Vansina, because many of them are similar to the ones presented by Thompson, but discuss his views only as they relate to our primary concern of the oral history approach. Pertinent to our interest is his sharp distinction between oral history and oral tradition. The former includes "reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitness accounts about events and situations which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informants";<sup>56</sup> the latter consists of "verbal messages which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation",<sup>57</sup> such as memorized speech, various forms of accounts of events, epic, tales, proverbs and sayings. "The two situations typically are very different", says Vansina, "with regard to the collection of sources as well as with regard to their analysis".<sup>58</sup> Vansina's own set of rules relate to the analysis of oral tradition, not oral history.<sup>59</sup>

Although the distinction is heuristically helpful and has been used in the study of the ancient historians,<sup>60</sup> one must indeed remember that an oral tradition is also a testimony about the past. For Vansina it is essential that an oral tradition has a double aspect of being of the present as well as of the past. He formulates his conviction programatically in the preface:

"'Ancient things are today'. Yes, oral traditions are documents *of the present*, because they are told in the present. Yet they also embody a message from the past, so they are

<sup>55</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. xiii.

<sup>56</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> It is thus surprising that even Lord, one of the pioneers on issues of orality and literacy, refers to the English translation of Vansina's first book as the "classic work on oral history" ("The Gospels as Oral Traditional Literature", p. 33 n. 1).

<sup>60</sup> Cobet thus, in his study of Herodotus, proceeds on the following assumption: "Oral tradition findet der Forscher als formbewußte Erzählungen in schriftlosen Gesellschaften vor, oral history betreibt er mit Interviews in schriftgeprägten Gesellschaften, um eine sprachlose Tradition, individuelle Erinnerung, erst an den Tag zu bringen und um das Abstraktionsniveau der Literalität zu durchdringen mit der Absicht, an die Modi historische geprägter kultureller Orientierung einzelner wie breiterer Schichten zu gelangen" ("Herodot und mündliche Überlieferung", p. 227).



expressions of *the past* at the same time. They are representations of the past in the present. One cannot deny either the past or the present in them”.

The same could certainly be said of an eyewitness account. Vansina fails to mention that both are essentially representations of the past in the present. Elisabeth Tonkin, another oral historian, thus criticizes Vansina for distinguishing two types of data, each of which have different rules of evaluation, “whereas it can be argued that his terms of distinction do not hold good”.<sup>61</sup>

In this context she also brings attention to the fact that a tradition cannot be defined in relation to the lapse of time of only one generation, but due attention must be given to the number of transmitters within one and the same generation. An experience is not always transmitted from one generation to the next. The rise and dissemination of tradition can be almost simultaneous. This synchrony of eyewitness report and oral transmission might cause a certain fusion of oral history and oral tradition already during a period of time that is nearly contemporaneous with the event or situation of interest.

The overlapping between the two becomes clear when Vansina speaks of oral tradition as evidence.<sup>62</sup> The relation between the event or the situation observed and the final recording made of it may be described in different ways, but whatever the model used, Vansina insists, there must be a link between the record and the observation. “If there is none”, he says, “there is no historical evidence”.<sup>63</sup> Is this not another way of postulating a close relationship between oral history and oral tradition as far as the pastness of a tradition is concerned?

Despite Vansina’s strict distinction between the two, it becomes evident that an oral tradition must through some way of transmission relate to oral history, that is, to the initial experience and formulation of an event or a situation, in order to be of value as a representation of the past.

This discussion of oral history and oral tradition is reminiscent of the two folkloristic categories “memorate” and “fabulate”. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi have strongly objected to Carl Wilhelm von Sydow’s influential distinction between the memorate as a distinct kind of material that reproduces people’s own, purely personal experiences and the later retelling of that memorate.<sup>64</sup> Granted that many memorates subsequently turn into third-person fabulates, it is also a rule, according to Dégh and

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<sup>61</sup> Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, p. 87.

<sup>62</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, pp. 29–32.

<sup>63</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 29.

<sup>64</sup> Dégh/Vázsonyi, “The Memorates and the Proto-Memorates”, pp. 225–239.

Vázsonyi, that each fabulate or other narrative that requires credence is based on either a truly existing or an assumed memorate, that is, on a proto-memorate. They stress thus that “each fabulate *necessarily* presupposes a memorate – a real one (as in so many cases) or an inferential one”.<sup>65</sup> This folkloristic insight, though not being concerned with the historicity of a narrative, lends support to our insistence on the interplay between oral history and oral tradition.

If there is no sharp break, one might do better to avoid too strict a distinction between the two, granting that an oral historian may seek information by interviewing eyewitnesses and by interrogating tradition carriers. We shall therefore have occasion to return to Vansina’s discussion as it relates to individual parts of the oral history approach.

### C. Oral History and New Testament Scholarship

Oral history has, to my knowledge, never been employed as a comprehensive approach in a New Testament study. The recent interest in orality moves within a different, though related, conceptual paradigm. Werner H. Kelber’s influential book *The Oral and the Written Gospel* from 1983, with a reprint from 1997 including a new introduction by the author, focuses mainly on the abrupt discontinuity between the oral and the written word and the hermeneutical shift embodied in that process. The debate and critique that followed have been, accordingly, more concerned with that alleged polarity than with the role of oral informants during the development of the gospel tradition.<sup>66</sup> That role is, as we have seen, the central issue of oral history, but it is usually neglected or excluded in the various discussions of the intricate interaction between orality and literacy (textuality) in early Christianity.<sup>67</sup> The two volumes of *Semeia* from 1987 and 1994 dealing with orality and literacy – the first volume discusses Kelber’s approach – fail to mention it altogether. Similarly, the inter-

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<sup>65</sup> Dégh/Vázsonyi, “The Memorates and the Proto-Memorates”, p. 239.

<sup>66</sup> For critique of Kelber, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 24, 319–320, 323–324, 331–349, with literature. Cf. also, e.g., Halverson, “Oral and Written Gospel”, pp. 180–195; Gamble, *Books and Readers*, pp. 28–30; Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte*, pp. 43–57. The most recent Biblical studies of orality also neglect the oral history approach. Cf. Harvey, *Listening to the Text*; Davis, *Oral Biblical Criticism*.

<sup>67</sup> We shall, nevertheless, have reason to discuss Kelber’s contribution at some length as he has certain opinions concerning the possibility of speaking about a sense of pastness in oral contexts and the influence of a person within a group on the transmission process. See below Chap. 3, B:4, Chap. 4, A:6a and Chap. 6, B:10.

disciplinary Hamburg-Rissen conference of 1995 on “Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Judentum und Christentum der Spätantike”, the contributions of which were edited and published by Gerhard Sellin and François Vouga in 1997 as *Logos und Buchstabe*, pays no attention to the oral history approach. While some of the contributions present significant additions to the discussion of orality and literacy in various parts of antiquity, the editors’ preface shows that the general focus of the conference proceeded along the same lines as Kelber did, supplemented by certain philosophical, theological and hermeneutical considerations pertinent to the Christian-Jewish dialogue.

Other scholars have indeed touched on the issue of the role of oral informants, yet without approaching it from the interdisciplinary perspective of oral history.<sup>68</sup> The early form-critics sensed the importance of the entire question of how the eyewitnesses influenced the gospel tradition, and the debate with them centered partly on that issue.

### 1. Martin Dibelius

It is the unfortunate fate of many scholarly discussions to become simplified and categorical. The early form-critics are often lumped together and characterized as one school with inner coherency and agreement. Such was, however, not the case. Martin Dibelius’ view of the form-critical approach was somewhat different from the one of Rudolf Bultmann. To be sure, they agreed on basic matters, such as the notion of the existence of small, separate items of tradition units, the importance of relating the form and its development to the life situation (“Sitz im Leben”) of the early communities, the low estimation of the literary capabilities of the early Christians, etc. But while Bultmann held on to the view that we can know practically nothing concerning the life and the person of Jesus,<sup>69</sup> Dibelius was more positively inclined towards the reliability and impor-

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<sup>68</sup> This is especially the case in some studies of Luke. Thus Baum discusses the role of eyewitnesses. But instead of relating it to the oral history approach, he explicitly understands the ancient historians very much in line with the theoretical ideals of Ranke (*Lukas als Historiker*, pp. 87–102).

<sup>69</sup> This is apparent even in Bultmann’s book about Jesus: “Denn freilich bin ich der Meinung, daß wir vom Leben und von der Persönlichkeit Jesu so gut wie nichts mehr wissen können, da die christlichen Quellen sich dafür nicht interessiert haben, außerdem sehr fragmentarisch und von der Legende überwuchert sind, und da andere Quellen über Jesus nicht existieren” (*Jesus*, p. 12). He focuses instead on what Jesus intended, on his preaching, thus bringing the modern Christian into dialogue with history.

tance of the pre-synoptic gospel tradition.<sup>70</sup> The sermon was indeed the life setting of tradition and transmission in the early communities, in his view, and the present and the future were of most importance to the early Christians, as we saw in the previous chapter. But the sermon, in its broadest sense, with its teaching and proclamation of salvation,<sup>71</sup> constituted according to Dibelius a mysterious synthesis between the historical foundation of the church in the life and teaching of Jesus, on the one hand, and the present expectation of the future coloured by christology, on the other.<sup>72</sup> While the followers of Jesus were not interested in history for its own sake, their hopes were still nourished by it.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Dibelius, contrary to Bultmann, spoke quite often and explicit of eyewitnesses as playing an important role during the initial stages of the emerging traditions about Jesus. For Bultmann the tradition gained increasing importance only when the eyewitnesses of Jesus had died out.<sup>73</sup> Dibelius expresses a different attitude, both in his major book *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* and elsewhere. To be sure, there appears a certain inconsistency. He occasionally adheres strictly to the collective understanding of literature and authorship and rejects therefore the attempt to link the historicity of the gospels to the issue concerning the authors' relationship to eyewitnesses. The view behind such an attempt is too "individualistisch", he says.<sup>74</sup> Yet, on other occasions one finds a different way of thinking. Here he does speak of eyewitnesses.

One distinguishes three contexts in which such a discussion appears. On a general level, Dibelius attaches importance to the linking of eyewitness-

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<sup>70</sup> Cf., e.g., Dibelius' famous statement: "Wie sich im Urchristentum von Anfang an neben enthusiastischen auch nomistische Gedanken gezeigt haben, so steht neben dem pneumatischen Interesse, für das alle christliche Paränese den einen göttlichen Ursprung hat, die Wertschätzung der Tradition, der Authentie und der Autorität" (*Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, p. 243).

<sup>71</sup> Dibelius has been criticized for using the category of preaching ambiguously and without precision (e.g., Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, pp. 13–15). But in an essay from 1935 he defines it quite concisely: "Predigt meint in diesem Zusammenhang a) missionarische Predigt an die Unbekehrten, b) Erbauung der Gläubigen und c) die Unterweisung der Katechumenen" (*Botschaft und Geschichte*, I, p. 307).

<sup>72</sup> See especially Dibelius' essay "Gospel Criticism and Christology" from 1935, German translation in *Botschaft und Geschichte*, I, pp. 293–358.

<sup>73</sup> Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, p. 39.

<sup>74</sup> Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, pp. 56–57. He is here discussing the historicity of the paradigms, but broadens the issue in this paragraph to concern the historicity of the gospels.

ses and ministers of the word in Luke 1:2.<sup>75</sup> The Lukan prologue is indeed schematic and conventional, according to Dibelius, but it breaks the conventional pattern precisely in juxtaposing the eyewitnesses with unknown ministers of the word. Evidently the author did not wish to separate the two groups strictly, while at the same time there must have been ministers of the word – Dibelius calls them “preachers” – who were not eyewitnesses. What is of importance to Dibelius is that some eyewitnesses became preachers, who were followed by other preachers that were not eyewitnesses. This shows that the gospel tradition was not carried by preachers only, but by preachers who had themselves been eyewitnesses.

Dibelius employs this observation and brings it a step further in discussing the paradigms.<sup>76</sup> He regards them as very old, because they show no trace of having been embellished with Hellenistic legends and anecdotes or influenced by current events in the contemporaneous world, and because Paul must have become familiar with them already at the time of his conversion or call.<sup>77</sup> At this early time, Dibelius points out, the eyewitnesses could control and correct the paradigms. They may also have performed a similar censoring function when the paradigms were translated from Aramaic into Greek. The eyewitnesses, who had been students of Jesus,<sup>78</sup> would have been able to correct an entirely erroneous translation.

Dibelius becomes most concrete when he deals with the initial formation and transmission of the passion narrative.<sup>79</sup> He considers it to be the only account in the gospel tradition that already very early formed a long, coherent narrative. At two points the tradition has maintained its roots in the account of eyewitnesses. Mark 14:51 mentions an anonymous young man following Jesus after the disciples had deserted him at the arrest. The brief reference to him and his flight without clothes serves, according to Dibelius, no specific purpose in the passion narrative itself.

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<sup>75</sup> Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, pp. 10–12, 59. Cf. also, e.g., Dibelius, *Botschaft und Geschichte*, I, pp. 308–309.

<sup>76</sup> Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, p. 59. Cf. also, e.g., Dibelius, *Jesus*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, pp. 294–295; Dibelius, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, pp. 29–30.

<sup>78</sup> So Dibelius, *Jesus*, p. 26.

<sup>79</sup> Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, pp. 183–184, 205–206, 217–218. Dibelius devoted a separate article to the passion story, which is reproduced in his *Botschaft und Geschichte*, I, pp. 248–257, cf. especially pp. 252–253. Cf. also, e.g., Dibelius, *Jesus*, pp. 27–28, 85, 118–119; Dibelius, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, pp. 36–37.

Matthew and Luke omit it accordingly. It would not have been included in Mark had the young man not himself narrated what he observed and had not the early Christians known him. Likewise Mark 15:21 mentions, seemingly unnecessarily, that Simon of Cyrene was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Again the reference serves no specific purpose in the passion narrative, and again Matthew and Luke omit it. It is understandable, according to Dibelius, only if we assume that Alexander and Rufus were known to the Christians, so that in this way they were reminded of the origin of the tradition from an eyewitness. Somewhat less concretely Dibelius also mentions the disciples and the women, who according to Mark 15:40 were present at the crucifixion. Peter, in addition, might himself have told others about his denial of Jesus, information which perhaps was confirmed by the anonymous disciple – to be identified with the Jerusalem priest John the elder, according to Dibelius<sup>80</sup> – mentioned in John 18:15, 16.

## 2. Vincent Taylor

Vincent Taylor published his eight lectures entitled *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* in 1933, before having seen the second, extended edition of Dibelius' *Formgeschichte*.<sup>81</sup> His major discussion – and quarrel – was thus with Bultmann,<sup>82</sup> who at this time was the most detailed and complete of the German form-critics.<sup>83</sup>

Taking his cue from Bultmann's version of form criticism, Taylor detects a vulnerable front in that it neglects entirely the role of eyewitnesses.<sup>84</sup> "If the Form-Critics are right, the disciples must have been translated to heaven immediately after the Resurrection", Taylor remarks.<sup>85</sup> The reason for this neglect, according to Taylor, is two-fold. Firstly, the form-critics are by the nature of their studies interested in oral forms shaped by nameless individuals according to certain laws of tradition, not

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Dibelius, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, pp. 72–76.

<sup>81</sup> He studied it of course later. Cf., e.g., Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>82</sup> Taylor seems, as a matter of fact, to have been quite appreciative of Dibelius' pioneering book. Cf. the comments in Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, pp. 11–12, 17.

<sup>83</sup> At this time Bultmann had already published the second, revised and expanded edition of his *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, pp. 41–43, 106.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, p. 41.

in persons who could enrich the tradition by their recollections. Secondly, the form-critics realize how greatly the influence of eyewitnesses has been exaggerated. Papias' statement concerning Mark as Peter's attendant has caused a one-sided tendency not to allow for the influence of current tradition on Mark. With the form-critics the pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other, according to Taylor.

### 3. Dennis Nineham

It was not until almost three decades later that the whole issue was taken up for separate treatment. Dennis Nineham published in 1958 and 1960 his three articles entitled "Eye-Witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition". He is concerned primarily with the questions of how, when and to what extent eyewitness testimony continued to control the tradition in the later stages of its development. The origin of the tradition in such testimony is more or less assumed.

Nineham starts with the form-critics. While form criticism acknowledges the influence of eyewitness testimony during the initial phase of the gospel tradition,<sup>86</sup> the essence of that approach is, according to Nineham, incompatible with any theory that postulates a significant and direct influence of eyewitnesses after the initial stage. The development was controlled entirely by the impersonal needs and forces of the community. The very minor part played by eyewitnesses in the development of the gospel tradition is, in Nineham's view, central to the form-critical position.

Nineham's conclusion is mainly negative. The phenomena in the texts are ambiguous and at best inconclusive when it comes to deciding the direct impact of the eyewitnesses at the stage at which the canonical gospels were in process of composition. The same is to be said for the time before the composition of Mark. Nineham does not deny entirely the possibility that eyewitness testimonies were of some importance, but he still ends up in a rather agnostic tone:

"If the thesis put forward in these articles is sound, the conclusion must be that, though certain passages in our gospels may still be formulated exactly as they were by eyewitnesses of the events concerned, we have no compelling *a priori* reasons for thinking that it is so, and, even if it is, no absolutely watertight criteria for establishing *where* it is so".<sup>87</sup>

Drawing out the implications of his result, Nineham holds the view, as

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<sup>86</sup> As we have seen, this is true primarily for Dibelius.

<sup>87</sup> Nineham, "Eye-Witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition. III", pp. 254–255.

it seems, that we can dispense with the notion of autopsy in the gospel tradition. While hellenistic historians, according to Nineham, regarded eyewitness evidence as some kind of bed-rock truth and produced history largely by discovering and stringing together such testimony, the modern historian has emancipated himself from such a naive trust in reports from eyewitnesses. So even if the gospels consisted exclusively of eyewitness testimony, they would still have to abide the historian's question. This is precisely the differentiae of "scientific history", Nineham argues.

#### 4. Bo Reicke

Nineham's articles never issued the further investigation and discussion he hoped for. Among more recent scholars, Bo Reicke was the one who reckoned most explicitly with the role of personal contacts between eyewitnesses and others during the formation of the gospel tradition, though without entering into debate with Nineham at this point. His position is argued most concisely in his last book, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels* from 1986.

The roots of the synoptic gospels are living roots. The eyewitnesses were, according to Reicke, important during the initial stage of the gospel tradition as well as at the time of the composition of the synoptic gospels. The oldest apostolic circle and other Christian groups in Jerusalem, which remembered the last supper and the crucifixion, developed the passion narrative in substantially identical forms. The meal celebrated in the house churches constituted the life setting of that development. Most of the remaining parts of the gospel tradition were formed in retrospect as the early house circles needed to be strengthened concerning the Christian faith and the mission of the church. But also in this context eyewitnesses such as Galilean disciples like Peter and other apostles, and women like Mary Magdalene, and pilgrims from Galilee as well as Transjordan, played decisive roles and coloured to some extent the tradition by adding episodes and quotations connected with their home regions.

The synoptic gospels have direct roots in the testimonies of eyewitnesses. The gospel of Matthew is to be understood as the fruit of a conscious translation and edition of Aramaic or Hebrew material from Matthew the tax collector and material going back to Peter. Some of that material already circulated in Greek. The second evangelist was identical with John Mark of Jerusalem, who in the house of his mother became acquainted with the teaching and preaching of Peter. He composed the gospel in Caesarea while Peter was still alive. The third evangelist was the collaborator



of Paul named Luke. He composed the gospel on the basis of information received in Caesarea from John Mark (cf. Phlm 24) and Philip, with his four daughters, and from the Hellenists in Jerusalem.

The evangelists are related to each other not by literary dependence, but through traditions going back to eyewitnesses or through personal contacts. The similarities between Matthew and Mark have to do with a common dependence upon Petrine traditions. The similarities between Mark and Luke are explained by reference to a personal encounter between the two evangelists in Caesarea. The similarities between Matthew and Luke (the Q material) are paradoxically characterized by a lack of contextual parallelism and go therefore back to two separate but adjacent backgrounds of the Q material: the one of Matthew to the Petrine group in Jerusalem and the one of Luke to the Hellenistic group of disciples in Jerusalem and to Philip in Caesarea.

## D. The Present Study

### 1. Narrowing the Problem

Nineham and Reicke represent two extremes. If Nineham is correct, oral history has little to contribute to the study of the emerging gospel tradition. His arguments will therefore have to be carefully considered as we move along. If Reicke is correct, oral history and oral tradition has much to contribute, but his view is hampered by the indirect character of the evidence. It will have to be concretized, supplemented and, as a result, perhaps altered. Nineham and Reicke will be discussed in the following chapters. What both imply, however, as do Dibelius and Taylor, is that *autopsy, if practised, is the axis around which much that has to do with oral history in early Christianity evolves*. From here other related issues of importance become possible to handle.

It is therefore appropriate to enter into the vast domain of ancient oral history by concentrating on the possible influence of autopsy in the origin and development of the gospel tradition. Focusing on references to eyewitnesses, we are not, however, studying merely an ancient way of collecting information. These references are only the tip of the iceberg, suggestive of deeper insights. They constitute the angle from which other, related issues of interest can be approached. Autopsy is a manifold phenomenon, as we shall see, carrying numerous different implications that

touch significantly on the complex issue of this study: “story as history - history as story”.

Several questions come to mind. Who are the eyewitnesses, how are they to be classified, how are they related to the use of other sources, oral and written? Are there different ways of using eyewitness testimony, and what do they imply, in that case? What do they say about a person’s relationship to the past? Are the eyewitnesses reliable? What is the role of memory? Is the reference to eyewitness testimony only a part of the apologetic repertoire of the story or is it an actual reflection of the extratextual reality, or is it both? Is it merely a way of securing the objective character of sources and historical research or is it coupled with a sense of subjectivity and active interpretation? Questions such as these will guide our inquiry; they could be multiplied. All in all, how are story and history, present and past, related in the ancient phenomenon of autopsy?

## 2. Perspectives and Methods

The oral history approach as presented by Paul Thompson alerts us to the various dimensions involved as soon as we speak of eyewitness testimony. Thompson has given a theoretical framework which helps us in asking the right questions and finding the appropriate answers. I would not, however, call it a method, if we with that – much misused – term mean the techniques by which we carry out the inquiry. For the purposes of this study, it constitutes more the perspective from which we look at an ancient phenomenon, the approach. Like sociology or psychology, it does not so much guide the concrete exegetical work with the text itself as it provides a helpful interpretative model.

It is different, however, from some other interpretative models in that it presents a theory which, as I hope to show, formulates structures of thinking and acting that were deeply inherent in the ancient way of relating to the past. Modern science shapes our thinking in many imperceptible ways, influencing strongly how we see the ancient world. And our scientific notions are mostly entirely alien to the ancient world. *Some effort is therefore necessary in order to identify and strip away the irrelevant aspects of modernism if we are ever going to deepen our understanding of the ancients.* The fundamental method of the present study is thus very much reminiscent of the basic tenets of cultural anthropology.<sup>88</sup> In essence, it is carried by the conviction that the matters of history can be

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<sup>88</sup> For a fuller account, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 27–31.

grasped without the most serious fallacies of modern anachronism only when placed firmly within their adequate socio-cultural setting.<sup>89</sup> A serious problem with our New Testament discipline is that detailed studies of individual pericopes often lead to a kind of circular reasoning determined by the parameters of modern paradigms, with meagre and hypothetical results that are more or less unrelated to broader currencies of the ancient times. One might indeed wonder if such procedures do not reflect our modern, Western desire to “control” history and textual phenomena rather than to comprehend them! Just as cultures of today need to be studied within their own, specific ethnographic patterns in order to be properly perceived, as most would agree on, so do the old ones. Åke Hultkrantz, a Swedish professor of religion, showed clearly that current ideas and practices attain their primary meaning and significance within the context of their own configurational whole;<sup>90</sup> and Bruce J. Malina, defining language in line with the influential socio-linguistic approach of M. A. K. Halliday,<sup>91</sup> has repeatedly warned New Testament scholars against reading texts in a fashion that derives meaning from our own cultural story instead of from the cultural story of the people who produced the ancient texts.<sup>92</sup> *Oral history, as a modern discipline, is of help precisely because its theories do not fly high above the reality of ancient times but revive and refine old values and conceptions about how to relate to the past.* Instead of imposing an entirely foreign theory on the material, one may thus hope for a fair dialogue between the material and the theory.

A certain kind of comparative model is essential in order to construct an adequate socio-cultural setting. It is, however, a matter of dispute what

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<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of certain methodological fallacies in the study of ancient phenomena of socio-religious character, see Judge, “The Social Identity of the First Christians”, pp. 201–217. Judge concludes: “A ‘religious’ history that settles for a predetermined pattern of explanation, be it ecclesiastical or sociological, disqualifies itself from discovering how things were” (*ibid.*, p. 217). I believe that is true for studies of history generally.

<sup>90</sup> Hultkrantz, *Metodvägar*, pp. 112–118.

<sup>91</sup> See the collection of essays in Halliday, *Language as social semiotic*. Language is, according to Halliday, a three-level phenomenon, consisting of (1) sounding/spelling/writing that realize (2) wording that realizes (3) meaning which comes from and constitutes the social system and the “reality” of the culture (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 21, 122–124, 207–208).

<sup>92</sup> See, e.g., Malina, *The New Testament Word*, pp. 1–24; Malina, *Christian Origins*, pp. 5–12; Malina/Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary*, 1–14; Malina, *The Social World*, pp. 5–31.

comparative material is most useful for the study of a particular phenomenon. *I continue to resist the one-sided synchronous paradigm which suggests that only the contemporary material is of any significance.* Each culture is part of its own history, and can be explained fully only through a study of that history.<sup>93</sup> In a previous study, I learned much from the American anthropologist Walter Goldschmidt, who stresses, among other things, that each society has a temporal dimension, operating within the field of “cultural continuity”.<sup>94</sup> It has a past and is directed to the future. Men and women live in a time continuum, and it is therefore impossible to understand any social system without taking into account the “cultural heritage” of each society, Goldschmidt insists. A one-sided synchronous, functional approach seems to think of the society as frozen at a specific moment in its development, with no cultural heritage or continuity, related only to what is contemporaneous. One could also refer to the discussion of Edward Shils, who is one of the few sociologists that has dealt extensively with the role of tradition. He complains over the blindness of the social sciences to tradition, arguing that it is a dimension of social structure which is lost or hidden by atemporal conceptions of these disciplines.<sup>95</sup> “The more theoretically sophisticated the branch of social science, the less attentive it is to the traditional element in society”, he exclaims.<sup>96</sup> Shils’ own book constitutes a decisive argument against such an extreme approach. The branch of Biblical studies has much to learn from his wise comment on his own scientific field of expertise!

The ancient Greek and – to some extent – Roman historians will constitute the basic comparative material of the present investigation, from Herodotus and onwards.<sup>97</sup> Greek history writing always included a broad field of knowledge and observation, focusing not merely on political and

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<sup>93</sup> Hultkrantz realized this clearly in his criticism of Malinowski’s functional approach: “Funktionalismen måste alltså kompletteras med historiska utredningar”, he concluded (*Metodvägar*, p. 110).

<sup>94</sup> Goldschmidt, *Comparative Functionalism*, pp. 53–56. Cf. the comments in Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, p. 28. Unfortunately this insight, which I regard as going beyond the old search for genetic historical explanations, was not noticed by some critics of my previous book.

<sup>95</sup> Shils, *Tradition*, pp. 7–10.

<sup>96</sup> Shils, *Tradition*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>97</sup> Although there might have existed a specific branch of (national) Jewish-Hellenistic historiography (Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, pp. 135–225), with a special sense of the past (Rajak, “The Sense of History in Jewish Intertestamental Writing”, pp. 124–145), it brings, with the exception of Josephus, almost no explicit discussion of historiographical conventions.

military events in themselves, but on culture, including religion.<sup>98</sup> Most of us, I believe, have a general idea of what texts belong to this kind of writing, and narrow definitions of history should not lead us to an extreme, exclusivistic position. For the present purposes, *we regard history as an account of what people have done and said in the past, which means that various kinds of biased, pragmatic and didactic features can be part of the writing of history. A "sense of history" is to be defined as an interest in the past, seen as some sort of continuity, within a context of time.*

We are not interested in the historians merely as historians, nor in their works merely as history writings. They were more than historians; they were living persons who struggled to understand past matters in a more or less systematic fashion. On occasion, therefore, we will supplement the comparative focus with some attention to other people, be it philosophers, physicians or rhetoricians. The reason for choosing the historians and their texts as the basic comparative angle is very simple: the historians were, as far as we can tell, the ones who attempted most consistently to think of and search out what people had done and said and thought in the past. The reason is not that they were the only ones interested in autopsy; the physicians had a similar concern, though they did not, as physicians, relate it to an interest in the past. Nor is the reason based on generic assumptions that the New Testament gospel writers are to be regarded as historians; their works have certain generic resemblances with the *bioi*, though the *bioi*, being part of a very flexible encomiastic genre,<sup>99</sup> usually lack any serious sensitivity to the factual pastness of history and testify to the existence of an anecdotal interest in personality;<sup>100</sup> and it is another

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<sup>98</sup> Cancik, in his article on Acts as an institutional history, stresses this aspect of Greek history writing ("The History of Culture, Religion, and Institutions", pp. 673–695, especially pp. 680–687, 693–694).

<sup>99</sup> Burridge concludes: "The genre of βίος is flexible and diverse, with variation in the pattern of features from one βίος to another". The gospels, he continues, "have at least as much in common with Graeco-Roman βίοι as the βίοι with each other" (*What are the Gospels?*, p. 258).

<sup>100</sup> One might, for instance, look at the tales which began to circulate around Alexander the Great, despite the fact that several writers travelled with him and recorded what they saw. For discussion, see Stoneman, "The *Alexander Romance*", pp. 117–129. Reiser detects here a significant difference to the gospels: "Den Evangelien ist diese typisch romanhafte Art der Fiktionalität jedoch fremd ... Was die Evangelien von den Romanen unterscheidet, ist also ziemlich genau das, was Xenophons *Anabasis* von seiner *Kyropädie* unterscheidet: die historische Zuverlässigkeit der Darstellung" ("Die Stellung der Evangelien in der antiken Literaturgeschichte", p. 16).

matter that the gospel narratives might have furthered such an interest.<sup>101</sup> *The historians are of interest to us not as a special group of people with a special kind of writings, but as persons who consistently tried to search out the past.* They are the prime representatives of ancient people who related in a more or less conscious way to past events.<sup>102</sup> Their writings are most clearly reflective of the dynamics of story and history, present and past, in the socio-cultural setting of the gospel tradition. And as Hubert Cancik has pointed out, the gospels, while probably often heard/read from the horizon of the ancient *bioi*, contain, after all, several aspects that link them closely to the historiographical genre.<sup>103</sup>

The comparison with that material may reveal contrasts and similarities indeed; both are of equal importance. *The basic intention of the comparison is to unravel the essential and culture-specific patterns of oral history in the Greek and Roman antiquity as a means to conceptualize some important aspects of the origin and development of the gospel tradition.* The fundamental reason for this approach is that the New Testament came into being in a “high-context” society, as Malina puts it.<sup>104</sup> While “low-context” societies produce texts that spell out as much as possible, the “high-context” societies, such as we find in the ancient Mediterranean world, leave much to the imagination of the hearer or reader. Malina challenges New Testament scholarship to take this “high-context” characteristic of ancient societies and texts seriously.<sup>105</sup> The comparative perspective of the present study, informed by the oral history approach, constitutes essentially an attempt towards such a contextualized reading, aiming to understand some particular ancient phenomena with a culturally sensitive frame of mind.

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<sup>101</sup> Bowersock challenges New Testament scholars to consider more carefully the impact which the gospel stories had on the emergence of fictional genres in the Roman empire (*Fiction as History*, pp. 121–143).

<sup>102</sup> Mosley makes use of the historians in a similar way to find out how people living in Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome in the first century CE conceived the historicity of past events (“Historical Reporting”, pp. 10–26).

<sup>103</sup> Cancik, “Die Gattung Evangelium”, pp. 85–113. Cf. also recently Reiser, “Die Stellung der Evangelien in der antiken Literaturgeschichte”, pp. 1–27.

<sup>104</sup> Malina, *The Social World*, pp. 24–25. Cf. also Malina/Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary*, pp. 11–13.

<sup>105</sup> I must admit, however, that the following statement of Malina is perplexing to me: “It is the purpose of historical biblical interpretation to fill in the assumptions of the low-context documents that form the New Testament, assumptions which the authors of those documents shared with low-context readers of their Mediterranean world” (*The Social World*, p. 25). In my understanding, Malina here, by accident, confuses low-context with high-context.

A final word on the use of ancient texts. Discussions on textual methods often range over extensive fields, covering numerous pages and books. Scholars of history, working intensively with various kinds of texts, are usually more modest – some would call it pragmatic – in their comments. I shall approach the different kinds of texts in line with one of the essential tenets of this study, namely that intratextual and extratextual aspects cannot be strictly separated as we seek to clarify ancient cultural phenomena. For the purposes of the present study, it is evident that we cannot, as modern exegetes, listen any more to the living voices of the sources of the ancient historians or the early Christian authors. But we can seek for the textualized traces of those voices, if by no other means than by reading the texts aloud to ourselves and to each other.<sup>106</sup> We are not the oral historians; the ancient historians and the early Christians were, or might have been. *Our inquiry will therefore be one of searching in the ancient texts for encoded clues as to if and how they expressed and conceived the oral history behind their textualized works.* Some items in a text may be purely fictional, to be sure, mirroring only the self-contained world of the story; other texts, by the same token, may serve as transparent windows for what is “out there”. Yet, the world of the story, emerging as the textualized narrativization of the real world, remains an index to the socio-cultural situation of its authors, because both essentially depend on the language embedded in a common social system.<sup>107</sup>

### 3. Procedure

We shall conduct our study as if we were travelling from the present to the past, and back to the present, taking seriously the various factors which we encounter on the way. Our vehicle is the modern oral history approach. The factors which we come across have been brought to our attention by that approach, and we shall therefore, as we subsequently introduce each chapter respectively, explain how the present study follows the issues inherent to it.

As a first step, it will be necessary to move back to the eyewitnesses themselves. It would be futile indeed to conduct the present study if the importance of eyewitness testimony in the Greek and Roman antiquity could not be amply demonstrated. We shall therefore, to begin with, seek

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<sup>106</sup> For the interpretative ramifications of audible reading, see Armstrong/Brandes, *The Oral Interpretation of Literature*.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 29–30, with literature.

to clarify its significance as a source of the past and identify the persons who were likely to serve as informants when the gospel tradition emerged and developed.

The eyewitnesses did not live and act in a vacuum. As we start our journey back to the present time of the ancient historians and evangelists, we shall take due notice to the simple fact that the eyewitnesses needed to verbalize their observations and experiences in order to communicate them to others. There follows, accordingly, a chapter which discusses the use and interaction of various media of information and communication in the ancient Mediterranean world.

A further corollary of taking seriously the various stages between the past and the present is the interpretative dimension and involvement entering into the ancient conceptions of history. Chapter four discusses that dimension on two levels: as a part of the phenomenon of autopsy itself and as an intrinsic ingredient of the inquiring and interrogating activity on part of the persons who were eager to find out things concerning the past.

We shall at this point be approaching the time of the story. Various literary and argumentative techniques now confront us. They are elements of the ancient endeavour to communicate history in some kind of narrative form. Chapter five seeks to clarify these narrativizing features, focusing on how the notion of autopsy became a literary signal as to how history entered into the narrative world of the story.

The narrativizing procedures concern much more than literary and argumentative techniques, because a story, at the end, exhibits also the author's own conceptual framework. In chapter six, as we have arrived at the gospel story, we shall therefore focus on the present time of the story, but without neglecting its retrospective dimension. Applying the insights of the previous chapters, we shall study how history and story interacted as the author of the Markan narrative, and to some extent of the Matthean one, narrativized and interpreted his own existence by means of the extrafictional history.



## Chapter 2

# Story as History: Autopsy as a Means of Inquiry

According to the discipline of oral history, the informants serve, as we have seen, as living sources of the past. Their oral accounts, while being important indications of their own feelings concerning history, are investigated in view of their *retrospective* character. Our first task must be, therefore, to clarify the use of autopsy as a means of inquiry into the past.

*Autopsy is essentially to be defined as a visual means to gather information concerning a certain object*, a means of inquiry, and thus also a way of relating to that object. The object itself may of course be of various kinds: a place, an event, a concrete epigraphical or archaeological item. The visual act may also vary, from passive observation to more active participation. In this chapter we are interested mainly in *the phenomenon of autopsy* itself. Subsequently we shall bring in considerations about the precise character of that visual act.

Is it legitimate to speak of autopsy as we study the origin and development of the gospel tradition in early Christianity? What evidence do the New Testament texts present? Was it ever practised “out there” as the gospel tradition emerged? Who are the likely eyewitnesses and informants? Is it possible to substantiate the New Testament evidence by locating it within the broader socio-cultural setting of ancient historiography? We begin with the latter issue.

### A. The Major Historians

Loveday C. A. Alexander has provided one of the most recent discussions of autopsy in antiquity.<sup>1</sup> She concentrates on the term *αὐτοψία* and its

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander, *The preface to Luke's Gospel*, pp. 34–41, 120–123.

cognates, limiting the material to passages where the word-group αὐτόπτης, αὐτοψία, αὐτοπτικός, αὐτοπτος, αὐτοπτειν is represented. Her conclusion is rather negative as far as the historians are concerned. While autopsy plays an extremely important role in the medical literature, Alexander argues, it is not as prominent in the writings of history.

One hesitates, however, to agree entirely with Alexander's estimation of the historians. Other scholars have dealt with the subject at length, taking further passages into consideration. While Alexander displays an admirable familiarity with the ancient sources, she is amazingly restrictive in her interchange with these scholars. Only Giuseppe Nenci's pioneering article from 1955, "Il motivo dell' autopsia nella storiografia greca", is mentioned,<sup>2</sup> but Alexander fails to discuss his arguments and basic thesis. Today's leading expert on autopsy among ancient historians is Guido Schepens. But one searches in vain for a discussion of, or at least a reference to, his major work on the topic, *L' 'autopsie' dans la méthode des historiens grecs du V<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J.-C.* from 1980. Take Thucydides, for instance. Although Alexander is very much aware of his stress "on his own opportunities for direct observation",<sup>3</sup> she minimizes its importance in favour of the medical tradition, because Thucydides never uses the actual terms for autopsy. Shepens study, on the other hand, illustrates that while Thucydides does not employ the word-group as such, autopsy was indeed at the heart of his methodological convictions and practice.<sup>4</sup>

As it seems, there existed no technical terminology for autopsy. A consistent focus only on certain expressions tends to narrow the evidence, causing a neglect of passages where the phenomenon is expressed by other means. Insofar as we are interested in autopsy not merely as a textual code but as a historical phenomenon, we need to take a broader view.

## 1. The Heritage of Heraclitus

"Eyes are surer witnesses than ears",<sup>5</sup> thus the old dictum of Heraclitus, the well-known pre-Socratic philosopher (Diels/Kranz, 22B frg. 101a).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Alexander, *The preface to Luke's Gospel*, p. 34 n. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander, *The preface to Luke's Gospel*, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Shepens concludes: "Chez Thucydide, l'autopsie est pour la première fois intégrée dans une déclaration théorique décrivant la méthode historique qui trouve son application dans toute l'œuvre" (*L' 'autopsie'*, p. 197).

<sup>5</sup> ὀφθαλμοὶ γὰρ τῶν ὄτων ἀκριβέστεροι μάρτυρες.

<sup>6</sup> Also in Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, frg. 15. A similar view is expressed by Heraclitus in Diels/Kranz, 22B frg. 55 (Kahn, *ibid.*, frg. 14): "Whatever [comes

His utterance, in all its fragmentary briefness, represents an early indication of the essential importance attached to one's own sight, to autopsy.

The notion expressed in this saying was part of a larger framework and mindset. In his article, Nenci traces the history of autopsy from its occurrence in writings attributed to Homer, especially in the repeated expression ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὄρᾶν, via its presence in early philosophers such as Thales, Parmenides and Heraclitus, to the similar notions found in the Attic dramatists Aeschylus (c. 525–426), Sophocles (c. 496–406) and Euripides (c. 480–406), and in the Attic comedy of Aristophanes (c. 446–385), paying attention also to the medical schools issuing from Hippocrates.<sup>7</sup> The ancient Greeks were “Augenmenschen”, as Bruno Snell and others have labelled them.<sup>8</sup> In a subsequent chapter we shall discuss the cognitive implications of the emphasis on sight.<sup>9</sup> But it is important already at this point to give an indication of how the notion of autopsy emerges in the non-historical writings, because they show that in ancient Greece sight was generally considered a most vital means to perceive the core of reality.<sup>10</sup>

As Alexander indeed points out, the physicians, in particular, brought attention to the value of autopsy as a professional method of inquiry. It is perhaps significant that Galen's numerous writings from the second century CE contain the highest amount of terms associated with autopsy.<sup>11</sup> As a physician Galen was of course familiar with the importance of the eye.<sup>12</sup> His studies of the ox, for instance, conveyed detailed information of the anatomical structures of the eye, to the extent that he thought of it as an instrument of such perfection that it only could have been invented

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from] sight, hearing, learning from experience: this I prefer” (ὄσων ὄψις ἀκοή μάθησις, ταῦτα ἐγὼ προτιμῶ).

<sup>7</sup> Nenci, “Il motivo dell' autopsia”, pp. 14–29.

<sup>8</sup> Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens*, p. 69. Cf. also Rudberg, “Hellenisches Schauen”, p. 162 (“ein Volk des Auges”); Pohlenz, *Der hellenische Mensch*, p. 166 (“Augenmenschen”); Malten, *Die Sprache des menschlichen Antlitzes*, p. 10 (“Augenmenschen”, “Augendenker”); Boman, “Hebraic and Greek Thought-Forms”, p. 1 (“men of sight”); Boman, *Das hebräische Denken*, pp. 176–177.

<sup>9</sup> See below Chap. 4, A:1.

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion, cf. also, e.g., Skard, “Auge und Ohr”, pp. 128–129; Mette, “‘Schauen’ und ‘Staunen’”, pp. 49–71 (with a discussion also of Herodotus and Thucydides on pp. 65–68). A cautious assessment of the senses in Aristotle's writings is given by Stigen, “On the Alleged Primacy of Sight”, pp. 15–44.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander, *The preface to Luke's Gospel*, pp. 35, 121. Of course, Galen's writings are so abundant that it is virtually impossible to analyze each item.

<sup>12</sup> To be sure, Galen was much more than merely a physician. Sarton rightly labels him also a philosopher, a historian and a philologist (*Galen of Pergamon*, pp. 70–77).

by a superior mind.<sup>13</sup> Autopsy was to him the primary means of inquiry (cf. e.g., *Hipp. victu acut.* 3:39).<sup>14</sup>

Turning back to more ancient times, it is significant that autopsy received a prominent function as soon as a physician set out to write some kind of history or historical romance. Ctesias of Cnidus spent a considerable time in the east as the personal physician of the Persian emperor,<sup>15</sup> combining his professional activity with literary pursuits. The most important of his literary works was the so-called *Persica*, a twenty-three-volume treatment of the entire history of the Near East, from its legendary beginnings up to 398 BCE. In the text available from the excerpts of Photius the Patriarch (9th cent. CE), Ctesias emphasizes the importance of autopsy and of direct information from other eyewitnesses. Photius states concerning Ctesias: “He says that having been an eyewitness himself of most of what he recounts, or having heard from the Persians themselves that which he could not see, he thus composed the history” (*Persica* 1 [König’s edition]).<sup>16</sup> Ctesias makes a similar claim in Photius’ excerpts of the *Indica*.<sup>17</sup> He professes that his narrative is all perfect truth, “bringing out”, says Photius, “how he writes what he either saw himself or learned from those who had seen” (*Indica* 31 [Henry’s edition]).<sup>18</sup> Autopsy was for Ctesias evidently not limited to the practice of medicine. The physician incorporated his professional methods of inquiry into a broader perspective concerning how to attain true knowledge about matters of history. Although Ctesias’ statements are not to be taken at face value,<sup>19</sup> they are important as reflections of the physician’s deeply rooted conviction that true knowledge – whether of medicine or history – should be obtained by means of direct, personal observation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> CMG V 9:1, p. 251 lines 27–28. Further references are listed by Alexander, *The preface to Luke’s Gospel*, pp. 36, 121–122.

<sup>15</sup> See further Jacoby, “Ktesias”, col. 2033.

<sup>16</sup> φησὶ δὲ αὐτὸν τῶν πλείονων ἃ ἱστορεῖ αὐτόπτην γενόμενον, ἢ παρ’ αὐτῶν Περσῶν, ἔνθα τὸ ὄρᾶν μὴ ἐνεχώρει, αὐτήκοον καταστάντα, οὕτως τὴν ἱστορίαν συγγράψαι.

<sup>17</sup> Other titles besides the *Persica* that are attributed to Ctesias include geographical works describing continental coastlines, so-called *Periploi*, but it is uncertain whether these titles and the *Indica* represent independent works or excurses which originally were part of the *Persica*. Cf. Wirth, “Ktesias”, col. 366.

<sup>18</sup> ἐπάγων ὡς τὰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἰδὼν γράφει, τὰ δὲ παρ’ αὐτῶν μαθὼν τῶν ἰδόντων.

<sup>19</sup> See below Chap. 5, A:3c.

<sup>20</sup> One may also mention Dioscurides of Anazarbos in Cilicia, a first century CE pharmacologist. His claim to autopsy is linked with his opportunities for travel and questioning of the local people (*Mat. Med.*, I, pref. 5).

It is not surprising that autopsy became very closely linked with the writing of history. The Greeks actually formed the term ἱστορία or ἱστορίη (Ionic) on the basis of ἰστωρ, which recurs in ἰδεῖν/εἰδέναι.<sup>21</sup> Thus, “ἱστορία bedeutet die ‘Forschung’, die auf ein Sehen zurückgeht”, Rudolf Bultmann once acclaimed.<sup>22</sup> The ancient Roman grammaticians regarded autopsy as inherent in the etymology of the very term ἱστορία. Aulus Gellius of the second century CE, to take one example, discussing the difference between history and annals, refers to people who think that “while each is a narrative of events, yet history is properly of those events in which he who narrates has taken part” (V 18:1).<sup>23</sup> Such a view is reasonable, Gellius continues, “since ἱστορία in Greek means a knowledge of current events” (V 18:2).<sup>24</sup>

These scattered references indicate the importance of one’s own sight in various corners of ancient Greece. Heraclitus was not alone in his emphasis. Did the major historians themselves live up to his famous dictum? They were clearly aware of it. Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius – to mention only a few historians – were heirs of the very ancient, deeply rooted respect for the human sight. The dictum soon entered into their conceptions. Heraclitus’ statement is actually known to us primarily from Polybius. Criticizing Timaeus for neglecting to practise autopsy, he quotes it explicitly under Heraclitus’ name (XII 27:1). More remote reminiscences of the saying are to be seen also much earlier, already in the writings of Herodotus and Thucydides. “Ears happen to be less reliable for men than eyes”,<sup>25</sup> Herodotus’ Candaules remarks as he asks his favourite guard Gyges to see for himself the naked beauty of his wife (1:8);<sup>26</sup> and Thucydides tells of the Athenians’ reluctance to speak about matters quite remote, “whose witnesses are the words one hears rather than the eyes of those who will hear” (I 73:2).<sup>27</sup> The saying lived on in

<sup>21</sup> For discussion of texts, see Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens*, pp. 59–71. For the etymology, cf. Frisk, *Wörterbuch*, I, pp. 740–741 (with bibliography; further bibliography in *ibid.*, III, p. 113).

<sup>22</sup> Bultmann, “Zur Geschichte der Lichtsymbolik im Altertum”, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> *cum utrumque sit rerum gestarum narratio, earum tamen proprie rerum sit historia, quibus rebus gerendis interfuerit is qui narret.*

<sup>24</sup> *quod ἱστορία Graece significet rerum cognitionem praesentium.*

<sup>25</sup> ὅτα γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποισι ἐόντα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν.

<sup>26</sup> Barth overinterprets, with many others, the philosophical implication of this passage (“Erkenntnistheoretische Probleme der Vorsokratik bei Herodot”, p. 584). For critique of Barth, see Werner, “Ὀτα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν”, p. 577; Schepens, “Éphore sur la valeur de l’autopsie”, pp. 167–168; Schepens, *L’‘autopsie’*, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> ὦν ἀκοαὶ μᾶλλον λόγων μάρτυρες ἢ ὄψεις τῶν ἀκουσομένων.

various forms,<sup>28</sup> eventually entering into Lucian's handbook on history-writing composed around 165 CE.<sup>29</sup> Although, as far as we know, not an historian himself, Lucian denounces the caricature of a historian who begins his account by stating, "Ears are less reliable than eyes. I write then what I have seen, not what I have heard" (*Hist. Conscr.* 29).<sup>30</sup> Such a person, evidently not being able to live up to his high ideals, uses the valuable historiographical rule *in absurdum*, Lucian implies.

So, being aware of, or at least influenced by, Heraclitus' dictum, to what extent did the historians actually practice autopsy and/or use eyewitnesses as informants concerning the past? To what extent did they compose *ιστορία* in the actual sense of the term? To what extent are their stories in fact based on oral history?

## 2. Herodotus

Herodotus, the father of history,<sup>31</sup> is the first known Greek historian to refer explicitly to autopsy. He completed the present version of his *Histories* shortly after 430 BCE, having probably already lectured on the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Dio Chrys. 12:71, referring to the saying "eyes are more trustworthy than hearing" (ἀκοῆς πιστότερα ὄμματα). For him personal experience was of more value than hearsay. Cf. also 7:1. There may of course also occur statements which, while not speaking of the expression as a saying, allude to it. Cf., e.g., Philo, *Conf. Ling.* 57 (ὄψει πρὸ ἀκοῆς σαφεστέρω χρησαμένοις μάρτυρι); Sen., *Ep. Mor.* 6:5 (*primum, quia homines amplius oculis quam auribus credunt*).

<sup>29</sup> There may have existed other hand-books. The lost *Περὶ ἱστορίας* by Theophrastus (c. 372–287 BCE), mentioned in Diog. L. 5:47 and perhaps referred to in Cic., *Orator* 12:39, and the lost work with the same title by Praxiphanes (4th–3rd cent. BCE), mentioned in Marcellin., *Vit. Thuc.* 29, probably dealt with historical methodology. So Walbank, *Polybius*, p. 36 n. 20. Cf. also references to works with a similar title in *FGrHist* 183 F 2 (Caecilius of Calacre; 1st cent. BCE); *FGrHist* 850 T 1 (Theodorus of Gadara; 1st cent. BCE). Possibly Dionysius' *Letter to Pompeius* is a kind of historiography as well (so Sacks, "Historiography", pp. 65–87). Moreover, in one sense Josephus' *apologia* in *Contra Apionem* belongs to the same genre (cf. Cohen, "History and Historiography", pp. 1–11).

<sup>30</sup> ὄτα ὀφθαλμῶν ἀπιστότερα: γράφω τοίνυν ἃ εἶδον, οὐχ ἃ ἤκουσα. Cf. also Luc., *Salt.* 78, where he attributes the saying to Herodotus.

<sup>31</sup> This label was originally ambiguous when applied to Herodotus. Cf. Cic., *De Leg.* I 1:5. For Herodotus' ambivalent reputation in antiquity generally, see Evans, "Father of History or Father of Lies", pp. 11–17; Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography*, pp. 127–142.

subject in Athens and elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> His work deals with the conflicts between the Persians and the Greeks, from the Ionian revolt in 499 to the Athenians' conquest of Sesthos in 478, events occurring before and just after his own birth. He needed therefore to collect material by other means than direct involvement in the events themselves.

There have been sustained attempts to deny that Herodotus was interested in collecting and using any kind of sources at all. In the early 1960s, the great historian Arnaldo Momigliano stated: "The study of the technique whereby Herodotus collected and organised his evidence during his travels is still in its infancy".<sup>33</sup> This scholarly situation was soon to change.<sup>34</sup> Detlev Fehling, in his monograph *Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot* from 1971,<sup>35</sup> made a provocative and radical attempt to deny that Herodotus used sources to any significant extent at all. Herodotus was a gifted writer who intended to amuse his audience,<sup>36</sup> according to Fehling. He was not a compiler of various sources; he did not collect and organize evidence during his travels.

Fehling's study has, by and large,<sup>37</sup> not won the approval of the experts on Herodotus.<sup>38</sup> In the same year, Herman Verdin published his book *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus* as part of a larger project initiated by W. Pereman on the methods used by ancient Greek and Roman historians.<sup>39</sup> Verdin is of the opinion that Herodotus did use sources

<sup>32</sup> Evans claims to find "extensive evidence that ... he gave oral performances of his 'researches'" (*Herodotus*, p. 94). But the evidence for this activity is indirect and later than Herodotus. Herodotus himself never refers to it explicitly. See the cautious discussion of Jacoby, "Herodotus", col. 242; Momigliano, "The Historians of the Classical World", pp. 64–66; Flory, "Who Read Herodotus' *Histories*?", pp. 12–28.

<sup>33</sup> Momigliano, *The Classical Foundation of Modern Historiography*, p. 39. This book is based on the 1961–62 Sather Classical Lectures delivered by Momigliano at the University of California at Berkeley.

<sup>34</sup> More recent studies of Herodotus and his work are listed by Bubel, *Herodot-Bibliographie 1980–1988*.

<sup>35</sup> Fehling's book is available in an English translation by J. G. Howie: *Herodotus and His "Sources". Citation, Invention and Narrative Art* (Arca, 21; Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1989). This translation is based on a new German manuscript, but Fehling has changed his opinion only on a very few points.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the subtitle of Fehling's monograph: "Studien zur Erzählkunst Herodots".

<sup>37</sup> For a positive use of Fehling's study, cf. Bichler, "Die 'Reichsträume' bei Herodot", pp. 125–147. Bichler does not reject the notion that Herodotus used sources.

<sup>38</sup> Moles lists some amplifications of Fehling's study ("Truth and Untruth", p. 91 n. 5). But for critical reactions, see especially Cobet, "Review", pp. 737–746.

<sup>39</sup> For the aims and possibilities of this project, see Verdin, "L'importance des recherches sur la méthode critique des historiens grecs et latins", pp. 289–308.

to a significant extent, though without denying that he eventually produced a coherent product moulded by his own philosophical and religious beliefs. Verdin does justice to his explicit claims to use sources and, most significantly, refuses to see a contradiction in Herodotus being both a compiler of various pieces of information as well as a gifted author. In a subsequent article he criticizes Fehling precisely on this point:

“En plus, on a souvent l'impression que D. Fehling a érigé une barrière infranchissable entre la littérature narrative et l'historiographie, en négligeant le caractère un peu ambigu de la dernière. Une œuvre historiographique est, après tout, une œuvre narrative, dans laquelle l'élément rédactionnel peut atteindre des dimensions respectables, sans pour autant, éliminer l'intention première de l'historien, qui est celle de rapporter des événements réels”.<sup>40</sup>

Herodotus clearly declares his intention to give an account concerning the events about which he has collected information. The entire work starts with a typically programmatic description: “Publication of the inquiry of Herodotus the Halicarnassian” (1:1).<sup>41</sup> This publication has the stated aim, Herodotus immediately continues, to prevent the memory of the past to be blotted out from among men by time. Whether or not the present version constitutes the final publication that Herodotus was actually aiming for,<sup>42</sup> he evidently regarded the *Histories* as a public presentation of his own previous investigations concerning the past. The term “inquiry”, ἱστορίη, implies that he was not writing *ad hoc*. The whole composition, he seems to suggest, is based on a process of collecting information.

One notices, to begin with, the numerous references to his journeys. He claims to have travelled broadly in Greece, Egypt, Babylonia and the area around the Black Sea.<sup>43</sup> Three times, at least, he says quite clearly that he undertook a voyage for the specific purpose of gathering information. According to 2:29 he travelled as far as to the city of Elephantine to see

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<sup>40</sup> Verdin, “Hérodote historien?”, p. 684. For a similar attempt to see Herodotus' work as both history and literature, see Moles, “Truth and Untruth”, pp. 92–98, focusing on Herodotus' prefatory discussions. It is unfortunate, however, that Moles seems to equate literature merely with certain interpretative preferences of the historian. A recent review of the (English-speaking) debate, with a detailed critique of Fehling on the basis of Herodotus' way of citing sources, is given by Shrimpton and K. M. Gillis in appendix one of Shrimpton, *History and Memory*, pp. 229–265.

<sup>41</sup> Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησέως ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Jacoby, “Herodotus”, cols. 372–379.

<sup>43</sup> See Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, pp. 95–111. For a detailed analysis of Herodotus' journey in Egypt, see Lloyd, *Herodotus*, I, pp. 61–76.



the sources of the Nile; here he uses the term αὐτόπτης of himself.<sup>44</sup> According to 2:44 he went to Tyre in Phoenice to inquire about Hercules. “I saw” (εἶδον), he says, the temple of the god. According to 2:75 he made a journey to Arabia to investigate the winged serpents. “I saw” (εἶδον), he says again, innumerable bones and backbones of serpents. Although he does not always state that he travelled specifically in order to collect information, these three passages indicate that the frequent travels provided him with the opportunity to see certain places with his own eyes. Not being able to claim autopsy in the sense of active participation, he evidently travelled quite broadly in order to observe various places of interest.

Herodotus is quite programmatic concerning his autopsy. It receives a prominent place in the important statement of 2:99:

“Thus far my sight and judgement and inquiry are saying these things. Henceforth I will relate Egyptian accounts according to that which I have heard. Thereto will be added also something of what I myself have seen”.<sup>45</sup>

The first part of the statement concerns what he has written up to this point in regard to the ethno-geographical situation of Egypt. From the three “sources” referred to – sight (ὄψις), judgement (γνώμη) and inquiry (ἱστορίη) –, the personal observation is mentioned first. The three are closely interrelated, to the extent that they probably served as the one comprehensive basis of Herodotus’ means to gather information.<sup>46</sup> The second half of the passage indicates that sight also functioned as a way to gain certain historical information. It appears as a means to confirm information received from various oral testimonies, from hearsay. This function of sight is evident in 2:147, where Herodotus states – in words almost identical with those used in 2:99 – that something of what he had himself seen will be added (προσέσται δέ τι αὐτοῖσι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ὄψιος) to that which the Egyptians and other people had said together.<sup>47</sup>

Elsewhere he accordingly invokes his own judgement, obviously based on his own observations, to confirm or refute other sources.<sup>48</sup> He has

<sup>44</sup> For the terminological evidence, cf. also 3:115; 4:16.

<sup>45</sup> μέχρι μὲν τούτου ὄψις τε ἐμὴ καὶ γνώμη καὶ ἱστορίη ταῦτα λέγουσα ἐστὶ, τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦδε Αἰγυπτίους ἔρχομαι λόγους ἐρέων κατὰ τὰ ἤκουον προσέσται δὲ αὐτοῖσι τι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ὄψιος.

<sup>46</sup> For Herodotus’ use of his own γνώμη as a source, see below Chap. 4, B:4.

<sup>47</sup> See further Verdin, *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus*, pp. 3–8; Schepens, *L’‘autopsie’*, pp. 54–56.

<sup>48</sup> *E.g.*, 1:51; 2:5, 10, 12, 131, 148, 156; 3:12; 4:195; 7:129.

seen with his own eyes (εἶδον δὲ καὶ αὐτός).<sup>49</sup> If he had not had the opportunity of personal observation, he is eager to point that out.<sup>50</sup> He also assigns a special value to inscriptions and archaeological remains. Such an appreciation has to do with his wish occasionally to confirm information from oral tradition by appealing to epigraphical and archaeological evidence which he himself had encountered.<sup>51</sup>

The old philosophical wisdom, “eyes are surer witnesses than ears”, was hence transposed not only to Candaules’ passing remarks concerning the beauty of his naked wife (1:8), but also to Herodotus’ very task as a historian. He had himself no personal experience of the wars which he describes. He was never an eyewitness in the sense that he was involved in the events themselves. But that did not, in his own opinion, disqualify him as a historian. Autopsy meant for him primarily observation of places and items of interest to his subject. Direct involvement was not necessary. It is indeed difficult to ascertain that he had always observed the matters he claims to have seen. Fehling has at least pointed to the problems inherent in some of Herodotus’ episodes.<sup>52</sup> Certain things are indeed fanciful, at least to the modern mind. Nevertheless, his writing clearly shows that personal observation was a vital ingredient in the historian’s conception of how to gather information concerning ethno-geographical as well as historical matters. It is reasonable to assume that he actually tried to live up to his claims. The references are thoroughly integrated into his account, to the extent that they appear not to constitute merely an apologetic feature aimed to win the favour of the audience, but a methodological conviction of fundamental importance for the research behind the written product.

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<sup>49</sup> 5:59; 6:47.

<sup>50</sup> E.g., 1:140, 183; 2:73, 156.

<sup>51</sup> E.g., 1:51, 66, 183; 2:44, 102, 106, 131, 143–144, 148, 155–156; 3:12, 59; 4:11–12, 166; 5:59–61; 8:121.

<sup>52</sup> Fehling expresses however his scepticism in a somewhat exaggerated fashion: “Wir sehen, daß es einfach nicht Herodots Gewohnheit ist, Dinge, die man tatsächlich sehen konnte, durch die Versicherung der Autopsie zu beglaubigen” (*Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot*, p. 168). But how are we to ascertain any of Herodotus’ “Gewohnheiten” from a text which is mostly fictitious, according to Fehling? The logical consequence of Fehling’s approach would be that we know practically nothing about the real author; we know only his “Erzählkunst”.

## 3. Thucydides

Thucydides found himself in a somewhat different situation. He was initially involved in the Peloponnesian war and made commander in 425/24 (IV 104:4), soon to be deprived of his office and exiled from Athens, to which he could return, if he so wished, only after the peace of 404. Starting his inquiries already at the outbreak of the war in 431 (I 1:1), he probably worked on his *History of the Peloponnesian War* in stages during the twenty-seven years of battle between Sparta and Athens (V 26:4–5), and perhaps afterwards as well.<sup>53</sup>

“Thucydides, an Athenian, composed the history of the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, how they fought against one another”,<sup>54</sup> thus the beginning of the composition. Thucydides was concerned to write about current events of which he was himself a part. This interest in contemporary events has a methodological motivation. “As to the matters preceding these, and those of a still earlier date, it was impossible to find clear information on account of lapse of time”,<sup>55</sup> he immediately continues (I 1:3). Later on in book one, he provides an extensive theoretical discussion concerning the difficulty of remembering τὰ παλαιά (I 20:1–3). In I 73:2 the Athenians express the same view, probably, as we saw, reflecting the old saying of Heraclitus. Thucydides takes the lack of clear evidence as the reason for dealing mainly with the present. He evidently wished to confine himself to things he could control adequately.

Even the writing of contemporary history involves a process of collecting information. The opening statement describes Thucydides’ activity as συγγράφειν, “to collect and write things down”.<sup>56</sup> He was a συγγραφέυς.<sup>57</sup> He must have had plenty of opportunity to observe the matters he

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<sup>53</sup> The possible stages of composition of the *History* constitutes the “Thucydidean question”. The most extreme minority view claims that Thucydides wrote the *History* at one time after 404. I follow the majority view. Thucydides indicates that he began his work as soon as the war broke out (I 1:1) and lived to see the end of the conflict (V 26:5; cf. VI 15:3–4). For overview of the discussion, see, e.g., Luschkat, “Thucydides”, cols. 1183–1229; Proctor, *The Experience of Thucydides*, pp. 8–14; Hornblower, *Thucydides*, pp. 136–154.

<sup>54</sup> Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων ὡς ἐπολέμησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους.

<sup>55</sup> τὰ γὰρ πρὸ αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἔτι παλαιότερα σαφῶς μὲν εὐρεῖν διὰ χρόνου πλήθος ἀδύνατον ἦν.

<sup>56</sup> Hornblower, *Commentary*, I, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> LSJ translates the term συγγραφέυς with “one who collects and writes down historic facts, historian” (p. 1661).

describes, yet he is rarely explicit about it. The two most important, general statements concerning the actual means of acquiring information are the ones in I 22:1–2 and V 26:5.<sup>58</sup> The former passage deals with the accurate way to recall and report speeches and deeds. As to the speeches, Thucydides discusses in I 22:1 the difficulty of recalling with strict accuracy the words actually spoken, “both for me as regards that which I myself heard, and for those who from various other sources bring me reports”.<sup>59</sup> As to the deeds, he stresses in I 22:2 his own detailed research, aiming at as much accuracy as possible in each case, “both those where I was present myself and [when I rely on information] from others”.<sup>60</sup> Chapter V 26 forms a kind of second introduction. In V 26:5 he stresses that he lived through the whole war and followed it with close attention, so as to acquire accurate information. His banishment, Thucydides continues, even had the advantage of making him conversant with both sides of the war.

The texts suggest that Thucydides collected information by means of autopsy. Both passages give general importance to what he was able to hear and observe as he was himself present. This is in accordance with his emphasis on dealing mainly with contemporary matters. Things of the ancient past could no longer be heard or observed directly. Their truth was difficult to verify. The matters that he had himself heard or seen were at least open to careful investigation.

#### 4. Polybios

Polybios is the major Hellenistic historian whose work has partially survived.<sup>61</sup> As an Achaean statesman until 168/167, as an influential internee in Rome up to 150, with several important Roman friends, and as a traveller in Africa, Spain, Gaul and “on the sea that lies beyond these regions” (III 59:7), he had plenty of opportunity to collect information for his *Histories* through personal observation and participation as well as through the interrogation of important eyewitnesses.<sup>62</sup> His original inten-

<sup>58</sup> For extensive discussion and literature, see Schepens, *L' 'autopsie'*, pp. 113–151.

<sup>59</sup> ἔμοι τε ὧν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθεν ποθεν ἔμοι ἀπαγγέλλουσιν.

<sup>60</sup> οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων. I take the following ἐπεξελεθῶν with both parts of the sentence, not only with the latter. See Gomme, *Commentary*, I, pp. 142–143.

<sup>61</sup> Books 1–5 have survived intact; books 6–39 survive only in fragments as excerpts and quotations. See further Ziegler, “Polybios”, cols. 1478–1482, 1572–1578.

<sup>62</sup> For a survey of Polybios' life and journeys, see Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, pp. 1–16.

tion was to record the rise of Rome to supremacy over the Mediterranean states, from the beginning of the second Punic war in 220 BCE to the end of the third Macedonian war in 168, with an introductory section reaching back to the first expedition of the Romans outside Italy, that is, the beginning of the first Punic war in 264 BCE. At some subsequent time (cf. III 4–5), he extended his plan in order to include an account of events down to the destruction of Carthage and Corinth in 146.<sup>63</sup>

Polybius shows himself to be very much aware of how a historian should go about his work. Like Thucydides, he has a deliberate methodological motive for limiting the range of his writing. In book four he explains that one of the reasons for choosing the period 220–168 for his *Histories* was precisely that he had either been present himself at the events or had the testimony of eyewitnesses (IV 2:1–2). Direct or indirect autopsy was the decisive factor.

The critique which he labels against other historians reveals very clearly his own methodological preferences.<sup>64</sup> His systematic exposition of what kind of sources to use is most evident in book twelve,<sup>65</sup> especially in his extensive criticism of Timaeus' (4th–3rd cent. BCE) historical method of inquiry (XII 23–28).<sup>66</sup> In the polemical context of chapter twenty-five, he gives his own basic view of the qualifications of the historian. He draws a comparison – somewhat forced – between medicine and history. Just as medicine has three parts, first the theory of disease, next dietetics, and thirdly surgery and pharmaceutics (XII 25<sup>d</sup>:3), so does history (XII 25<sup>e</sup>:1–2):

“In the same fashion, πραγματικὴ ἱστορία too consists of three parts, the first of its parts being the close inquiry into the written sources and the comparison of their contents, and

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<sup>63</sup> For the date, purpose and content of the extension, see Walbank, *Selected Papers*, pp. 325–343.

<sup>64</sup> In his unpublished dissertation (cf. the summary in Koerner, “Polybius als Kritiker früherer Historiker”, pp. 327–331), Koerner argued against the methodological coherence and seriousness of Polybius' criticism. But see Meister, *Historische Kritik bei Polybios*, who detects a methodological, though not always factual, justification in Polybius' criticism.

<sup>65</sup> Sacks regards book twelve as “a general hand-book for the writing of history” (*Polybius on the Writing of History*, p. 22), “a manual on certain aspects of history writing” (*ibid.*, p. 188). But for a proper assessment of the polemical setting of Polybius' methodology, see Schepens, “Polemic and Methodology”, pp. 39–61. Cf. also Lehmann, “Polybios und die ältere und zeitgenössische griechische Geschichtsschreibung”, pp. 147–200; Meister, *Historische Kritik bei Polybios*, pp. 3–55; Walbank, *Selected Papers*, pp. 262–279.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Levi, “Die Kritik des Polybios an Timaios”, pp. 405–414.

the second the survey of cities and places, of rivers and lakes and in general all the peculiarities and distances of land and sea, and the third the review of political events".<sup>67</sup>

These parts – the study and collation of written sources, the autopsy and the political experience – are fundamental in the writing of history, according to Polybius.

The three are not of equal importance, however. The autopsy and the personal experience of events, at least the most important and commonest ones (cf. XII 25<sup>h</sup>:6), are essential, Polybius continues. Timaeus had no real, immediate experience of the matters of history and could not, therefore, write properly about it. His inability was due to the lack of autopsy, *διὰ τὴν ἀορασίαν* (XII 25<sup>e</sup>:4).

Somewhat later in book twelve, as we noticed above, Polybius quotes Heraclitus explicitly. He is still criticizing Timaeus, now focusing on his lack of experience and accuracy (XII 27:1–3):

"For according to nature, as it were, there are two organs for us, by the aid of which we inform ourselves and inquire closely about everything: hearing and sight, sight being much more veracious according to Heraclitus, 'eyes are surer witnesses than ears'. [...] Now this one [*viz.*, the knowledge derived from hearing] being of two sorts, [Timaeus acquired knowledge] through the one of written sources, but conducted himself carelessly in regard to the interrogations [of eyewitnesses]".<sup>68</sup>

Other aspects of writing history here enter into the picture. In addition to speaking again of the primary importance of personal observation, knowledge derived *διὰ τῆς ὀράσεως*, Polybius introduces a two-fold distinction in the use of the ear, knowledge derived *διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς*. To understand his point, one must remember that the reading of written documents was usually an oral and aural event registered through the ears and not through the eyes. This kind of hearing is decisively inferior to autopsy, according to Polybius. The other aspect of hearing is the interrogation of eyewitnesses. This kind of hearing is extremely important, because it is a hearing which is concerned with the oral history of eyewitnesses.

<sup>67</sup> τὸν αὐτὸν δὴ τρόπον καὶ τῆς πραγματικῆς ἱστορίας ὑπαρχούσης τριμεροῦς, τῶν δὲ μερῶν αὐτῆς ἑνὸς μὲν ὄντος τοῦ περὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι πολυπραγμοσύνην καὶ τὴν παράθεσιν τῆς ἐκ τούτων ὕλης, ἑτέρου δὲ τοῦ περὶ τὴν θέαν τῶν πόλεμων καὶ τῶν τόπων περὶ τε ποταμῶν καὶ λιμένων καὶ καθόλου τῶν κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν ἰδιωμάτων καὶ διαστημάτων, τρίτου δὲ τοῦ περὶ τὰς πράξεις τὰς πολιτικάς.

<sup>68</sup> δεῦν γὰρ ὄντων κατὰ φύσιν ὡς ἂν εἴ τινων ὀργάνων ἡμῖν, οἷς πάντα πυθνανόμεθα καὶ πολυπραγμονοῦμεν, ἀκοῆς καὶ ὀράσεως, ἀληθινωτέρας δ' οὔσης οὐ μικρῶ τῆς ὀράσεως κατὰ τὸν Ἡράκλειτον – ὀφθαλμοὶ γὰρ τῶν ὄτων ἀκριβέστεροι μάρτυρες – [...] καὶ ταύτης [δι]μερ[οῦς] οὔσης τίνος, τοῦ μὲν διὰ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων ... τὸ δὲ περὶ τὰς ἀνακρίσεις ῥαθύμως ἀνεστράφη.

nesses.<sup>69</sup> Direct and indirect autopsy is of fundamental value to the serious historian, Polybius thus asserts.

### 5. Josephus

As is well-known, Josephus' life story included the participation in the Jewish war which he describes in the *Bellum Judaicum*. During different parts of his life, he was a politician, a soldier as well as a writer.<sup>70</sup> He knew of the war from both sides, first as the commander responsible for the defence of Galilee (*Bell.* 2:569; *Vit.* 28–29), then, after the fall of Jotapata in the summer of 67 CE (*Bell.* 3:141–339; *Vit.* 412), as a Roman prisoner,<sup>71</sup> from 69 as a free man able to observe the situation in Jerusalem (*Ap.* 1:47–50; *Vit.* 416) and from 70 onwards as a Roman citizen enjoying favourable relations with Vespasian, Titus and Domitian (*Vit.* 422–423; 428–429).<sup>72</sup>

For Josephus, as for Thucydides and Polybius, contemporary history has a methodological basis in the possibility of personal experience. He wishes for that reason to write in detail only about contemporaneous matters (*Bell.* 1:18).

Throughout his life he continuously asserted his qualification as a historian. And he did so very much by speaking of his own direct autopsy of certain matters.<sup>73</sup> When he in retrospect, for instance, towards the end of the first century, defends himself against Apion by means of some historiographical reflections,<sup>74</sup> he immediately refers to his credentials for writing about the Jewish war, emphasizing his own presence in every regard: "I have made the veracious record of the whole war and in detail of the things that happened during it, having been present myself at all the

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<sup>69</sup> For Polybius' further comments on the interrogation, see below Chap. 4, B:4.

<sup>70</sup> For Josephus' family, education and career, cf., e.g., Thackeray, *Josephus*, pp. 3–22; Shutt, *Studies in Josephus*, pp. 1–7; Rajak, *Josephus*, pp. 11–45; Bartlett, *Jews in the Hellenistic World*, pp. 72–76; Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, pp. 27–60; Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, pp. 35–52.

<sup>71</sup> For the events in Galilee and Jerusalem during 66–67 CE, see Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, pp. 181–231.

<sup>72</sup> For Josephus' activities in Rome, which perhaps were primarily literary, see Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, pp. 232–242.

<sup>73</sup> Varneda mentions rightly autopsy as being extremely important for Josephus, but he neglects to discuss the evidence at hand (*The Historical Method of Josephus*, pp. 275–276).

<sup>74</sup> Cohen, "History and Historiography", pp. 1–11.

events" (*Ap.* 1:47).<sup>75</sup> Other Greek historians, he claims, have merely put together a few hearsay reports without taking the trouble to seek information from those who know the facts, without having visited the sites or been near the actions they describe (*Ap.* 1:45–46).<sup>76</sup> They ought to realize that it is their duty to obtain exact knowledge either by entering into close contact with the events or by inquiring those who know them (*Ap.* 1:53).<sup>77</sup> He himself kept careful record of all that went on under his eyes in the Roman camp; and he was the only one to understand the information brought by deserters (*Ap.* 1:49).<sup>78</sup>

## 6. Tacitus

The Greek historians set the pattern to be continued by the Romans. With the exception of Livy, the latter group employed autopsy in a manner similar to the one of the Greeks. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for what it is worth,<sup>79</sup> praises Fabius Pictor and Cincius Alimentus, two third century Roman historians writing in Greek, for relating with great exactness only the events at which they themselves had been present and thus were well acquainted with (*Ant. Roma.* I 6:2).

Tacitus is the most prominent representative of the Roman historians writing in Latin. Although he never tells us to what extent he was himself an eyewitness,<sup>80</sup> it is evident that he spent considerable effort to seek out others who had observed certain matters of interest to him. Most well-known is perhaps his request to Pliny the Younger for an eyewitness report of the death of Pliny's uncle in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. In letters sixteen and twenty of book six, Pliny gives an account of the event, assuring Tacitus that he has described every incident in detail as he either witnessed them himself or heard about them immediately afterwards, when reports were most likely to be accurate (VI 16:22).<sup>81</sup> Evidently

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<sup>75</sup> ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ περὶ τοῦ πολέμου παντὸς καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ κατὰ μέρος γενομένων ἀληθῆ τὴν ἀναγραφὴν ἐποιησάμην τοῖς πράγμασιν αὐτὸς ἅπασι παρατυχῶν.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. his critique of Justus in *Vit.* 357.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. his critique of Greek historians in *Ap.* 1:15.

<sup>78</sup> For other relevant texts in Josephus' writings, see below Chap. 4, A:3.

<sup>79</sup> For discussion, cf. Timpe, "Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit", pp. 266–286; Ungern-Sternberg, "Überlegungen zur frühen römischen Überlieferung", pp. 237–265.

<sup>80</sup> Chilver, *Commentary*, p. 35.

<sup>81</sup> For an account of these letters within the context of Tacitus' compositional activity, see Syme, *Tacitus*, I, p. 118. Cf. also, e.g., Martin, *Tacitus*, p. 30; Mellor, *Tacitus*, pp. 19–20, 32.



Tacitus had asked specifically for the information; he wished to be accurately informed by a person who had observed the event itself.

Tacitus' request is a prime example of the vital importance of direct and indirect autopsy among the Roman historians. Although Pliny's lengthy report probably was included in the lost portion of the *Historiae*, one can notice the importance which Tacitus attaches to autopsy as he asserts, for instance, that the facts of the miracles of Vespasian at Alexandria go back to eyewitnesses (*Hist.* 4:81),<sup>82</sup> or, to take an example from the *Annales*, as he remembers to have heard from some aged senators about documents seen in the hands of Cn. Piso which would dispel all guilt in matters of Germanicus and incriminate Tiberius (*Ann.* 3:16). "When Tacitus was composing the *Annales*", says Ronald Syme, the nestor among experts on Tacitus, "it was not too late to question witnesses surviving from the last years of Nero".<sup>83</sup> The pattern is thus the same as with the Greeks; historians seek out eyewitnesses.

## 7. Conclusion: A Visual Relationship to the Past

These texts suffice for the present purpose. In the following chapters we shall discuss other texts, pointing to some complicating factors and drawing out further implications. Here we posed a simple question, and we received a simple answer: *the major Greek and Roman historians who comment on their own and/or others' practice of inquiry and sources adhered to Heraclitus' old dictum. Eyes were surer witnesses than ears.* The ancient historians exercised autopsy directly and/or indirectly, by being present themselves and/or by seeking out and interrogating other eyewitnesses; they related to the past visually. Autopsy was the essential means to reach back to the past. They acted very much like oral historians, aiming to hear the living voices of those who were present.

They also permitted the accounts of the eyewitnesses to become a vital part of their own writings, of their own written stories. The accounts of the eyewitnesses, whether they were the accounts of the historians themselves or of other persons, were heard and recorded in view of their retrospective character. In this way, by including these accounts in their written works, *the historians gave the writings a fundamental diachronic dimension*; they created story as history.

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<sup>82</sup> Chilver and Townend think of witnesses who were perhaps present in the imperial household thirty years after the event (*Commentary*, p. 84).

<sup>83</sup> Syme, *Tacitus*, I, p. 300.

It is important to realize that the notion of the primacy of sight was not restricted to the historians only, but, as we saw, part of the ancient Greek theory of cognition. It was deeply embedded in the socio-cultural setting of the New Testament. What the historians show with clarity is that sight became an essential methodological repertoire and practice for reaching back to the past, especially that past which was not too far removed from the present. They epitomize the need of autopsy for any person who was seriously interested in finding out and recording what had happened at an earlier time. As such, *they reflect most clearly the visual aspect of the ancient Greek and Roman way of relating to the past.*

## B. The Early Christians

So what about the early Christians as the gospel tradition emerged and developed? In view of the extreme importance attached to sight in the Greek and Roman environment, it is indeed likely that eyewitness testimony played an essential role during that development. But what actual evidence do we have? Some texts claim it existed, to be sure, Luke 1:1–2 most explicitly so. But these texts reflect primarily the author's view of the matter, and as such, they are first and foremost reflective of how the notion of autopsy was encoded into a story, and only on a secondary level of the actual practice of inquiry. I shall therefore deal with these texts as part of a discussion of how history enters into the world of the story.<sup>84</sup> Here we need to work with more circumstantial evidence, it seems. Is it probable that eyewitnesses existed and, equally important, that they functioned as informants during the emergence and development of the gospel tradition? Who are the likely candidates?

### 1. Eyewitness but not Informant

Not all the people who saw Jesus were informants; not all of them told other persons in touch with larger portions of the Jesus tradition about what they had seen. Even if one accepts the notion that various small units existed at an early stage of the gospel tradition, it is evident that at a certain point some people must have received sufficient information to mould the various units into a more or less coherent and chronological outline. Many inhabitants of different places must have seen him – he att-

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<sup>84</sup> Chap. 5, B:1–5.

racted the masses – and discussed him, without ever having conveyed that experience beyond the limited circle of family and close friends. Several people hearing and observing Jesus appear merely as shadows in the gospels. One cannot without further ado speak of them as eyewitnesses *and* informants.

For that reason, Martin Dibelius' bold attempt to identify the anonymous young man in Mark 14:51 or Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, in Mark 15:21 as original eyewitnesses and informants of Jesus' passion is no more than pure conjecture;<sup>85</sup> it can be neither proved nor disproved. The strange episode concerning the flight of a naked young man is probably not, as Dibelius thought, without significance in the Markan story itself.<sup>86</sup> His anonymity might perhaps have been intentional even from the time of the early formation of the passion story.<sup>87</sup> The reference to the two sons of Simon of Cyrene is more to the point as a way to identify an eyewitness; but again, Simon's function as an eyewitness is not pointed out. The listing of his sons may simply have served to distinguish him from other men of the same name.

Likewise, Bo Reicke's reference to various persons as eyewitnesses and informants, though certainly focusing on important individuals, is sometimes more plausible within the range of his own over-all hypothesis than within the picture emerging from the fragmentary information of the New Testament texts themselves.<sup>88</sup> The only substantial reason, for instance, to place Philip and his daughters in the position of informants of Luke is that the author of Acts refers to them in a "we-section" (Acts 21:8–9). On no occasion are they presented as eyewitnesses and informants. Other scholars sometimes relate also the notice of Papias, that he received a wonderful story from Philip's daughters (Eus., *Hist. Eccl.* III

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. above Chap. 1, C:1. Dibelius was not alone. Cf., e.g., Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 562; Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, p. 324.

<sup>86</sup> Cf., e.g., Fleddermann, "The Flight of a Naked Young Man", pp. 412–418; Jackson, "Why the Youth Shed his Cloak and Fled Naked", pp. 273–289, both with surveys of various proposals. Haren brings out a new suggestion for the identity of the young man, proposing Lazarus, but he does not deny the significance of the episode in the Markan story ("The Naked Young Man", pp. 525–531).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Theißen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte*, pp. 196–200. Theißen argues that the anonymity of the person who cut off the ear of the high-priest's slave (Mark 14:47) and of the naked young man was actually due to the traditionists attempt to protect them by hiding their identity from the authorities in Jerusalem. "Ihre Anonymität ist Schutz-anonymität, die Verdunkelung ihrer positiven Beziehung zu Jesus Vorsichtsstrategie" (*ibid.*, p. 198).

<sup>88</sup> For his view, see above Chap. 1, C:4.

39:9),<sup>89</sup> but that story has evidently nothing to do with the Jesus tradition. All we can say is that such a view of Philip and his daughters is indeed possible; but it is impossible to verify – or, for that reason, to refute – with scholarly evidence.

It is true that certain reconstructions will be necessary to make sense of the fragmentary character of the material. Yet, if we are not to end up in complete guess work, we will have to abide by the texts themselves and see to what extent they provide a portrayal which identifies certain persons as capable of being eyewitnesses *and* informants in the line of the emerging gospel tradition.

## 2. The Local People

This is not to deny that some anonymous people must have played a certain role. In many societies untouched by the advanced information technologies that have been made possible through the extensive spread of writing and printing, the local people plays an important role in preserving and conveying anecdotes attached to a certain village or region. Numerous anthropological studies show this to be the case even today. Oral historians always try to take seriously the accounts and the experiences of seemingly unimportant people, the perspective of the inhabitants of a particular place. The oral history approach is essentially, as we said in the previous chapter, a “move from below”.

As Herman Verdin points out,<sup>90</sup> this interest in the local people was prevalent also among the ancient Greek historians. Herodotus often speaks of the ἐπιχώριοι as his informants; Thucydides and Polybius employed, with even more sophistication, material of a similar, local character. Local historians, says Dionysius as he strangely criticizes Thucydides, are obliged to reproduce local legends in the form in which they are passed on from parents to children (*Th.* 7). Local history – horography – emerged even as a genre of its own,<sup>91</sup> as one may infer from the histories of the native cities of the fourth century historians Phaeneas of Eresos (πρυτάνεις Ἐρεσιῶν), Ephorus of Cyme (*FrGrHist* 70 F 1) and Theopompus

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Baum, *Lukas als Historiker*, pp. 332–334, who repeats Harnack’s old view.

<sup>90</sup> Verdin, “Notes sur l’attitude des historiens Grecs”, pp. 183–200. For more detailed documentation, see below Chap. 4, A:2.

<sup>91</sup> Dionysius dates the origin of horography in the period before Thucydides and Herodotus (*Th.* 5). But the actual date is probably later. See Fornara, *The Nature of History*, pp. 17–23.

of Chios (*FrGrHist* 115 F 305), and from the Roman popularization of the official *annales maximi* mentioned in, for instance, Antonius' reply to Catulus (*Cic., De Orat.* II 12:52–53).<sup>92</sup>

No doubt, many people in the villages must have seen and heard Jesus. This peculiar man had visited their very own region and village; he had spoken there and performed mighty acts right where they lived and worked. It is quite likely therefore, on a general level, that hearsay and rumours soon existed. They had originated with various persons who had heard him speaking and/or observed his actions at a specific location. He was being “proclaimed” from early on. “For his name had become known”, Mark comments as he is to tell of some people’s estimate of Jesus (6:14).

We detect this phenomenon of rumour most clearly in the fact that sick persons come up to Jesus or are being brought to him. People have heard of him and expect miraculous healings to take place. The woman suffering from irregular bleedings, for instance, approaches Jesus because “she had heard” of him; she had heard people’s talk of his mighty deeds (Mark 5:27).<sup>93</sup> Or take the blind Bartimaeus, who calls out for mercy “when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth” walking along the road (Mark 10:47). The Markan comments and reports harmonize with how rumours usually arise around peculiar and fascinating persons.<sup>94</sup> They existed apparently very early and were already being spread around in the villages and beyond.

Gerd Theißen has shown convincingly that some local traits did eventually enter into the gospel tradition.<sup>95</sup> Notice, for instance, the peculiar fact that the three miracles connected with the lake of Gennesaret (Mark 4:35–41; 5:1–20; 6:45–52) use the term *θάλασσα*, “sea”, instead of the normal *λίμνη*, “lake”. Such a practice is explainable from both the Semitic background reflected in the LXX as well as the language of the local people at the shores of Gennesaret. For them a small “lake” could easily become a “sea”. It reflects an epichoric perspective, the limited world-

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<sup>92</sup> Fornara, *The Nature of History*, pp. 16–28.

<sup>93</sup> The MSS vary between *ἀκοῦσασα περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ* and *ἀκοῦσασα τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Abel, “The Psychology of Memory and Rumor Transmission”, pp. 270–281. In addition to entertaining a simplistic view of the role of eyewitnesses in early Christianity, Abel fails, however, to distinguish sufficiently between different settings of memorization and transmission. What might be spread as a rumour in certain popular contexts might in other, more organized settings be preserved and elaborated systematically.

<sup>95</sup> Theißen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte*.

view of the “small” people living and working in the region.<sup>96</sup> As it seems, local people’s talk about Jesus did have some affect on the material later to be recorded in the synoptic gospels. It was spread beyond their own, immediate surroundings. The persons preserving and working on the gospel tradition and the evangelists editing the material into coherent narratives did not abolish entirely the simple and local character of the material.

In all its fragmentary fashion, the evidence indicates the importance of some local eyewitness-accounts as the gospel tradition emerged and developed. The inhabitants of the villages are not portrayed directly as informants in the texts, but apparently they somehow functioned as such. *What the local people had seen and experienced was maintained and presented – at least in part – from their very own perspective.*

### 3. The Disciples: the Group versus the Individual

As we noted in the previous chapter,<sup>97</sup> oral historians of today often attempt to control the uniqueness of each eyewitness account with a sense of its representativeness and a careful method of strategic sampling. In order to do this, one needs to single out persons who are representative of a larger group, and compare their versions with each other. Groups are important, but *one needs to focus on the individuals within each group*, because the collective version might be entirely different from the version of the individual. The uniqueness as well as the representativeness of each life story is at the center of the oral history approach.

The disciples constitute, of course, the most evident group of eyewitnesses of Jesus’ active ministry.<sup>98</sup> They had followed Jesus during an extended part of his career; they had listened to his teaching and preaching in public as well as in private; they had observed his mighty acts, etc. They must have had common memories and common experiences. The group had its central identity in Jesus, in what he said and did, in what he was to its members. It is thus but a short step to assume that they actually formed a decisive body of eyewitnesses and informants, to be questioned and interrogated as the gospel tradition eventually took shape and developed.

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<sup>96</sup> See further Theißen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte*, pp. 111–115.

<sup>97</sup> See above Chap. 1, B:1.

<sup>98</sup> For the question of the historical Jesus and his twelve disciples, see Meier, “The Circle of the Twelve”, pp. 635–672.

This apparently never happened. Just as the old form-critics have been criticized for assuming that the transmission of the Jesus tradition was merely a collective enterprise integrated within the various activities of the entire communities of believers, so one may also question the possibility of a collective oral history within the group of disciples. The disciples never formed such a coherent group of persons, even less were they trained in the techniques of memory and transmission.

The material at hand indicates instead a certain focus on a few leading individuals within the group of disciples – a sampling of the prominent representatives. Here the synoptic gospel narratives are in basic agreement. Most of the disciples remain inconspicuous, being included in the larger group without carrying any individual traits. Only Peter – or Simon – and the sons of Zebedee – and of course, in his own way, Judas Iscariot – are characters of whom we hear more specifically.<sup>99</sup> The situation portrayed outside of the gospel narratives, depicting the post-Easter perspective, is very much the same. The Twelve are presented as a leading group (Acts 6:2), but Peter and John are the only ones concerning whom any details are given.<sup>100</sup> Of James, John's brother, we learn merely that he was killed by Herod (Acts 12:2).<sup>101</sup> Galatians 2:9 also implies that Peter – or Cephas – and John attained a position of leadership together with James, the Lord's brother. Although we have no reason here to discuss in detail the historicity of the Twelve as a group and their historical position as apostles, we take notice that most of them are presented as being nothing else but members of a group, lacking all individuality, while only a few are portrayed in more specific terms. Not the group but certain individuals within the group are given historical specificity.

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<sup>99</sup> In Mark 1:29 Andrew, Peter's brother, is mentioned together with Simon as the owner of a house, but the parallels in Matt 8:14 and Luke 4:38 mention only Peter/Simon. According to Mark 13:3 he is also present with the other three on the Mount of Olives, but the parallels in Matt 24:3 and Luke 21:7 omit any specificity regarding which disciples that were present. – Levi's, or Matthew's, call is mentioned together with an event taking place in his (probably implied also in Matt 9:10) house (Mark 2:13–17 parr.).

<sup>100</sup> Philip, who is mentioned in Acts 8:5–40, is probably not to be identified with one of the Twelve carrying the same name (Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13), because in Acts 8:1 all the apostles are said to remain in Jerusalem. Rather, Philip, one of the seven, is implied. Cf. Acts 6:5; 21:8.

<sup>101</sup> "James" is mentioned again later in the same chapter (12:17), but this must be James the Lord's brother.

## 4. Peter

Peter appears as the most significant sample. The New Testament provides images of him that strongly point to his important position as an eyewitness and informant concerning Jesus. The prominent role he plays in the group of disciples is evident in all three synoptic gospels. His function as some kind of representative is linked to the peculiar characterization of him with both positive and negative traits. The most evident example is the account of his so-called confession coupled with Jesus' prediction of his own death and resurrection. In Mark Peter represents first the confessing and then the "satanic" disciples (Mark 8:27–33). On both occasions he is singled out as their spokesman.<sup>102</sup> The same image is maintained in Matthew and Luke, which even enhance his representative role. The latter expresses also a more favourable attitude towards him.

As the most prominent disciple, he is of course also the most prominent eyewitness. Whenever there are moments where only some of the disciples are present, one is sure to find Peter among them, always mentioned first. Together with James and John he is with Jesus as he restores a girl to life (Mark 5:37/Luke 8:51), at the transfiguration (Mark 9:2 parr.), where only Peter speaks to Jesus (Mark 9:5 parr.), and in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33/Matt 26:37), where the address is directed only to Peter (Mark 14:37/Matt 26:40).<sup>103</sup> The Markan author pictures him as present at the Mount of Olives together with James, John and Andrew (Mark 13:3). Sometimes he is the only disciple present. Only Peter follows Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest (Mark 14:54 parr.; Mark 14:66–72 parr.). Like Paul, Luke also maintains the conviction, it seems, that Peter was the first of the disciples to see the risen Lord (1 Cor 15:5; Luke 24:34).<sup>104</sup> Alone or together with some of the other disciples, he is the primary eyewitness of them all.

Peter's function is not merely that of an observer. At some points his role as an eyewitness has to do with remembering and conveying infor-

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<sup>102</sup> Peter's representative role is quite evident in 8:29, because his declaration is placed within an address to all the disciples. I take the remark in 8:33, that Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, as well as the following teaching to the crowd with his disciples, as indication of Peter's representative function as a "satanic" disciple. This is of course not to say that his individuality is entirely absent (cf. Wiarda, "Peter as Peter", pp. 28–30). It is precisely as an individual that Peter represents the disciples. See further below Chap. 6, B:6 and B:8.

<sup>103</sup> Luke 22:46 has Jesus speak to all the disciples.

<sup>104</sup> The Lukan author seems to employ already formulated material at this point. See Dietrich, *Das Petrusbild*, pp. 158–163.



mation concerning Jesus. Who else would be more suitable to such a function than the primary eyewitness? Already in the earliest gospel narrative, it is Peter who twice remembers what has happened or what Jesus has said (Mark 11:21; 14:72).<sup>105</sup> In Matthew's special material concerning the temple tax, which breathes a setting of when the temple was still in function, it is to Peter that those who want to know something about Jesus the teacher turn (Matt 17:24). This image of Peter is re-enforced in the early post-Easter situation. Acts clearly portrays him as the one who cares for the proper transmission of the items concerned with Jesus; he is the one who recollects his words and deeds. He takes responsibility for ascertaining that someone acquainted with the active ministry of Jesus from personal experience is added to the group of the eleven apostles (Acts 1:21–22); he is emphatic about his own and the other apostles' ministry of being reliable witnesses not only to the resurrection (1:22; 2:32; 3:15),<sup>106</sup> but to that which they have seen and heard (4:20), to all that Jesus did both in Judea and in Jerusalem (10:39), to Jesus being the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead (10:42); he tells his version about Jesus in such a bold way as was unusual for uneducated and ordinary men, but perfectly possible for companions of Jesus (4:13); and he is the one to remember and quote what the Lord had said (11:16; cf. 1:5). If Acts is only roughly correct in this picture, it implies Peter's eminent role as an eyewitness and informant, deeply concerned to secure the Jesus tradition.

This depiction of Peter as an eyewitness who remembers and conveys information concerning Jesus cannot be entirely fictitious. It is impossible to find any reasonable historical explanation to this characterization had he not in fact been an important eyewitness and transmitter of Jesus' words and deeds. A radical retrojection of a late, post-Easter image of Peter would probably have looked quite different,<sup>107</sup> more elevated and less contradictory. In Galatians 1:18, moreover, Paul implies that Peter was the most important of the apostles in Jerusalem. It was him only whom Paul was eager to learn to know during his two weeks in Jerusalem,<sup>108</sup> perhaps in order to receive first-hand information about Jesus'

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<sup>105</sup> Lane's comment on Mark 11:21 is noteworthy: "The remark that Peter remembered (cf. Ch. 14:72) suggests that the entire incident was associated with the Petrine memoirs in the tradition" (*The Gospel according to Mark*, p. 409).

<sup>106</sup> In Acts 5:32 Peter and the apostles speak together of being witnesses.

<sup>107</sup> Feldmeier, "The Portrayal of Peter", pp. 59–60.

<sup>108</sup> Hofius shows that the expression ἵστορεῖν τινα means primarily "to learn to know someone" ("Gal 1 18", pp. 73–85).

life and teaching.<sup>109</sup> Already in the early 30s Peter,<sup>110</sup> the simple Galilean fisherman, was apparently a person whom even a newly converted proto-rabbi, who was probably trained in advanced techniques of torah transmission, took effort to become acquainted with. The simple fisherman must have had important things to tell his learned friend.<sup>111</sup>

## 5. The Women at the Cross and the Tomb

### a. "An Exegesis of the Silence"

Throughout the centuries, the memories and experiences of women have frequently been ignored and silenced. It happens in modern times, as the development of the oral history discipline has brought to light,<sup>112</sup> and it happened in antiquity. Ancient Jewish writings reveal, generally speaking, a low estimation of women as reliable witnesses.<sup>113</sup> "From women let no

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<sup>109</sup> This is the thesis of Kilpatrick ("Galatians 1:18", pp. 144–149) and Dunn ("The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem", pp. 463–466). Hofius has pointed to the shaky philological basis of Kilpatrick's and, in particular, Dunn's argumentation (cf. the response by Dunn, "Once more – Gal 1 18", pp. 138–139, and the restatement in his *The Theology of Paul*, p. 188), but leaves a possibility open: "Natürlich ist es denkbar (wenn auch nicht beweisbar), daß Paulus sich bei seinem zweiwöchigen Aufenthalt im Hause des Petrus unter anderem auch über Jesu Erdenwirken und seine Verkündigung hat berichten lassen" ("Gal 1 18", p. 85). Wehr insists that Paul did nothing of the sort but tried only to learn to know Peter (*Petrus und Paulus*, p. 41 n. 52), building on Hofius without noticing that this scholar actually recognizes that the philological data do not exclude the possibility that the two discussed certain matters with each other.

<sup>110</sup> For chronology I follow Riesner, who dates Jesus' crucifixion to 14 Nissan (7 April) in the year 30 (*Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus*, pp. 51–52). So also Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie*, I, p. 55.

<sup>111</sup> For a full appreciation of this visit, see Hengel/Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus und Antiochien*, pp. 229–236.

<sup>112</sup> The literature is growing. See, e.g., Roberts' account of the oral history of working-class women in three towns of north Lancashire in the period 1890–1940, *A Woman's Place*, and its sequel *Women and Families* (with further bibliography). It has also been felt that the oral history methodology does not always serve the interests of women's oral history. See the collection of essays edited by Gluck and Patai, *Women's Words*. For discussion and further literature, see also Sangster, "Telling our stories", pp. 87–100.

<sup>113</sup> For a survey of previous research, see Ilan, *Jewish Women*, pp. 2–21. In the subsequent volume *Mine and Yours are Hers*, Ilan establishes specific criteria in order to open up the corpus of rabbinic literature for the feminist scholar. Cf. also her most recent study *Integrating Women into Second Temple History*.

evidence be accepted, because of the levity and insolence of their sex”,<sup>114</sup> Josephus comments on Deuteronomy 19:15 (*Ant.* 4:219). He represents the dominating ancient Jewish view. The rabbis made the same determination.<sup>115</sup> Yes, the Jew was, according to Rabbi Judah, to praise God daily that he was not created a woman (t. Ber. 7:18).<sup>116</sup> There were exceptions to this rule, to be sure, and it had its special relevance in legal contexts.<sup>117</sup> Josephus himself knows to report, for instance, that Salome, Herod’s sister, was among the persons presiding in the trial of his two sons with Mariamne (*Bell.* 1:538) and that she was brought in to testify against Antipater (*Ant.* 17:93).<sup>118</sup> Women’s testimony could sometimes, it seems, be accepted.<sup>119</sup> And as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza reminds us, the Jesus movement, with its women, was essentially a Jewish movement.<sup>120</sup> But these occasions do not reflect the general rule, and there must have been a reason why women were mostly excluded as witnesses in legal proceedings. Their situation might have been somewhat better according to Roman law, but again, only in exceptional circumstances.<sup>121</sup>

The four gospel narratives of the New Testament speak indeed of female characters, but these characters are for the most part not given a prominent position in the plots. The important characters are men. The women are minor characters. In the synoptics an androcentric perspective takes over indeed; the voices of women are no more to be heard in their

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<sup>114</sup> γυναικῶν δὲ μὴ ἔστω μαρτυρία διὰ κουφότητα καὶ θράσος τοῦ γένους αὐτῶν.

<sup>115</sup> Cf., e.g., m. Rosh HaSh. 1:8; m. Ket. 2:5–6; m. Sot. 3:4 (the statement of R. Eliezer); m. Abot 1:5; y. Rosh HaSh. 57c (cf. b. Sanh. 27b); b. Rosh HaSh. 22a; b. Sot. 47b; b. Shebu. 29b.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. also y. Ber. 13b; b. Men. 43b.

<sup>117</sup> The legal setting is stressed by Vahrenhorst, “Se non è vero, è ben trovato”, pp. 282–288.

<sup>118</sup> Most likely 1QSa 1:11 does not contain a reference to a female witness. See Baumgarten, “On the Testimony of Women in 1QSa”, pp. 266–269.

<sup>119</sup> See further Wegner, *Chattel or Person?*, pp. 120–123; Ilan, *Jewish Women*, pp. 163–166; Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, pp. 63–97. Cf. also Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Women*, pp. 99–110; Wegner, “The Image and Status of Women”, pp. 68–93.

<sup>120</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza puts it in her own terms: “The discipleship of equals called forth by Jesus was a Jewish discipleship” (*In Memory of Her*, p. 107).

<sup>121</sup> Gardner, *Women in Roman Law & Society*; Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society*, pp. 14–119. The most important literary and visual sources for the lives of ancient women are collected and discussed in Fantham/Foley/Kampen/Pomeroy/Shapiro, *Women in the Classical World*.

own right.<sup>122</sup> The Lukan story, for instance, tends to pair women with men, enhancing and legitimizing the female characters, as it appears, by reference to the existence and action of males.<sup>123</sup> What women have to say and what women do is of less importance. Their words are like “idle talk” (Luke 24:11). Paul, moreover, is in 1 Corinthians 15:5–7 entirely silent about the women’s role as witnesses of the resurrection. No one could believe “a hysterical female”, such was later the view of the Jews according to Celsus (Orig., *Cels.* 2:55), and such was evidently the view behind the curious reserve about the witness of women in earlier works as well.<sup>124</sup> It is thus not implausible that the role of women as eyewitnesses and informants concerning Jesus was suppressed during the course of transmission and redaction. To study the role of women during the formation of the gospel tradition requires therefore, with the words of Carla Ricci, “an exegesis of the silence”.<sup>125</sup>

*b. Mark 15:40–41, 47; 16:1, 4–5*

Yet, we do have some explicit comments. Perhaps the women were not actually that far removed from the more limited circle of disciples. The Markan story seems to indicate such a view on at least one occasion,<sup>126</sup> in 15:40–41:

“There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were also Mary

<sup>122</sup> Dewey, “Women in the Synoptic Gospels”, pp. 53–60.

<sup>123</sup> I am aware of simplifying a complex picture. The most important contributions to the discussion of the role of women in Luke-Acts have recently been discussed by Collins, “Did Luke Intend a Disservice to Women in the Martha and Mary Story?”, pp. 104–111. Cf. also Corley, *Private Women*, pp. 108–146; Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society*, pp. 120–193; Bieberstein, *Verschwiegene Jüngerinnen*; Thurston, *Women in the New Testament*, pp. 96–128. The dissertation of W. V. Whitney, “Women in Luke. An Application of a Reader-Response Hermeneutic” (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville KY, 1990), was not available to me.

<sup>124</sup> So Setzer, “Excellent Women”, pp. 270–271. The ramifications of Celsus’ critique is discussed in a most informative manner by Bowersock, *Fiction as History*.

<sup>125</sup> Ricci, *Mary Magdalene*, pp. 19–28. In order to fill out this “silence”, Ricci is, however, often rather bold and speculative, in my opinion, thus failing to explain convincingly precisely why the texts are silent. To refer to the androcentric dominance of the culture is not sufficient as long as we cannot show how that dominance influenced the transmission of the Jesus tradition. I shall attempt to give a partial explanation below, Chap. 4, B:5.

<sup>126</sup> The author might indicate a positive view of women also in other ways. It is perhaps significant that female characters play important roles in 5:24–34; 7:25–30; 12:41–44; 14:3–9. See Beavis, “Women as Models of Faith”, pp. 3–9.

Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the younger and [Mary the mother] of Jesus and Salome, who used to follow him and serve him when he was in Galilee, and many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem".<sup>127</sup>

Labels of discipleship are here employed to describe the women's action. They "followed" Jesus and "served" him in Galilee.<sup>128</sup> Both verbs occur in the imperfect,<sup>129</sup> suggesting a customary past action. They used to follow him; they used to serve him during an extended part of his Galilean ministry.<sup>130</sup> Although it may be most accurate not to call them "disciples", because they are, after all, never explicitly identified as μαθητρίαι in the gospels,<sup>131</sup> they were, it seems, habitual followers of Jesus.<sup>132</sup>

The text is part of the passion narrative, and one detects indication of the women's importance especially in passages dealing with the passion and resurrection of Jesus. The women are observers, eyewitnesses, of these events. Mark 15:40 has precisely this aspect in focus. Although at some distance, the women observe the death of Jesus. The verb used is

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<sup>127</sup> ἦσαν δὲ καὶ γυναῖκες ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι, ἐν αἷς καὶ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσήτος μήτηρ καὶ Σαλώμη, αἱ ὅτε ἦν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ αἱ συναναβᾶσαι αὐτῷ εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα.

<sup>128</sup> The two expressions often function as labels of discipleship in rabbinic literature. See Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 90, 97. Davies states correctly: "The fact that in Mark xv. 41 those who serve are women does not make the terminology less significant" (*The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 423). Already 1 Kgs 19:20–21 employs both *לָּקַח אַחֲרָיו*, "to walk after", and *עָבַד*, "to serve", for the relationship between Elijah and Elisha.

<sup>129</sup> Corley detects an undercurrent of a scandal in the two verbs, because the women could easily be categorized as sexually available slaves (*Private Women*, pp. 85–86). Undercurrents among a "Hellenistic audience" are always possible, but the two verbs in Mark need to be seen in conjunction; and the parallel from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, which Corley cites in support of her thesis, does not use that pair of verbs at all.

<sup>130</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza takes note also of the verb *συναναβαίνειν* as a way to characterize discipleship and relates it to Acts 13:31, where the same term is used (*In Memory of Her*, p. 321). But Acts is hardly relevant for interpreting Mark; and the term is not, after all, a specific expression of discipleship.

<sup>131</sup> This term is used only in Acts 9:36. – Witherington correctly points out that Mark reserves the term *μαθητῆς* for the Twelve, yet he calls the women in Mark "disciples of long standing" (*Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, p. 122). More cautious, however, Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, II, pp. 1155–1157.

<sup>132</sup> Munro, "Women Disciples in Mark?", pp. 225–241; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 316–323. Munro and Schüssler Fiorenza agree, though with different emphases, to call the women in Mark disciples, despite the question-mark in the title of Munro's article.

θεωρεῖν, “to look at, observe, perceive”. It implies more than the casual registration of an item; they are there to observe. Their function as eye-witnesses is further accentuated as three or four of them are singled out by name.<sup>133</sup> There was evidently the need to be specific at this point, perhaps because as female eyewitnesses they were already from the outset somewhat suspect.<sup>134</sup>

Next time the women are mentioned is in Mark 15:47. Their role as observers is again at the fore: “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where it [*viz.*, the body] was laid”.<sup>135</sup> This time two witnesses are sufficient (cf. Deut 19:15), but again θεωρεῖν is used, and again the women are mentioned by name. The previous verse refers to the place of the grave somewhat obscurely, which makes the women’s observation all the more necessary.<sup>136</sup> They were not there to secure the proper burial, as is sometimes claimed, but – so the text says – to see for themselves where Jesus’ body was actually placed.<sup>137</sup> Specifically named women are thus eyewitnesses of Jesus’ death as well as of the location of his tomb.

The text immediately continues in 16:1, 4–5 with a further reference to their role as important eyewitnesses:

“When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices in order to go and anoint him. [...] When they looked up, they saw that the stone was rolled back. For it was very large. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side”.<sup>138</sup>

This time the mother of James is said to accompany Mary Magdalene. Nonetheless, their function is again partly the same. For the third time in the passion narrative women are present, and for the third time they are

<sup>133</sup> Perhaps we should distinguish between Mary the mother of James and Mary the mother of Joses. So Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, II, pp. 505–508. In 15:47 only Mary the mother of Joses is mentioned, and in 16:1 only Mary the mother of James. It is not necessary for our purposes to take a definite stand on this issue.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Gerhardsson, “Kvinnorna som vittnen”, p. 51; Gerhardsson, “Mark and the Female Witnesses”, p. 219.

<sup>135</sup> ἡ δὲ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰωσήτος ἐθεώρουν τοῦ τέθειται.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, II, p. 516.

<sup>137</sup> Matthew and Luke agree essentially concerning the main point, though they weaken somewhat the aspect of witnessing – the former by not using θεωρεῖν (Matt 27:61) and the latter by not identifying the women at this point (Luke 23:55; but cf. 24:10).

<sup>138</sup> καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ [τοῦ] Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν. [...] καὶ ἀναβλέψασαι θεωροῦσιν ὅτι ἀποκεκλύσται ὁ λίθος· ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα. καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιῶις περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν.

portrayed as observers and mentioned by name. The verbs used are θεωρεῖν – again – and ὁρᾶν.<sup>139</sup> They see a young man in a white robe instead of finding Jesus' body. The young man points out to them that the tomb was empty, urging them to see for themselves the place where they laid him (16:6). Specifically named women are thus eyewitnesses of Jesus' death and of the location of his tomb, as well as of the empty tomb itself.

It is unlikely that this picture of the women is merely a part of the Markan fiction. All three passages are surely pre-Markan.<sup>140</sup> Mark probably depends here on a pre-synoptic source with colours suggesting an early origin in Jerusalem.<sup>141</sup> Whatever the Easter experience of the women actually involved, and there is reason to expect some legendary embellishment, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter,<sup>142</sup> it is indeed plausible that their role as eyewitnesses of the passion and the empty tomb from early on was a firm part of the tradition. Soon after the death of Jesus, it seems, *members of the community in Jerusalem realized that certain women had, in fact, observed Jesus dying, that they had seen the location of his tomb and experienced something which convinced them that it was empty.*

### c. Mary Magdalene

Just as Peter is accorded a leading role among the disciples, Mary Magdalene stands out as of special importance in the group of women. The gnostics, we know, came to love her.<sup>143</sup> They attributed a significant role to her, perhaps as a reaction against the patriarchal structures of the leading ecclesiological institutions at the time.<sup>144</sup> Although the view of these

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<sup>139</sup> Matthew maintains the aspect of observing, and even enhances it. Although the stone is not an issue for the women in Matthew, they come to the tomb in order to observe (θεωρησάτω) it (28:1), implicitly thus to confirm that Jesus is dead (Longstaff, "The Women at the Tomb", pp. 277–282); and they are subsequently commanded by the angel to see (ἴδετε) the actual place where Jesus lay (28:6). Luke diminishes this aspect. The women found (εὑρον) the stone rolled away (24:2); and they did not find (οὐχ εὑρον) the body (24:3). He reports the identity of the women only subsequently (24:10), but it is eventually Peter who sees (βλέπει) the linen cloths (24:12).

<sup>140</sup> So also, e.g., Hengel, "Maria Magdalena", p. 246.

<sup>141</sup> See below Chap. 6, B:3.

<sup>142</sup> See below Chap. 4, B:5.

<sup>143</sup> See Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, with a survey of earlier research (pp. 1–21). Cf., in addition to the literature mentioned there, Boer, *Mary Magdalene*, pp. 58–117. For a broader survey of research on Mary Magdalene, see Thimmes, "Memory and Re-Vision", pp. 193–226.

<sup>144</sup> So Heine, "Eine Person von Rang und Namen", pp. 188–190, 194.

circles was repeatedly marginalized, it is not certain that the prominence attached to her was entirely out of line with the situation of the first century.<sup>145</sup> Her importance is indicated already in the synoptic gospel stories. A peculiar feature is that she is not identified in relation to her family, as the other women are, but in relation to her place of living. In particular, one notices, with Martin Hengel,<sup>146</sup> that whenever the authors of the gospel narratives list her together with other women, they always mention her first. John 19:25 is an exception, evidently using the women's relation to Jesus as a criterion for the order in which the women, probably four,<sup>147</sup> are listed; but Mary Magdalene is still given prominence by being included among Jesus' relatives.

Why was she accorded such an importance? Hengel suggests that her reputation of being the first one to see the risen Lord was the decisive factor. Schüssler Fiorenza agrees.<sup>148</sup> And Esther de Boer, though without a detailed analysis of texts, also speaks of her as a "key witness" to Jesus death, his burial and the empty tomb with the revelation that goes with it.<sup>149</sup> Truly, other plausible explanations are hard to find.<sup>150</sup> An appearance of Jesus to her is reported in Matthew 28:9–10; John 20:14–18 and the appendix in Mark 16:9–11. The three texts differ indeed from each other to a significant extent. Raymond E. Brown points out, accordingly, the difficulties involved in assuming that the three versions depend on each other and argues for the existence of independent traditions of a christophany to Mary Magdalene.<sup>151</sup> The differences between the Matt-  
 hean and the Johannine texts are surely significant enough to make it dif-

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<sup>145</sup> Bovon states; "Seul le recours à une ou des traditions paléo-chrétiennes, discrètement écartées par la Grande Eglise, explique cette survie. Le poids culturel, historique, sociologique et même mythologique de l'époque a amplifié, modifié ou même tordu ce vieil héritage ... Mais il n'a pas donné naissance à ces vieilles traditions" ("Le privilège pascal de Marie-Madeleine", pp. 56–57).

<sup>146</sup> Hengel, "Maria Magdalena", pp. 248–251.

<sup>147</sup> Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, pp. 185–187.

<sup>148</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 139.

<sup>149</sup> Boer, *Mary Magdalene*, pp. 45–55.

<sup>150</sup> Walker, in his strained attempt to show that the postcrucifixion appearances of Jesus have nothing to do with the resurrection faith, thinks that the account of the appearance to Mary Magdalene is a late attempt to legitimize her place of prominence ("Postcrucifixion Appearances", p. 165). But he gives no reason why she was accorded such a prominence in the first place.

<sup>151</sup> Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, II, pp. 1002–1003. His arguments are valid in spite of his questionable hypothesis that Matt 28:9–10 is a later insertion. The christophany serves Matthew quite well as an authoritative enforcement of the angel's commission in 28:7.



difficult to envision any direct dependence.<sup>152</sup> Already Pierre Benoit, in a separate article, while recognizing some similarities between Matthew 28:9–10 and John 20:11a, 14b–18, thus advocated the view that the author of John made use of an old tradition which the Matthean author resumed and elaborated.<sup>153</sup> The Markan version reflects a tradition independent of the gospel narratives, according to Benoit.<sup>154</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza thus also speaks of “two independent streams of the Gospel tradition”.<sup>155</sup> Various solutions to the history of John 20 have indeed been proposed,<sup>156</sup> but granted the independent attestation of the christophany and the priority which all the gospels give to Mary Magdalene among the women who followed Jesus, the existence of some early roots of the conviction that Jesus appeared first to her alone is not implausible.<sup>157</sup> The first evangelist, in that case, by fusing the christophany with the angel’s commission and the tradition of the empty tomb, included another Mary into the account, while the Johannine author, in line with the tradition of a protophany to Mary Magdalene, elaborated the tradition of the empty tomb in 20:1–10 by focusing also at this point on her alone.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> So Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, III, p. 380. Neiryneck’s attempt to minimize the significance of these differences is not convincing (“John and the Synoptics. The Empty Tomb Stories”, pp. 166–171; cf. also his defence in “John and the Synoptics: 1975–1990”, pp. 34–35). The only real similarity is, after all, the use of the expression οἱ ἀδελφοί μου in Matt 28:10 and John 20:17, though also this expression is put in two different grammatical forms in each gospel respectively. Even if the Johannine author “depended” upon the synoptics at this point, these texts must have been re-oralized and supplemented to the extent that it becomes somewhat simplistic to speak of his “dependence” upon the synoptics as sources. Neiryneck admits the supplementary information provided by oral tradition (“John and the Synoptics: 1975–1990”, pp. 14, 59).

<sup>153</sup> Benoit, “Marie-Madeleine”, pp. 144–145, 150–152. For some critique of Benoit, however, cf. Bode, *The First Easter Morning*, pp. 85–86. Bode does not consider the priority of Mary Magdalene in the synoptics.

<sup>154</sup> Benoit, “Marie-Madeleine”, p. 150 n. 32.

<sup>155</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 332.

<sup>156</sup> The main options are listed by Neiryneck, “John and the Synoptics. The Empty Tomb Stories”, pp. 162–164, and Zeller, “Der Ostermorgen”, pp. 149–151. The older contributions are listed by Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs*, p. 134 n. 1. Also Perkins, in her rather speculative discussion of the women’s role in the process of community founding, holds Joh 20:11–18 to be based on earlier tradition (“I Have Seen the Lord”, p. 40).

<sup>157</sup> The question whether she was actually seeing rather than visualizing the risen One poses false alternatives. Davis’ insistence that she saw him, that “a camera could have taken a picture of him” (“Seeing’ the Risen Jesus”, p. 147), neglects the notion of faith and forces an apologetic tendency on the experience itself. “The eye of faith is not a camera’s eye”, Wilkins summarizes the objection (“A Summit Observed”, p. 2).

<sup>158</sup> Neiryneck and Zeller, among others, envision a development from a christophany

Perhaps, therefore, the female eyewitnesses and informants did not, at first, consist merely of a collective body of women. *The members of the early Jerusalem community might have realized that one woman in particular carried memories worthwhile telling and preserving.* They knew to whom to turn for information.

d. "The Double Message"

The oral history of the female eyewitnesses and informants comes through only vaguely in the texts and has, it seems, been the object of subtle, legitimizing elaborations during the course of transmission.<sup>159</sup> For that reason, *it is impossible to isolate transmission processes which clearly betray a female influence and perspective.* Thorleif Boman's attempt, for instance, to trace the Lukan special material back to a group of women is too speculative in order to carry any significant analytical force.<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, one should not forget that it is Luke who assigns a role to the women as "memorizers".<sup>161</sup> They are to remember that Jesus told them of his sufferings and resurrection while he was still in Galilee; and they do remember his words (Luke 24:6–8), suggesting that somehow they are thought to have been present at his teaching to the disciples in 9:18–22, 43b–44.<sup>162</sup> It is noteworthy that the pericope which authorizes the idle talk of women with the witness of men assigns such an important function to female characters. And it is the Lukan author who reports of women suffering at the persecution of Saul (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4–5); and it is the Lukan author who calls the woman Tabitha in Joppa a disciple, using the feminine gender μαθήτρια (Acts 9:36). There is a "double message".<sup>163</sup> The question is therefore reasonable, how else but through the initial influence of women would the items relating to their activity during Jesus' passion have entered the tradition at all. Moreover, *how else but through their influence in the early community would the account of their presence have endured the androcentric force of transmission and redaction?*

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to many women towards a christophany to Mary Magdalene alone (Neiryneck, "John and the Synoptics. The Empty Tomb Stories", p. 167; Zeller, "Der Ostermorgen", pp. 152–153). Cf. also Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, III, pp. 379–380. But this leaves unexplained the extraordinary position of Mary Magdalene in the synoptic gospels. See correctly, in my view, already Benoit, "Marie-Madeleine", p. 151.

<sup>159</sup> See below Chap. 4, B:5.

<sup>160</sup> Boman, *Die Jesus-Überlieferung*, pp. 129–137, 143–144.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Ricci, *Mary Magdalene*, pp. 182–187.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Karris, "Women and Discipleship", pp. 10, 14–15. The third prediction, in 18:31–34, is addressed to the Twelve on the way to Jerusalem.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts", p. 443; Seim, *The Double Message*.

We hold on to the vague contours of their vital importance as eyewitnesses and channels of information during the early stages of the Jesus tradition. The men fled, and the women, for all we know, were alone among Jesus' close followers to observe significant points related to his death. Moreover, they were not merely the primary eyewitnesses, but the tradition, despite its corrective and elaborating features, ascribed to them a specific mission of being informants. That mission was not the kind of apostolic and proclamative activity that was given to men directly by the risen Lord, according to Matthew and Luke (Matt 28:16–20; Luke 24:36–49; Acts 1:8),<sup>164</sup> but rather the subtle one of informing the male disciples of things related to the empty tomb. The voice of the women was not permitted to be heard in its own right, but it was never entirely ignored or silenced. Mary Magdalene was evidently accorded a particular respect. In spite of the Markan remark concerning their silence, they must at some point have communicated their experiences to others, and in the early post-Easter situation they were there to be interrogated by anyone wishing to have further information and verification.<sup>165</sup> Among the people who heard their oral history were, in all likelihood, Peter and other men, those who would decisively form and develop the gospel tradition.

## 6. The Family of Jesus

### *a. Family Traditions among the Historians*

People interested in past events that have to do with a family usually recognize the importance of the information provided by the various family members themselves. They have been closest to the persons of interest; they have seen and heard what others have not seen and heard; they have inside information.

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<sup>164</sup> Thurston erroneously refers to Acts 1:14 as evidence that women are included in Luke 24:36–49, and thus authorized as witnesses in 24:48 (*Women in the New Testament*, pp. 113–114). But Acts 1:14 refers to a subsequent gathering. Acts 1:1–5 speaks of the apostles being together with the risen One, implying that women are not of any particular interest to the author of Luke 24:36–49.

<sup>165</sup> Gerhardsson states: "Obviously they were mentioned originally as witnesses to whom the curious listener might turn and interrogate" ("Mark and the Female Witnesses", p. 217). This must have been particularly true during the early post-Easter period in Jerusalem. For Mark and his listeners, however, their presence seems to have been part of the traditional material of the passion narrative.

To take the historians again, already Herodotus, while mostly rather ignorant concerning the identity of his informants; occasionally makes a point of seeking out facts from certain family members. These items are of special importance. With that purpose in mind, he speaks, for instance, in 3:55 of his encounter with the Spartan Archias. In order to show the reliability of his spokesman, he is anxious to list his ancestry. He even specifies the place where they met, in Archias' home village of Pitane at Sparta. This Archias probably provided Herodotus with valuable information concerning the exploits of Archias' grandfather – also called Archias – recounted in 3:54–56.

Or take Thucydides. In I 138:6 the phrase “his relations say that his bones were carried home” has Themistocles' own family as the speaking subject. Or take another passage, the digression about Harmodius and Aristogeiton (VI 54–59), who killed the Peisistratid Hipparchus in 514 BCE. Here Thucydides wishes to show that Hippias, not Hipparchos, was the reigning tyrant at this time,<sup>166</sup> accordingly affirming that it was Hippias who, as the eldest son of the family, succeeded to the sovereignty, “because I know even through hearsay more accurately than others” (VI 55:1). Simon Hornblower, a leading expert on Thucydides, regards it likely that Thucydides met descendants of Peisistratus in Chios and spoke to them there.<sup>167</sup>

These scattered examples suffice to show how important it was to seek out family members in order to gain exact information concerning certain matters of the past. It was, more or less, a matter of course.

### *b. Jesus' Family Before Easter*

What about Jesus' own family as informants? To what extent were the early Christians eager to hear their accounts concerning their peculiar family member?

We are entering into a field of old controversy. The discussion concerning the existence of Jesus' physical brothers (and sisters) has suffered much from the various confessional preferences of the exegetes. Theodor Zahn's argument that such brothers did exist (the so-called Helvidian view) was countered a number of decades later by Josef Blinzler's and John McHugh's insistence that they were, in fact, Jesus' cousins (the so-called Hieronymian view).<sup>168</sup> Or were they actually the sons of Joseph by

<sup>166</sup> Gomme/Andrewes/Dover, *Commentary*, IV, p. 317; Hornblower, *Thucydides*, p. 84.

<sup>167</sup> Hornblower, *Thucydides*, pp. 77 n. 19, 84.

<sup>168</sup> Zahn, “Brüder und Vettern Jesu”, pp. 225–363; Blinzler, *Die Brüder und Schwes-*

a former marriage (the so-called Epiphanian view), as J. B. Lightfoot argued?<sup>169</sup> Opinions differ markedly. Lorenz Oberlinner has tried to overcome the scholarly impasse by focusing on the redactional work of Mark. Yet he recognizes indeed – as a catholic scholar publishing his dissertation with a catholic publisher – that Mark 3:21 testifies to the notion of Jesus’ physical brothers: “Die Tatsache der Existenz leiblicher Brüder Jesu war offenbar in der urchristlichen Überlieferung fest verankert und wurde ohne Bedenken tradiert”.<sup>170</sup> He is followed by another prominent German catholic exegete, Rudolf Pesch, in his massive commentary on Mark;<sup>171</sup> and John P. Meier at the Catholic University of America, to take another example, concludes similarly that “from a purely philological and historical point of view, the most probable opinion is that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were his siblings”.<sup>172</sup>

I will not enter into that debate further here but take Oberlinner’s, Pesch’s and Meier’s position as a welcome move towards the avoidance of the undue influence of theological dogmas,<sup>173</sup> granting historical probabilities their legitimate role.<sup>174</sup> A rehearsal of the evidence, according to Richard Bauckham,<sup>175</sup> seems to leave us with the possibility that Jesus had either real brothers or step-brothers. At any rate, he had close relatives besides his parents. That is sufficient to know for the present purposes.<sup>176</sup>

These relatives play a rather timid role as informants in the gospel narratives. As is well-known, Jesus’ family shows a consistent reserve towards the words and deeds of their peculiar relative – regardless of whether we should speak of an “extended” family or not. All the gospel nar-

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*tern Jesu*; McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus*, pp. 234–254 (a strongly modified version of Jerome’s theory). Blinzler also published a number of articles on the subject.

<sup>169</sup> Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to Galatians*, pp. 252–291.

<sup>170</sup> Oberlinner, *Historische Überlieferung*, p. 355. Oberlinner states this in a context reflecting also his extreme caution and reserve towards simplistic reconstructions of Jesus’ family ties.

<sup>171</sup> Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, I, pp. 322–324.

<sup>172</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, I, p. 332.

<sup>173</sup> Hartin’s blunt statement, in his otherwise intriguing dissertation, is characteristic of this attitude: “As a Roman Catholic, I understand these terms [‘brother of the Lord’ and ‘family of the Lord’] in their widest possible designation, as referring to the relations of the extended family” (*James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, p. 237 n. 2).

<sup>174</sup> Some critics would of course claim that this is a veiled defence of other confessional preferences. I can only affirm that the question carries no vital significance in my own theological and confessional conception.

<sup>175</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, pp. 19–32. Bauckham provides a helpful critique of the influential Hieronymian view.

<sup>176</sup> Since the New Testament speaks of them as “brothers”, I will use that term.

ratives agree that he did not receive much support from any of them during his active ministry. They were his close relatives, but not his close followers. The Johannine author, it is true, once pictures his mother and brothers as travelling together with him and his disciples (2:12), but later on, as his brothers urge him to act more openly, the author remarks that “not even his brothers believed in him” (7:5).<sup>177</sup> The synoptic gospel narratives, especially the Markan one, are even more reserved. The Markan author inserts the curious note that Jesus’ kinsmen went out to restrain him (3:21),<sup>178</sup> thus placing his family in close connection to the harsh accusation of the scribes in the verse that follows. He was out of his mind, they believed. Jesus, on his part, distanced himself from them. The three synoptics report, with some variations, his indifference towards his family (Mark 3:31–35 parr.). The Markan narrative is most radical. Those who do the will of God are his true family. It is significant that Jesus chooses the image of the family to bring out his message. Although the point of the saying goes beyond its specific setting, the presence of Jesus’ mother and brothers (and sisters) makes it into an implicit critique of his physical relatives. The Markan Jesus labels further critique against his family when he, after that the inhabitants of Nazareth had identified him in relation to his relatives, speaks of how his own kin failed to honour a prophet (6:1–6a). They wished to protect him from what they believed was wrong and insane, according to Mark; he responded by rejecting them as his real family and accusing them of not honouring him.

This view must have been fostered by tradition. Details which accentuated the negative portrayal of Jesus’ relations with his family might have been added in the course of transmission and redaction.<sup>179</sup> But it is

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<sup>177</sup> I find no reason, as indicated above, to reject the normal sense of ἀδελφοί as denoting the brothers of Jesus, the sons of Joseph and Mary. They are mentioned together with Mary in a way that distinguishes them from the disciples, the reference to whom is certainly original. It is also highly questionable if John 19:25 indicates that they are to be seen as Jesus’ cousins. The normal Greek word for cousin, ἀνεψιός, was in use in New Testament times (Col 4:10); but it is not employed by John. Matt 1:18, 25 and Luke 2:7 might be taken to imply that Joseph and Mary had children after the birth of Jesus, but not necessarily so (cf. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, p. 25). It is uncertain, however, if these physical brothers are included in John 20:17. The author might here use the same traditional language as the one reflected in Matt 28:10.

<sup>178</sup> The expression οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ does not refer to those who were with Jesus in the house, who heard the crowd and went out to calm it. For arguments against this view, see Lambrecht, “The Relatives of Jesus”, pp. 244–245 n. 6; Oberlinner, *Historische Überlieferung*, pp. 165–166; Best, “Mark III. 20, 21, 31–35”, pp. 311–312.

<sup>179</sup> So Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, pp. 67–96.

difficult to envision a devoted follower of Jesus like the Markan author inventing the idea of the problematic relationship between Jesus and his family at a later time, when the relatives were of a different, more positive attitude. Someone could possibly have heard/read Mark 3:35 as a polemic against the dominating position of Jesus' relatives in the early church.<sup>180</sup> Yet, the evidence that the tradition was deliberately shaped and developed to counter such tendencies is extremely weak.<sup>181</sup> Both the Matthean and the Lukan author, two early interpreters of Mark, understood it differently. They, it seems, felt somewhat uncomfortable with the harsh features of the Markan narrative and for that reason left out Mark 3:21 entirely and omitted Jesus' reference to the negative attitude of his own kin in their account of his teaching in Nazareth (Matt 13:57/Luke 4:24);<sup>182</sup> Luke also diminished the opposition between Jesus and his family reflected in Mark 3:31–35 (Luke 8:19–21).<sup>183</sup> There is even less to suggest that the Markan view actually originated for that polemical purpose. Quite evidently, Jesus' own mother and brothers (and sisters) were not among his closest followers and, we may thus assume, did not entertain any particular interest before Easter to observe him and inform others of his words and deeds.

### c. James, the Brother of Jesus

This situation was soon to change. The post-Easter situation reveals a different attitude. Now Mary and Jesus' brothers appear as members of the early community in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14). Paul also knows of the bro-

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<sup>180</sup> For a possible polemic against James, cf. Pratscher, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus*, p. 17. To be noted, however, is that James is not mentioned by name in Mark 3:31–35 (parr.). Later texts assert indeed that other relatives of Jesus held places of leadership in the Jerusalem church, but to speak of “a polemic against a kind of caliphate” (Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, p. 87) in Mark 3:35 clearly goes beyond what evidence can prove, whatever we might think of this old (Harnack) notion at large (cf. the negative assessment by Campenhausen, “Die Nachfolge des Jacobus”, pp. 133–144, and the response by Stauffer, “Zum Kalifat des Jacobus”, pp. 193–214). For a balanced account of the evidence, see Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, pp. 125–130.

<sup>181</sup> Pesch lists as arguments that ἀδελφός is, in distinction to previous references, mentioned first in 3:35b, that ἀδελφοί is used in an absolute sense in 3:33b and that the sisters are introduced only in 3:32 (*Das Markusevangelium*, I, p. 224). Pratscher realizes, at least, that these arguments are not mandatory (*Der Herrenbruder Jakobus*, p. 17). For critique, see Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, pp. 82–85.

<sup>182</sup> The Matthean author still maintains a distance between Jesus and his relatives, because he does not omit ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

<sup>183</sup> See further Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, pp. 78–79, 178–191.

thers. He speaks of them as travelling preachers in line with the apostles and Cephas (1 Cor 9:5).

James, as we all know, soon became the leader of the Jerusalem church.<sup>184</sup> Ananus' choice of him as an object of accusation before the Sanhedrin (Jos., *Ant.* 20:199–203) certainly had to do with his important position in the early church. His death around 62 brought, accordingly, a devastating blow to the Jerusalem community, from which it would never recover. Later texts elaborated much on the position of James,<sup>185</sup> putting also other relatives in places of leadership.<sup>186</sup> Eusebius quotes Hegesippus (c. 170 CE), who asserts not only that Symeon, a cousin of Jesus, acted as bishop after James (*Hist. Eccl.* IV 22:4), but even that grandsons of the Lord's brother Jude became leaders of the churches during the reign of Domitian (*Hist. Eccl.* III 20:1–6).<sup>187</sup> At some point, we must thus assume, the relatives had realized the extraordinary importance of Jesus' words and deeds; they had changed their minds concerning their unusual relative.

One may speculate as to the factors involved in this change. The texts are silent. The reason is never stated any clearer than in Paul's statement that the risen Christ had appeared to James (1 Cor 15:7).<sup>188</sup> Paul, it is true, is here not so much concerned about James as the brother of Jesus as with his prominent position together with Peter during early post-Easter times. Nevertheless, by means of a sophisticated stylistic parallelism between 15:5 and 15:7 (ὄφθη Κηφᾶ εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα – ὄφθη Ἰακώβῳ εἶτα τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν), Peter is portrayed in relation to the Twel-

<sup>184</sup> Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12. The reason why Paul refers to him in 1 Cor 15:7 might indeed also be due to his leading position in Jerusalem.

<sup>185</sup> See Hengel, "Jakobus der Herrenbruder", pp. 71–104; Pratscher, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus*, pp. 102–228.

<sup>186</sup> For discussion concerning Jesus' brothers in later tradition, cf. Zahn, "Brüder und Vettern Jesu", pp. 306–325; Blinzler, *Die Brüder und Schwestern Jesu*, pp. 130–144.

<sup>187</sup> A comprehensive treatment of Eusebius' treatment of James is provided by Painter, *Just James*, pp. 105–158.

<sup>188</sup> The notion expressed in *Gos. Heb.* frg. 7, that James was among the disciples and the first to see the risen One, is an interesting attempt to legitimize him; but it is strongly legendary in character. Bernheim's attempt to employ this text (and *Gos. Thom.* 12) as evidence of James being a disciple of Jesus (*James*, pp. 97–100) rests almost entirely on the work of, as he puts it, "prestigious exegetes like Helmut Koester and John Dominic Crossan" (*ibid.*, p. 98). Eisenman's notion, that James was actually the first to see Jesus (*James*, I, pp. 689–724), is, like much of the rest of his book, based on a strained and capricious use of sources, to the extent that any scholarly discussion with him becomes impossible. Cf. the review by Painter, *Just James*, pp. 277–288.



ve and James is seen in relation to all the apostles.<sup>189</sup> The appearance to James was, like the one to Peter, quite early,<sup>190</sup> taking place before Paul himself experienced the christophany at the Damascus road.<sup>191</sup> But there was an essential difference between Peter and James, not mentioned by Paul. Peter had been a follower of Jesus. For Peter the experience of the risen Christ must eventually have meant the renewal – and the correction – of the messianic dreams that Jesus once aroused in him. For James, in all likelihood, as for Paul himself, it led to a more radical change. No matter his close physical relationship to Jesus, it was at this point that he was converted and called to a ministry.<sup>192</sup> We have reason, therefore, to suppose that at least one of Jesus' family members quite early became convinced that their peculiar relative actually was risen from the dead; and he was, accordingly, compelled to actively re-consider the previous, sceptical attitude towards the earthly ministry of his brother.

James, his mother and brothers (and sisters) truly had some fascinating oral histories worth-while telling during the early post-Easter time. They were the primary eyewitnesses of those parts of Jesus' life that took place before he appeared in public and called some devoted followers to be with him. Yet, for all we know, *the texts rarely portray them as informants, and the gospel tradition is comparatively reserved concerning matters that could have been remembered only by these relatives.* We shall have to discuss that peculiar feature later, as we consider the actual influence of the eyewitnesses on the gospel tradition. Here we must be content with a general conclusion: the family of Jesus had their own memories, and soon after Easter they joined the company of early Christians; they were there to be interrogated.

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<sup>189</sup> Paul probably regarded James as an apostle. Cf. Gal 1:19 (on ἔτερον, see Howard, "Was James an Apostle?", pp. 63–64). He also elsewhere extends the reference of the term ἀπόστολος beyond himself and the Twelve (Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 4:9(?); Phil 2:25; 1 Thess 2:7). See Byrskog, "Co-Senders, Co-Authors and Paul's Use of the First Person Plural", pp. 238 n. 39, 242 n. 61.

<sup>190</sup> Pratscher argues the old (Harnack) thesis that 15:7 is "eine rivalisierende Formel" which was developed to legitimize James' position in relation to the one of Peter (*Der Herrenbruder Jakobus*, pp. 35–46). It assumes that 15:7 is pre-Pauline.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων in 1 Cor 15:8.

<sup>192</sup> Campenhausen rightly stressed the importance of the christophany to James *vis-à-vis* his physical relation to Jesus: "Jesus selbst war nach seiner Auferstehung dem Jakobus erschienen (I. Kor. 15,7), und diese Erscheinung muß für Jakobus nicht nur die Bekehrung, sondern auch so etwas wie eine 'Berufung' bedeutet haben" ("Die Nachfolge des Jakobus", pp. 136–137).

d. Mary, the Mother of Jesus

One person, Jesus' mother, is on occasion singled out as informant. Luke indicates twice how she "kept treasuring" (συνετήρει/διετήρει) all the things concerning Jesus' birth (2:19, 51b). She stored it in her memory. The expression "pondering in her heart" (συμβάλλουσα ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς) in 2:19 is circumstantial to the main verb, indicating that Mary's constant attempt to remember has to do with her sustained effort to penetrate the right meaning.<sup>193</sup> In 2:51b the statement about Mary is preceded by a reference to her and Joseph's lack of understanding and there is, accordingly, no indication that she tried to penetrate the right meaning.<sup>194</sup> Here the heart is the place where she simply stores the memories.

Scholars of older date often assumed that the Lukan author in this way intentionally pointed to Mary as the source and informant of the episodes.<sup>195</sup> Other scholars, of more recent date, deny such a purpose.<sup>196</sup> And to be sure, the author truly had his own interest in Mary. She was to him a paradigm for all believers, as Heikki Räisänen has shown.<sup>197</sup> Luke 1:66 shows, moreover, that the act of remembering in one's heart was meant to point beyond itself, to the new-born child.<sup>198</sup> Yet, Räisänen also recognizes, in regard to the two texts of interest here, how the author portrayed Mary as the one who was able to preserve and tell others of the

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<sup>193</sup> So correctly, in my view, Räisänen, *Die Mutter Jesu*, pp. 121–122 n. 6; Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, p. 110.

<sup>194</sup> So also Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, p. 162 n. 54. Differently Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, pp. 209–210. Coleridge claims that Mary in 2:51b keeps pondering the meaning of the events witnessed; but the text does not say so at this point.

<sup>195</sup> Räisänen lists several scholars: Eduard Meyer, Karl Bornhäuser, Theodor Zahn, René Laurentin and Josef Schmid (*Die Mutter Jesu*, p. 124 n. 2). To these could be added Easton, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, pp. 25, 33.

<sup>196</sup> So, e.g., Meyer, "But Mary Kept All These Things ...", pp. 47–49; Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, I, p. 117 n. 158; Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 430; Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, p. 149 n. 2. But there are exceptions. Cf. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 114, 130; Riesner, "Luke's Special Tradition", p. 48.

<sup>197</sup> Räisänen states his conclusion concisely: "Das Marienbild des Lukas kann also mit einem Wort als *paradigmatisch* bezeichnet werden. Maria ist Vorbild und Typus der Gläubigen" (*Die Mutter Jesu*, p. 154). For a development of the paradigmatic function of Luke-Acts, see Syreeni, "The Gospel in Paradigms", pp. 36–57.

<sup>198</sup> Schürmann comments on 2:19: "Die Sinnrichtung der Notizen ist ohne Zweifel christologisch, aber es ist eben charakteristisch für die luk Erzählung, daß dieser Christushinweis 'marianisch' formuliert ist" (*Das Lukasevangelium*, I, p. 117). Similarly Meyer, "But Mary Kept All These Things ...", pp. 45–47, 49.

episodes, as his ultimate source.<sup>199</sup> This is not implausible, because the common element of 2:19 and 2:51b is not the act of penetrating the right meaning, which would be natural if Mary's function was solely paradigmatic or christological, but the act of remembering itself. Perhaps partly for that reason, the author also diminished the problematic relationship between Jesus and his family depicted, as we have seen, in the Markan story. Mary was his informant concerning certain episodes of Jesus' birth, so the hearers/readers are at this point to believe.

We should probably reckon with some kind of basis for this view in the available tradition. It is difficult, to be sure, to decide with certainty whether the reference in 2:19 or the one in 2:51b was part of the tradition. Most scholars, it seems, tend to think that the Lukan author added 2:19 on the basis of 2:51b, which was formed originally on the basis of Genesis 37:11 (cf. Dan 7:28).<sup>200</sup> Either way,<sup>201</sup> the notion of Mary's aim to remember what happened at the birth of Jesus was evidently part of the tradition available to the author.

*It is entirely plausible that the Jerusalem community entertained a certain interest in Mary's intimate memories concerning the birth of the risen Lord.* Acts 1:14 refers to her as constantly devoting herself to prayer together with the apostles, some other women and Jesus' brothers. The mention of her at this point is somewhat surprising, because Mary and Jesus' brothers were not among those who followed Jesus to Jerusalem according to Luke. It is therefore hardly to be seen as a purely redactional addition.<sup>202</sup> Evidently there existed a tradition concerning her presence among the first believers in Jerusalem. It is noteworthy, moreover, that immediately afterwards, the author of Acts speaks, with the voice of Peter, of the fundamental qualification for being included in the group of apostles: to have accompanied Jesus during his whole itinerant ministry (1:21–22). Jürgen Roloff exaggerates, to be sure, when he claims that Mary in fact fulfilled this criterion,<sup>203</sup> failing to notice that she did not actually travel with Jesus according to Luke. Yet she was, it seems, closely related to the men who did fulfil that criterion. She was an eyewitness among eyewitnesses, all with their stories to tell.

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<sup>199</sup> Räsänen, *Die Mutter Jesu*, p. 124.

<sup>200</sup> So, e.g., Dibelius, *Botschaft und Geschichte*, I, p. 54 n. 90; Räsänen, *Die Mutter Jesu*, p. 119.

<sup>201</sup> Schürmann reverses the order, arguing that the Lukan author added merely some redactional features in 2:19 and created himself 2:51b (*Das Lukasevangelium*, I, pp. 117–118, 138). Cf. also Meyer, ““But Mary Kept All These Things ...”, pp. 36, 49.

<sup>202</sup> So Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, I, p. 80 n. 13.

<sup>203</sup> Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 28.

## 7. Conclusion: Eyewitnesses, Informants and Stories

Eyewitnesses who could also serve as informants during the emergence and development of the gospel tradition truly existed in early Christianity. There were, to be sure, eyewitnesses who never became informants, but by the same token, *we find the local people, Peter as the most prominent representative of the group of disciples, the women with Mary Magdalene, and the family of Jesus with James and Mary, Jesus' mother – all presented partly as eyewitnesses and informants.* We are still far from knowing anything more precise concerning their function during the formation and development of the gospel tradition. We have merely pointed to their existence “out there”, in history; we have noted that they did observe certain things concerning Jesus and that they did communicate their experiences to others.

Whatever one thinks of the role of these people, it is evident that the gospel tradition never silenced them entirely, not even the women. On the contrary, in various sources we encounter them as figures of the past; and *the gospel narratives use these figures as characters of a story, implying that what is told was, for the ancient authors, history rooted in the life experiences of these persons – story as history.* The stories, embodied in gospel narratives, may still be fictions, or they may not, or they may be fiction to a certain extent, some kind of “realistic narratives” – real people can of course be fictionalized to various degrees. But one must admit that the synchronous structures of these fictions are regularly intersected with a profound diachronic dimension, making a sharp and one-eyed distinction between story and history anachronistic and, at the end, untenable. It is time to explore that interplay between story and history more fully.

## Chapter 3

# Between the Past and the Present: Autopsy as Orality

In the previous chapter we travelled back to the history before the story, trying to ascertain that the gospel tradition has roots within the experiences of living people and contains indication of a visual means to relate to the past. We did that quite simply by identifying the persons who are likely, according to the texts, to have served as eyewitnesses and informants. It is time to problemize further, to diversify and become more nuanced. We shall now start our journey back to the present, taking into account the various factors involved.

As soon as an observation is verbalized, it leaves in part the domain of past history and relates to the present time of the eyewitness. It still has a retrospective dimension making it into oral history, but it now uses the language and the thoughts of the present currencies of orality. Granted there were people “out there” who did see certain things which they communicated, *one needs to distinguish between different ways of practising autopsy depending on how the ancient person related to what happened.* We spoke in the previous chapter of direct and indirect autopsy. The former is the kind of autopsy where one can see for oneself, one is one’s own informant, producing one’s own oral history; in the latter case, the historian has to rely on the oral accounts of other eyewitnesses, that is, on oral history as oral testimony or oral tradition. Direct autopsy involves a close connection between the event and its verbalization as oral history; indirect autopsy means that intermediary procedures enter into the process, adding other forms of receiving information to the phenomenon of autopsy.

Is it possible to concretize these different ways of verbalizing the observation? We shall in this chapter leave the eyewitnesses for a moment, discussing instead the media of research and communication that were available to the ancient people, and how they interacted. What is the rela-

tionship between autopsy and orality? How are we to estimate the literary – not only oral – verbalization of past events? What is the relationship between an oral source and a written source? Questions such as these become important.

## A. Autopsy and Orality: Distinctions and Overlapping

### 1. The Primacy of Sight

“Eyes are surer witnesses than ears”, Heraclitus said; and the ancient Greeks and Romans agreed, as we saw. Numerous other texts could be mentioned. On most of the occasions where the five senses are listed, or where sight and hearing are mentioned together, the eyes are mentioned first.<sup>1</sup> One realized the inferiority of hearing to sight, relating therefore to the outside world and the past primarily by visual means.

Some people were explicit about the primacy of sight. The medical schools, for instance, which insisted on the importance of personal observation, were quite aware of the distinction between seeing and hearing and gave it a very practical reason. The author of *De Arte* tries to prove the art of medicine and reflects on the need to verify the insufficient indications of internal sickness: “For more toil and no less time is required for it to be known as if it had been seen with the eyes” (*De Arte* 11:7–10).<sup>2</sup> The basic principle for healing the body is quite simple: “That [physical being] which admits of being seen will also admit of being healed” (*De Arte* 11:31–32).<sup>3</sup> Hearsay, no matter how reliable, is always insufficient, because it is indirect; autopsy is direct.

Among the historians, Polybius expresses most clearly a certain frustration concerning the oral medium. We have noticed his reliance on Heraclitus in XII 27:1–3.<sup>4</sup> In that connection he criticizes Timaeus for entering into his inquiries by the more pleasant but less efficient of the two roads of research. “For he entirely avoided those [roads that give knowledge] through sight and preferred those [that give knowledge] through

<sup>1</sup> For text references, cf. Blum, *Die antike Mnemotechnik*, p. 166 n. 121.

<sup>2</sup> μετὰ πλείονος μὲν γὰρ πόνου καὶ οὐ μετ’ ἐλάσσονος χρόνου ἢ εἰ τοῖσιν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἑώρατο γινώσκειται.

<sup>3</sup> ἢ δ’ ἦν μὲν διεξαρκέσει ἐς τὸ ὀφθῆναι, ἐξαρκέσει καὶ ἐς τὸ ὑγιανθῆναι.

<sup>4</sup> Chap. 2, A:1.

hearing”,<sup>5</sup> he remarks polemically (XII 27:3). He is here, as we have seen, thinking of the audible reading of a text. A written source thus becomes a deplorable oral source. On another occasion, he also reveals a certain uneasiness concerning oral transmission in general, voicing his reluctance to write about things that have been handed down by word of mouth; he wishes not to write ἀκοὴν ἐξ ἀκοῆς (IV 2:3). An oral hearsay going back to the distant past may have been severely blurred, he argues. One is reminded of how Thucydides has the Athenians echo Heraclitus’ saying in their reluctance to speak about matters quite remote (I 73:2).<sup>6</sup> Essentially direct autopsy was much better than oral sources acquired by hearing.

## 2. The Need for Oral Sources

It was, of course, inconceivable for any historian to be everywhere present.<sup>1</sup> Even Polybius recognized, after all, that “it is impossible for one man to be in several places at one time, and likewise it is not possible for one man to have been an eyewitness of every place in the world and of all the peculiarities of the places” (XII 4<sup>c</sup>:4).<sup>7</sup> Sometimes one cannot see but the mental picture which has been formed by listening attentively to the eyewitness reports of others. Oral sources are here necessary as a supplement to direct autopsy.

### a. Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon

Herodotus is the prime example, not having been involved himself in the war which he describes. He relied, among other things, on what he had heard, on hearsay.<sup>8</sup> Scholars agree that he did so to a very a large extent.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> τῶν μὲν γὰρ διὰ τῆς ὁράσεως εἰς τέλος ἀπέστη, τῶν δὲ διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς ἀντεποιήσατο.

<sup>6</sup> See above Chap. 2, A:1.

<sup>7</sup> παρῆναι δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν ἐν πλείοσι τόποις κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρὸν ἀδύνατον, ὁμοίως γε μὴν οὐδ’ αὐτόπτην γενέσθαι πάντων τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην τόπων καὶ τῶν ἐν τοῖς τόποις ἰδιωμάτων τὸν ἕνα δυνατὸν.

<sup>8</sup> For a survey of Herodotus’ oral and written sources, see Verdin, *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus*, pp. 2–35.

<sup>9</sup> In the first sentence of his article concerning Herodotus as an oral historian, Murray states: “It is generally agreed that Herodotus gathered most of his information from oral traditions” (“Herodotus”, p. 93). I would use the expression “oral sources” instead of “oral traditions” here. Cf. also, e.g., Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, pp. 6–7; Raaflaub, “Athenische Geschichte und mündliche Überlieferung”, p. 219.

It has been estimated that approximately eighty per cent of his information came from some kind of orally formulated material.<sup>10</sup> Herodotus' very technique of investigation was therefore primarily oral/aural.

He often indicates the aural reception of information. Occasionally he refers explicitly to hearsay by using the term ἀκοή.<sup>11</sup> More frequently, like in 2:99,<sup>12</sup> he uses the verb ἀκούειν.<sup>13</sup> Very often he employs forms of λέγειν, or φάσθαι, to denote how the information was conveyed to him.<sup>14</sup> The use of such terms can, of course, relate also to written sources.<sup>15</sup> The term λέγειν, for instance, denotes occasionally the testimony of inscriptions (e.g., 2:106, 141). But often the subject of the verb of saying is stated as a group of people, "the learned men of the Persians say" (1:1), "this say the Persians, but not the Greeks" (1:2), "this say the Persians" (1:5), "this say the Persians and the Phoenicians" (1:5), etc. Such statements are very common in the *Histories*. Similarly, the source of hearing can also be stated as a group of people, for instance, "having heard from the Delphians" (1:20), "I heard this from the priests" (2:13), "I heard this from men of Cyrene" (2:32), or, though more rarely, as a single person, for instance, "I heard from Tymnes" (4:76) or "I heard from Thersandrus of Orchomenus" (9:16). The evidence could be multiplied. The impression one receives is clearly that Herodotus had collected information by listening carefully to various kinds of orally circulating reports about past events. It is not unlikely that he occasionally asked specifically for information, interviewing certain important informants.<sup>16</sup> His very means of making ἱστορίη was oral/aural.

We could continue down the history to illustrate the same need for oral sources. It might suffice only to mention Thucydides and Xenophon. It is likely that Thucydides' use of oral sources was quite extensive.<sup>17</sup> We have seen, and will see,<sup>18</sup> that on the few occasions when he names his sources, he seems to be referring to oral informants. Here we shall merely bring

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<sup>10</sup> Waters, *Herodotus*, p. 76; Balcer, *Herodotus & Bisitun*, p. 26; Aune, "Prolegomena to the Study of Oral Tradition", p. 77.

<sup>11</sup> 1:171; 2:29, 123, 148; 4:16.

<sup>12</sup> See the quotation above Chap. 2, A:2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also 1:20; 2:13, 32, 43 52, 112; 3:117; 4:14, 76, 81; 6:117; 7:35, 55; 9:16.

<sup>14</sup> 1:1, 2, 3, 5, etc.

<sup>15</sup> How/Wells, *Commentary*, I, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Gould, *Herodotus*, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> So, e.g., Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography*, p. 214; Hornblower, *Thucydides*, pp. 77–81; Raaflaub, "Athenische Geschichte und mündliche Überlieferung", pp. 204–205; Momigliano, *The Classical Foundation of Modern Historiography*, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> See above Chap. 2, B:6a, and below Chap. 4, A:2.



attention to H. D. Westlake's investigation of Thucydides' use of λέγεται to introduce various kinds of information about which he is aware.<sup>19</sup> Some instances discussed by Westlake reflect oral sources. Where Thucydides uses the past tense, such as ἐλέχθη or ὡς ἐλέγετο, his sources were, according to Westlake, "undoubtedly oral".<sup>20</sup> The relevant texts are II 48:2; II 57:1; V 74:3 (LCL V 74:2); VII 86:4; and VIII 50:3. Where Thucydides uses a "legetai-phrase" in the present tense, the information was presumably in circulation at the time when he was collecting material. The sources of passages such as I 118:3; II 48:1; II 98:3; III 94:5; III 113:6; and VIII 87:2 were, according to Westlake, "probably oral".<sup>21</sup>

As for Xenophon, who indeed writes about events in which he was himself involved,<sup>22</sup> Albert Banderet argued long ago, drawing conclusions about the provenience of the sources on the basis of the content of certain passages, that the last three books of the *Historia Graeca* – or *Hellenica* – are based on information that he received orally from a number of eyewitnesses.<sup>23</sup> Xenophon's role is merely that of a compiler and recorder of information,<sup>24</sup> the finished work being mainly a conglomerate of the most significant pieces of orally received stories from eyewitnesses. Banderet's method and conclusions have been rightly criticized.<sup>25</sup> Yet, although the *Historia Graeca* gives little or no evidence of a person searching for someone to interview,<sup>26</sup> hardly testifying to the systematic research of a historian,<sup>27</sup> Banderet showed that Xenophon, in composing a work of history,<sup>28</sup> did after all consult oral sources where such were

<sup>19</sup> Westlake, "Λέγεται in Thucydides", pp. 345–362.

<sup>20</sup> Westlake, "Λέγεται in Thucydides", p. 347.

<sup>21</sup> Westlake, "Λέγεται in Thucydides", p. 349.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. below Chap. 4, A:3.

<sup>23</sup> Banderet, *Untersuchungen zu Xenophons Hellenika*.

<sup>24</sup> Banderet states: "Xenophon stand in der großen Zeit zu Passivität verdammt, da schrieb er nieder, was er sah und von andern hörte" (*Untersuchungen zu Xenophons Hellenika*, p. 8).

<sup>25</sup> Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, pp. 143–144.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Breitenbach, *Historiographische Anschauungsformen Xenophons*, pp. 143–144.

<sup>27</sup> Delebecque states: "Là où il n'était pas renseigné par des souvenirs personnels il a souvent procédé à des recherches" (*Essai sur la vie de Xénophon*, p. 262). But the texts referred to by Delebecque (*Hist. Graec.* III 5:25; IV 2:9–23; III 2:21–23) suggest merely that Xenophon knew of matters in which he had not been directly involved.

<sup>28</sup> Grayson denies that Xenophon's work was written as history or with historical intent and regards it as a didactic composition ("Did Xenophon Intend to Write History?", pp. 31–43). For critique of Grayson on this point, see Tuplin, *The Failings of the Empire*, pp. 15–16. Nickel also, at first, seems to question that it should be counted among

available. Except for *Historia Graeca* I 1:1–II 3:10, which might be a separate unit,<sup>29</sup> Xenophon, like Herodotus, often refers to a source with the use of various forms of λέγειν and φάσκειν. Most frequent is (ὡς) ἔφασκεν.<sup>30</sup> It is usually impersonal,<sup>31</sup> as one also observes in the use of other forms of the verbs.<sup>32</sup> Sometimes one finds expressions such as οἱ ... λέγουσιν (V 4:7), τινες λέγουσιν (VI 4:7) and λέγεται ... ὑπὸ μὲν τινῶν (VI 4:37), etc. On one occasion he even implies the importance of an eyewitness. Iphicrates suspected that he was told of Mnasippus' death in order to be deceived, "because he had not heard of the things concerning Mnasippus from any eyewitness" (VI 2:31).<sup>33</sup> More recent scholars thus speak of Xenophon's informants. J. K. Anderson finds it likely that Xenophon relied on Spartan informants;<sup>34</sup> Rainer Nickel believes that Xenophon combined his own notes and written sources from the atthidographers with oral stories from eyewitnesses;<sup>35</sup> Steven W. Hirsch postulates barbarian oral tradition as one category of source material for Xenophon's account of Cyrus and Persia;<sup>36</sup> and Vivienne Gray speaks of Xenophon's patterning and consequent distortion of his informants,<sup>37</sup> etc. The

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the historical writings (*Xenophon*, p. 52), but he later asserts that it belongs to "die historische Gattung" (*ibid.*, p. 117). Cf. also Breitenbach, "Xenophon", col. 1699, who argues against Eduard Schwartz' attempt to diminish Xenophon as a historian.

<sup>29</sup> While scholars in line with Baden, *Untersuchungen zur Einheit der Hellenika Xenophons*, believe the work to have been composed as a unity, others claim that it consists of two (I–II [II 3:10] and III [II 3:11]–VII or I–V 1 and V 2–VII) or three (I–II 3:10 and II 3:11–V I and V 2–VII) parts composed by Xenophon during different periods. Gray states that "a consensus is now emerging that the arguments against the unity of the work are unconvincing" (*The Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, p. ix), while Tuplin considers it "firmly established" that it "consists of two linguistically distinct sections" (*The Failings of the Empire*, p. 11).

<sup>30</sup> II 3:56; III 5:21; V 2:2; V 4:57; VI 2:6; VI 4:7, 12, 29, 30; VI 5:26, 29, 49; VII 1:30, 32; VII 4:40.

<sup>31</sup> Xenophon also uses it in other writings. Cf. *An.* I 9:23; II 6:11; *Cyr.* I 3:4; I 4:25 (λέγεται). For *Cyropaedia*, see Due, *Cyropaedia*, p. 31. Here Due also discusses other ways in which Xenophon refers loosely to his sources in order to assimilate the *Cyropaedia* to historical writings.

<sup>32</sup> λέγουσιν (VII 1:31); λέγεται (II 3:56; III 1:14; IV 2:22; IV 4:10; VI 4:30, 37); ἔλεγον (VI 4:8); ἐλέγοντο (IV 2:17; V 2:2); ἐλέγετο (III 3:8; V 3:2) ὡς (μὲν) ἐλέγετο (IV 8:36; VI 2:16); ὡσπερ ἐλέγετο (III 2:10); φασίιν (VII 1:31).

<sup>33</sup> γὰρ τὰ περὶ τοῦ Μνασίππου αὐτόπτου μὲν οὐδενὸς ἤκηκται.

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, *Xenophon*, pp. 65–72.

<sup>35</sup> Nickel, *Xenophon*, p. 87.

<sup>36</sup> Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians*, p. 68. Cf. also Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia*, p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Gray, *The Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, p. 73.

evidence adduced in these cases is not direct and explicit, but cumulatively it strengthens the probability that Xenophon received oral information.

### *b. Isocrates and Strabo*

The conviction that oral sources are necessary after all was occasionally felt very keenly and taken somewhat to its extreme. There are some scattered, strained attempts to defend the oral medium as being of even more importance than sight. Isocrates, the influential sophist and teacher in fourth century Athens, defended himself for speaking with exactness concerning events at which he was not present. He goes as far as to claim that direct autopsy is of less value than oral reports (*Panathen.* 150):

“I could show that all men have more knowledge gained through hearing than through seeing, and that they know of greater and nobler deeds which they have heard from others than those which they have happened to witness themselves”.<sup>38</sup>

Towards the turn of the eras, Strabo, the historian and geographer, insists that most geographers receive information by hearsay and form their ideas of shape, size and other characteristics very much as the mind forms its ideas from sense impression. This way of proceeding, Strabo concludes, is quite appropriate, because hearing is, after all,<sup>39</sup> more important than sight. “And he who values to know only the ones who have seen abolishes the criterion of hearing, which is much more important than sight for the purpose of gaining knowledge” (II 5:11).<sup>40</sup>

### *c. Oral Sources as Supplementary to Autopsy*

Isocrates and Strabo imply, each in his own way, the need to combine direct autopsy with the use of oral sources. Their insistence on the priority of hearing to sight is quite exceptional within Greek antiquity, and they both had their own – in a way opposite – reasons. Isocrates was a keen and influential advocate of the rhetorical branch of history writing, where autopsy found little room; and Strabo lived during a time when the insistence on rhetoric had resulted in what some people felt to be a serious misuse of references to autopsy among the historians.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> δυνηθείην ἂν ἐπιδειξάι πάντας ἀνθρώπους πλείους ἐπιστήμας ἔχοντας διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς ἢ τῆς ὄψεως, καὶ μείζους πράξεις καὶ καλλίους εἰδότας ἢ παρ' ἐτέρων ἀκηκόασιν ἢ κείνας αἷς αὐτοῖ παραγεγεννημένοι τυγχάνουσιν.

<sup>39</sup> Strabo also realized the importance of direct autopsy. Cf. below Chap. 5, A:3b.

<sup>40</sup> ὁ δ' ἀξιῶν μόνους εἰδέναι τοὺς ἰδόντας ἀναιρεῖ τὸ τῆς ἀκοῆς κριτήριον, ἥτις πρὸς ἐπιστήμην ὀφθαλμοῦ πολὺ κρείττων ἐστί.

<sup>41</sup> See below Chap. 5, A:2–3.

Viewing them in the context of other pieces of information, with the persistent ideal of the primacy of sight, one detects in their strong statements a need not to replace but to supplement the information gained through the eyes with what could be heard through the ears. We discover that basic attitude clearly in Herodotus' writing. Despite his extensive use of oral sources, he tried, whenever possible, to confirm and supplement what he had heard with what he had himself seen (2:99, 147). Also for Thucydides direct autopsy was of basic importance. Sight was essentially the primary means of acquiring information, but the hearing of an oral testimony was not to be rejected. The direct and the indirect means of practising autopsy were supplementary.

The basic reason for that supplementary relationship is not only that it was impossible to be everywhere present, as Polybius admitted, but also the double character of the material. It could consist of words and more comprehensive events or deeds. Thucydides is in I 22:1–2 quite aware that all historical material is not of the same kind. There are words that were spoken, τὰ λεχθέντα, and there are deeds that occurred, τὰ ἔργα, and he makes a distinction between the two. The former can only be registered through the ear, either by Thucydides himself or by others; the latter can be registered through sight, either by Thucydides himself or by others. On both occasions, the verbalization of the aural or visual experience takes place at some point, by Thucydides himself or by others.<sup>42</sup> But when the objects of that experience are spoken words, the verbalization has of course already taken place as an oral event, which the observer at some point receives aurally. Orality is in this case inherent in the historical happening itself.

Autopsy therefore needs the ear to register what is being said. The two are closely intertwined as information technologies. Hearing is a vital means of gaining information not only when autopsy is impossible, but also when the historical material carries oral characteristics requiring the ear as an immediate aid to the eye.

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<sup>42</sup> It is unlikely that Thucydides is here thinking of literary sources at his disposal. I 22:1 uses the verb ἀπαγγέλλειν; and I 22:2 places the sources which Thucydides investigates against the information from persons who happened by chance to be present (ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος), implying that the material "from others" probably came from more reliable oral informants.

## 3. Hearing and Seeing in Jewish material

These two supplementary ways of receiving information are not to be played out against each other as one confronts material from a primarily Jewish environment. Rudolf Bultmann made comments in this direction already long ago as he discussed the ancient symbol of light.<sup>43</sup> More extensively, but in a completely different way, Thorleif Boman compares what he calls “das hebräische Denken” with the nature of Greek thought and concludes that all the differences boil down to the fact that for the former the sense of hearing was the most important, while for the latter it was sight.<sup>44</sup>

One might question this clear-cut distinction.<sup>45</sup> Hearing was indeed essential to the ancient Jewish way of approaching the past and gaining information. Not only was it a vital part of the teacher’s call for the attention of his students,<sup>46</sup> but the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4–5, with its call to hear, was embellished several times – most notably in the Berakhot of the Mishnah – and made a profound impression in various circles of ancient Jewish piety.<sup>47</sup> To hear was a religious attitude of faith and obedience. The people should hear the word of Yahweh. However, that insistence on hearing did not necessarily imply a specifically Hebrew mode of thinking. Rather, it had very much to do with the character of the material. The rabbis possessed and developed a tradition of words, of sayings attributed to various prominent teachers; there was a process of transmission, they believed, of halakhah given to Moses from Sinai.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> “Und es gibt Völker, bei denen das Gehör den Vorrang hat, und wo deshalb eine ganz andere Lichtsymbolik erwächst; das den Menschen erleuchtende Licht ist das Wort, das weisend und fordernd ihm begegnet und ihn so seinen Weg finden lehrt” (Bultmann, “Zur Geschichte der Lichtsymbolik im Altertum”, p. 16). A foot-note refers to Ps 119:105.

<sup>44</sup> Boman, *Das hebräische Denken*. He states his conclusion concisely: “Aus obigen Ausführungen können wir schließen, daß der für das Erleben der Wirklichkeit wichtigste Sinn für die Hebräer das Gehör (und die verschiedenen Arten von Empfindungen), für die Griechen das Gesicht werden mußte” (*ibid.*, p. 181). Cf. also Boman, “Hebraic and Greek Thought-Forms”, pp. 1–22.

<sup>45</sup> For some critique of Boman, cf. Stigen, “On the Alleged Primacy of Sight”, pp. 15–20.

<sup>46</sup> Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, pp. 120, 376. In addition to the texts listed there, cf. CD 1:1; 2:2, 14; 4Q298 frgs. 1–2i, 3–4ii (*DJD* 20, pp. 20, 25).

<sup>47</sup> Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 67, 164, 300–302, 321–324, 326, 330, 361–364; Gerhardsson, *The Shema*.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. the expression למשה מסני in m. Peah 2:6; m. Eduy. 8:7; m. Yad. 4:3. There are numerous examples also in the Tosefta, the Talmudim and the Sifra. For dis-

Such were the matters of central importance, and sight was of course of little relevance for its reception.

Yet, the rabbis were not, as a matter of fact, all that averse to autopsy. Being painfully aware that the oral medium was a problematic means of accurate transmission, they “waged a conscious and energetic war against forgetfulness”.<sup>49</sup> And sight was a useful weapon in this war. While repetition was the primary technique to strengthen the memory, one also finds an emphasis on the inner visual act. A curious passage in y. Sheqalim 47a, for instance, advises the scholar to draw a mental picture of the person who authored a specific teaching. That person, so the scholar is to envision, stands besides him as he himself utters the teaching. It is easier to remember the oral torah, it is implied, when hearing is combined with a certain kind of inner seeing. There is thus no question of an either/or, of Hebrew versus Greek, as Bultmann and Boman, both in their own way, seem to suggest. Ideally the two should be combined, for the Jew as well as for the Greek.

To some extent, one may even claim that seeing was as important as hearing in order to learn torah. An ideal teacher should teach with both words and deeds, and the latter, by a 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 (שמיש) to the teacher. Those who did not practise that duty were like uneducated people, the עמ הארץ (b. Ber. 47b; b. Sot. 22a), because it was an integral part of learning torah. The teacher’s actions were torah, they were normative teaching, no matter how private, how idiosyncratic and exceptional they might have appeared.<sup>50</sup> The student did not learn merely by listening to his teacher’s words, but also by observing and witnessing his actions. He was to see as well as to hear.

#### 4. Autopsy and Orality in the Gospel Tradition

##### a. *The Form-Critical Division of the Gospel Tradition*

The early form-critics noticed, as is well-known, that the gospel narratives, and thus the gospel tradition, had a double character: there were the words of Jesus and there were the deeds and the narration. Rudolf Bult-

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cussion, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 174–175, with references to further literature.

<sup>49</sup> Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, p. 168.

<sup>50</sup> Kirschner, “Imitatio Rabbini”, pp. 70–79.

mann divided his entire analysis of the history of the synoptic tradition along these lines.<sup>51</sup>

The way was prepared by William Wrede's theory that the framework of the Markan story was the author's own creation in the interest of the so-called Messianic secret.<sup>52</sup> The author had imposed his own pattern on what were previously independently circulating units. Julius Wellhausen advocated a similar view, assuming that the primitive material was overlaid with editorial ambitions.<sup>53</sup> Karl Ludwig Schmidt examined the Markan framework more thoroughly and came to the conclusion that the gospel narrative is chronologically and geographically unreliable.<sup>54</sup> No biographical reconstruction of Jesus' life is possible on this theory, because the episodal framework of the sayings betrays no such information.

### *b. The Form-Critical Neglect of Orality as Aurality*

We are not yet at the point where we can discuss the various implications of that theory in regard to historicity. Peter, the women and other eye-witnesses had nothing to say which was of value to the gospel tradition, according to this view. What they had seen was of no importance. It was perhaps for this reason that the form-critics – especially Bultmann – paid more attention to the oral characteristics of the gospel tradition than to the informants themselves. Jesus' words were orally communicated, not "seen", and his deeds were also spoken of by word of mouth, not seen; or they were merely a direct reflection of the evangelists' redactional work.

This sensitivity to the oral features of the tradition was insufficient, lacking any serious attempt to connect them to aurality more specifically. An oral medium has to be heard by someone, one assumes, or it is not a medium of communication at all; a tradition is not an oral tradition, one assumes, if no one hears what is being transmitted. Things were told by word of mouth, Bultmann realized, but it was irrelevant by whom it was told or by whom it was heard, because the individuality of each informer and listener was entirely swallowed up by the collective identity and the

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<sup>51</sup> Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*.

<sup>52</sup> Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis*.

<sup>53</sup> Wellhausen employed this approach in his commentary on Mark. He does not discuss it as such, but certain statements are revealing. Thus he says, for instance, before commenting on Mark 1:16–20: "Mc gibt keine Geschichte Jesu, es fehlt die Chronologie und der pragmatische Faden, auch die Ortsangaben lassen viel zu wünschen übrig. Er sammelt nur lose Stücke, Erzählungen und Aussprüche, ordnet sie und bringt sie in drei Perioden unter" (*Das Evangelium Marci*, p. 9).

<sup>54</sup> Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*.

common hearing of the larger community. The challenge of oral history to take seriously the uniqueness as well as the representativeness of each narration is nowhere to be found in Bultmann's approach.

*c. The Form-Critical Neglect of Orality as Autopsy*

Even more problematic was the neglect of any serious consideration of how orality relates to autopsy in the gospel tradition. What is quite evident already here is that the sharp distinction between the words of Jesus and the narrative material is too simple; and that for several reasons. For all we know, the actions of Jesus were as important as his words in his total proclamation of the kingdom. The Q material, despite its character of a sayings collection, knows to report that when the messengers of John the Baptist are to ask Jesus about his identity, the Baptist responds by referring them back to what they see and hear (Matt 11:4/Luke 7:22);<sup>55</sup> and what follows is a rehearsal not of what Jesus had said, but of what he had done. The emphasis is here on seeing,<sup>56</sup> because when Jesus continues by speaking to the crowds about John the Baptist, he thrice asks them what they expected to see – not hear – in the wilderness.<sup>57</sup> Jesus and John, it seems, were part of an event, something that happened; and to convey the message of their identity required therefore visual as well as aural means.

The double character of that event comes to the fore also in another passage from the Q material. Jesus blesses the eyes of the disciples on account of what they see and compares that to what prophets and others longed to see and hear (Matt 13:16–17/Luke 10:23–24).<sup>58</sup> Only the disciples' eyes are mentioned in this ancient saying,<sup>59</sup> while the expectation of the people of previous generations is expressed as including both seeing and hearing. Seeing is here evidently a comprehensive idiom for experiencing a decisive eschatological moment which holds together words and deeds in one grand event. As it seems, sight has a basic primacy, as in ancient Greece, but it includes in itself the act of hearing.

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<sup>55</sup> The order of the two verbs differs. Matt 11:4 has ἀκούετε καὶ βλέπετε; Luke 7:22 has εἶδετε καὶ ἠκούσατε.

<sup>56</sup> The Matthean author perhaps placed hearing first because for him that aspect of acquiring Jesus' teaching was of special importance. He uses the verb ἀκούειν in reference to the words of Jesus at least 28 times. See Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 321–324, for further documentation.

<sup>57</sup> Matt 11:7/Luke 7:24; Matt 11:8/Luke 7:25; Matt 11:9/Luke 7:26.

<sup>58</sup> In Matt 13:16 Jesus blesses also the ears of the disciples on account of what they hear. This is probably a Matthean addition to the tradition.

<sup>59</sup> Not even Bultmann denied that this saying goes back to Jesus. See his *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, p. 135.



These are texts which betray a very early way to conceptualize the totality of Jesus' ministry. Individual aspects of that ministry required also, of course, both hearing and seeing. It takes no further proof to say that Jesus' words must have been appropriated by hearing and his mighty acts by seeing. Yet, we find no clear-cut distinction between the two. The Matthean author made the clearest division, to be sure, but as he collected the mighty deeds of Jesus in chapters 8–9, he not only included other kinds of material as well, but implied that just as the Sermon on the Mount consists of λόγοι (7:24, 26, 28), so are some of the miracles made effective through a decisive λόγος (8:8, 16). Teaching in Matthew is a matter of what Jesus says *and does*, so that when his authority is questioned as he teaches in the temple, it becomes not merely an issue of what he is saying, but of what he is doing (21:23, 24, 27). Not even Matthew, then, maintained any strict distinction between the words and the deeds of Jesus. Even less did the earlier tradition as represented in Q.

#### *d. Discipleship as the Matrix of Hearing and Seeing*

The group of disciples has been identified as the decisive pre-Easter setting for an early transmission of the Jesus sayings. Heinz Schürmann, in his influential article “Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition”,<sup>60</sup> brought attention to that group as a possible “Sitz im Leben” for the formation and transmission of the logia tradition, and he paid special attention to the need of the disciples as they were themselves commissioned by Jesus to preach. Although Schürmann might indeed be dependent upon the form-critical approach in not paying more attention to the individuals within that group,<sup>61</sup> his proposal potentially bridges the problematic gap between the pre- and the post-Easter aspects of the development of the gospel tradition.

Schürmann evidently thought that the narrative elements of the tradition was of an entirely different kind.<sup>62</sup> Yet, discipleship meant essentially following a person for the sake of learning by listening and by observing as one comprehensive act.<sup>63</sup> Schürmann recognizes, in passing, that when the disciples themselves were to preach, they would have needed also cer-

<sup>60</sup> Available in Schürmann, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, pp. 39–65.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. above Chap. 2, B:3.

<sup>62</sup> Schürmann states it explicitly: “Denn die Tradition des Erzählungsstoffes folgt in mancherlei Hinsicht anderer Gesetzlichkeit als die des Redestoffes” (*Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, p. 40).

<sup>63</sup> Larsson, *Christus als Vorbild*, pp. 38–40.

tain “Jesus-Geschichten”.<sup>64</sup> He refers here to Harald Riesenfeld’s suggestion that Jesus actually initiated the transmission of certain episodal material among the disciples, who would memorize and recite that material, together with the sayings, as holy words.<sup>65</sup> Riesenfeld truly postulates more than we can know, reckoning neither with the more evident variation in the episodal material as compared to the sayings material nor with the interpretative drive of transmission; and Schürmann does not intend to propose such a deliberate act of Jesus. His suggestion is more in line with Rainer Riesner’s later development of his thesis, that the disciples needed such material because (1) some sayings would be incomprehensible without an episodal frame; (2) some deeds were actually visual teaching themselves; (3) Jesus’ behaviour was an important part of his proclamation; (4) and because the *chreia* as a formal category often included brief episodal comments concerning known persons.<sup>66</sup> The last point has been reinforced and confirmed, to some extent, by subsequent research on the argumentative development of the gospel tradition.<sup>67</sup> These four observations imply the need for an early appreciation of what was heard as well as seen. However, the decisive point was not the practical one, but the essence of following a living person. Discipleship was always the matrix of a double activity; it was a way of learning that included hearing as well as seeing.

##### 5. Conclusion: Verbal and Behavioural Tradition in Interaction

All in all, we have a cumulative argument for the interaction of direct autopsy and orality in the gospel tradition. We have brought attention to several factors. (1) In Greek antiquity seeing and hearing were two inter-related means to acquire information concerning matters of history, two ways to relate to the past. Hearing could be a way of practising autopsy indirectly, when it included listening to those who had been present; it could also be a way to register that part of the material which was already verbalized and communicated orally, either by listening directly to the original words or by hearing them from others. (2) The ideal of a dis-

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<sup>64</sup> “Der ‘Sitz im Leben’ eines Teils auch der *Jesus-Geschichten* wird schon hier im vorösterlichen Jüngerkreis zu suchen sein” (Schürmann, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, p. 60 n. 88).

<sup>65</sup> Available in Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition*, pp. 1–29, especially pp. 25–26.

<sup>66</sup> Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, pp. 474–475.

<sup>67</sup> Mack/Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion*.

ciple in Jewish circles was that he should both hear and see his master. (3) Already the Q material, despite its focus on the Jesus sayings, conceptualized the totality of Jesus' ministry as a comprehensive event which was seen and heard. (4) Individual aspects of that ministry were always held together by close interconnections between sayings and deeds. (5) Discipleship was a comprehensive setting for both hearing and seeing Jesus. In their own preaching activity, the disciples could have recourse to what he had said as well as done.

It becomes entirely odd, thus, to envision the formation and development of the gospel tradition in terms of an either-or, either as visual or – with the form-critics – as oral. Autopsy, it seems, was itself a form of orality insofar as the direct observation was integrated into acts of hearing. For all we know, the early Christians lived indeed between the past and the present, between the event itself and its perception and interpretative inclusion into the oral history of living people. *The historical Jesus event was experienced through their eyes and their ears and soon became historic by entering into the present, oral currencies of observers such as Peter, the women, James and Mary*; it became their own oral history which they proclaimed to others. One needed their eyes as well as their ears.

If that is the case, others who heard their message also “saw” the utterances embodied in the life of the observers and hearers. Recent research shows that spoken words are not stored in memory in the form of abstract representations, but as veridical exemplars that encode specific information, such as the characteristics of the speaker's voice.<sup>68</sup> Ancient people appreciated the *viva vox* precisely for the reason that it concretized the message in a visual way. Pliny the Younger, in one of his letters, eagerly recommends Nepos to hear the famous Isaios in person, because even if he reads his works at home, he rarely hears the real thing. The spoken word is much more effective (*multo magis ... viva vox adficit*), and the reason is precisely that Nepos can “see” the message embodied as Isaios speaks. “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”,<sup>69</sup> he asserts (II 3:9). The rhetoricians were of course aware of this. Cicero, for instance, speaks of Demosthenes' three-fold emphasis on how nothing shapes, moulds and turns the mind of a

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<sup>68</sup> Luce/Lyons, “Specificity of memory representations for spoken words”, pp. 708–715.

<sup>69</sup> *Nam licet acriora sint quae legas, altius tamen in animo sedent, quae pronuntiatio vultus habitus gestus etiam dicentis adfigit.*

hearer more than *actio* (*Brut.* 38:142), that is, how 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.<sup>70</sup>

In contexts where the telling of the past is of importance, one must assume a similar appreciation of the spoken, living word. *Oral history is not produced at a distance but exists between the past and the present, relating to both*; it is part of the past as well as of the life story of the informant; one transmits not merely material of an impersonal character, but experiences what the witnesses have seen and heard. In all likelihood, there were special occasions when the past was recalled and re-enacted. In ancient Israel one had the Passover;<sup>71</sup> in early Christianity one had the Eucharist. They were, among other things, commemorative rituals, where gestures, mimicry, movements, behaviour and other paralinguistic means of communication – things that could be seen – interacted with what was communicated by word of mouth. *The deepest continuity with the past was not in memory as such but in mimesis, not in passive remembrance but in imitation.* Verbal tradition and behavioural tradition, as Birger Gerhardsson neatly labels the two important forms of passing on material,<sup>72</sup> were intertwined; they interacted in the act of communication through simultaneous hearing and seeing. *One related to the past aurally as well as visually.*

## B. Orality and Literacy: Oral Source versus Written Source

Granted the interrelatedness of autopsy and orality in the ancient practice of oral history and the gospel tradition, one immediately confronts the written text as a third medium of reaching back to the past. Indirect autopsy can include written texts – not only oral reports by eyewitnesses – through which the inquirer becomes “contemporaneous” with the event. It is true that oral history is a most fruitful avenue to the past in contexts where reading and writing play a very minor role, but *to the extent that literacy exists in a certain culture of interest, its feedback on the oral medium of communication cannot be ignored.* The discipline of oral his-

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Kelber, “Modalities of Communication”, pp. 193–216. Kelber rightly reminds us that rhetoric was essentially an outgrowth of a media world dominated by speaking; it had a profoundly oral disposition.

<sup>71</sup> Blenkinsopp, “Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past”, pp. 76–82.

<sup>72</sup> Gerhardsson, “The Gospel Tradition”, pp. 501–502.

tory does not neglect the written medium; that medium might serve as a means to broaden the historian's scope of knowledge or to cross-check the information gained through eyewitness testimony.

### 1. The Paradox of Writing

As soon as one enters into the world of Greek and Roman antiquity, the relationship between an oral and a written account becomes complex indeed. Most oral historians study relatively modern groups, where writing often carries a certain authority *vis-à-vis* oral speech. In ancient Greece the art of writing certainly existed from early on and gained increasing importance, but as we all know there also existed a widespread scepticism towards the written word.

This paradox of writing can be seen in some recent strands of New Testament scholarship. It has become customary to think of the written word in antiquity as something negative, deplorable, something which disrupted the living and intimate character of oral speech, something which should, to the extent possible, be avoided. One speaks of "a cultural bias in favour of the oral over the written".<sup>73</sup> At the same time, our discipline is made up of a study of written texts and we assume the early existence of both written and oral sources. Most of us grant that the gospel tradition emerged in the matrix of a subtle interchange of the two media of transmission; above I tried to add a dimension of importance to the oral medium. Things were put on papyrus, and the roles and codices eventually came to have a decisive influence far beyond their immediate context. Harry Y. Gamble illustrates well the "bibliographical substructure" of early Christian literature, how it was produced, circulated and used in the ancient church, and urges us to a more balanced way of speaking about the priority of orality.<sup>74</sup> In the range of the influence of that literature, we still perform our exegetical labour on the basis of structural strategies developed through studies of written texts, producing new forms of written discourse. *Habent sua fata libelli!*

Moreover, despite our awareness of the questionable status of writing in antiquity, we have come to appreciate the literary characteristics of most New Testament writings. The gospels as well as the letters and other books exhibit sophisticated structural, argumentative and rhetorical tech-

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<sup>73</sup> Achtemeier, "*Omne verbum sonat*", p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> Gamble, *Books and Readers*. The phrase "bibliographical substructure" is used in the preface, on p. x.

niques reflecting an educational level which is far above that of the illiterate or nearly illiterate. We have come a long way, and rightly so, from the romantic picture of Franz Overbeck, Adolf Deissmann and the early form-critics, who suggested that the early Christians were not at all inclined to writing and, at best, capable of producing merely “Kleinliteratur” or “Volksliteratur”; Overbeck speaks of “Urliteratur”.<sup>75</sup> The majority of the authors of the New Testament, as we realize today, were highly literate and not, it seems, all that reluctant to employ rather refined forms of the written medium as a means of communication. Not only the rich “bibliographical substructure” but also the advanced literary level of the New Testament contradict, on the face of it, our insistence that in antiquity writing was after all inferior to the oral medium.

## 2. The Ancient Scepticism towards Writing Reconsidered

This somewhat paradoxical situation calls for a more nuanced way of speaking about the ancient scepticism towards writing. It was not deplored and rejected as such; there was usually a rationale behind that attitude.

### a. *The Extent of Literacy*

One factor, which is often neglected, has simply to do with the limited extent of literacy. The capability of reading and writing has certain social repercussions in most societies. Today people lacking that ability are often marginalized and left with little or no means of influence. Literacy can be an instrument not only of development, but also of oppression.<sup>76</sup> The situation was different in antiquity, because most matters were handled without the extensive use of reading and writing.

One might suspect that the written word could be seen as a deplorable means of communication in view of the limited extent of literacy. In the most comprehensive study to date, William V. Harris, using a broad definition of literacy as the ability to read and write, reaches a largely ne-

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<sup>75</sup> Overbeck, “Über die Anfänge der patristischen Literatur”, pp. 417–472, especially pp. 426–444; Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, pp. 116–213. For a recent discussion of the influence of these scholars on the form-critics, with a critique of the distinction between “Hochliteratur” and “Kleinliteratur”, see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, pp. 11–20.

<sup>76</sup> The brief article of Pattanayak, a scholar from India, not only points to the oppressive factors of literate cultures, but also provokes learned experts on orality and literacy (Havelock, Ong, Olson) to avoid playing into the prejudice of the advantages of literacy *vis-à-vis* orality (“Literacy: an instrument of oppression”, pp. 105–108).

gative conclusion for Western antiquity. Granting regional and temporal variations,<sup>77</sup> the extent of literacy was about ten percent – never more than fifteen to twenty percent – of the whole population during the entire period of classical Greek, Hellenistic and Roman imperial civilization.<sup>78</sup> It was mainly restricted to a privileged minority, Harris argues, and co-existed even in those circles with elements of an oral culture. If Harris' somewhat surprising estimate is correct,<sup>79</sup> the reserve towards the written word is explainable partly in social terms. Not many people knew how to read and write; most people were illiterate;<sup>80</sup> so the written word was unsuitable as a means of communication.

To this could be added the limited availability of written documents. To be sure, we have the picturesque story from a book-shop in the Sigillaria, in Rome, where Aulus Gellius claims to have found an almost perfect Latin version of Fabius Pictor's Greek annals to be for sale (V 4:1). But such copies were evidently very rare. Latin books had not always been sold in good copies, as Cicero complained to his brother Quintus: "As for Latin books, I really do not know where to turn; they are copied and sold so full of mistakes" (*QF* III 6:6).<sup>81</sup> This was probably characteristic of the broader situation. Strabo knows of booksellers in different places who used bad copyists to produce works which they could sell (XIII 1:54). Written documents of good shape were hard to find.

### *b. The Cultivation of Memory: Plato and Seneca*

Some of the marks of an oral culture always remain visible, says Harris, "most notably a widespread reliance on and cultivation of the faculty of memory";<sup>82</sup> and the cultivation of the faculty of memory is actually an-

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<sup>77</sup> Thomas is very sceptical towards some statistical calculations of "literacy rates" for ancient Greece (*Literacy and Orality*, p. 11). But Harris does show, as far as I can judge, a sober sensitivity to the dangers of too broad a generalization.

<sup>78</sup> Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, pp. 327–330.

<sup>79</sup> Many classicists contend that a high proportion of the Greek people was fully literate from an early date. Cf., e.g., Burns, "Athenian Literacy", pp. 371–387. Andersen expresses however a warning: "Es wird m. E. in der Literatur viel zu leichtfertig mit Ausdrücken wie 'full', 'general', 'widespread', 'popular' (usw.) literacy umgegangen und daraus auf gewisse Konsequenzen geschlossen" ("Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit", p. 37 n. 36). In the preface of a book discussing Harris' contribution, Humphrey now also affirms than none of the contributors challenged Harris' basic point, that the levels of literacy were never high ("Preface", p. 5).

<sup>80</sup> For discussion, see Hanson, "Ancient illiteracy", pp. 159–198.

<sup>81</sup> *De Latinis vero, quo vertam me, nescio, ita mendose et scribuntur et veneunt.*

<sup>82</sup> Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 327.

other important reason why the written word was depreciated.<sup>83</sup> Several ancient texts express indeed a certain scepticism towards the written word, but as one looks more closely at these texts one usually detects a reason for that negative attitude. There is a rational behind it, circumstances which focus on other things than the mere fact that the text was written down.

Most well-known is perhaps the passage of the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates, discussing a speech of Lysias read to him by Phaedrus, is represented as being suspicious of the art of writing (*Phaedr.* 274c–277a).<sup>84</sup> He recounts the myth of the invention of the letters in Egypt by the god Theuth. Upon Theuth's praise of his own achievement, king Thamus exclaims that Theuth has ascribed false characteristics to his invention, "because it will create forgetfulness in the souls of the disciples through negligence of the practice of memory" (275a).<sup>85</sup> Memory is thus the key-factor. The written word does not lead to truth, only to the appearance of wisdom. Those who rely on it will be merely "opinion-wise", δοξόσοφοι (275b). One learns best through the oral dialogue between master and student. The written words are like paintings; they cannot answer questions. That person errs, Socrates continues, "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).<sup>86</sup> They are for reminding, not for remembering.<sup>87</sup> Writing does have a certain function, but it is, as Phaedrus fills in, an "image" (εἶδωλον) of the living and breathing word of the one who knows (276a).

Elsewhere, in the *Seventh Letter*, Plato goes one step further and confesses that he has composed no work at all about certain matters. There are topics which can be born and nourished in the soul only "as a result of long association with the subject itself and communion" (*Ep.* 7:341c).<sup>88</sup> Writing cannot, it seems, be even a remote image of such matters. "Whenever one sees a written composition, whether on the laws of a legislator or anything else on any other subject, one must know that these

<sup>83</sup> I will discuss the role of memory and recall below, Chap. 4, A:5.

<sup>84</sup> For a recent, broader discussion of the most relevant passages, see Frede, "Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit", pp. 33–54. For an extensive study of the *Phaedrus* as a whole, see Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*. He surveys and discusses the most influential interpretations of the reservations about the written word (*ibid.*, pp. 204–222).

<sup>85</sup> τοῦτο γὰρ τῶν μαθόντων λήθην μὲν ἐν ψυχαῖς παρέξει μνήμης ἀμελετησίᾳ.

<sup>86</sup> πλεον τι οἰόμενος εἶναι λόγους γεγραμμένους τοῦ τὸν εἰδότα ὑπομνήσαι περὶ ὧν ἂν ᾗ τὰ γεγραμμένα.

<sup>87</sup> Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 91.

<sup>88</sup> ἐκ πολλῆς συνουσίας γιγνομένης περὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦ συζῆν.



are not the most serious things, if he is serious" (*Ep.* 7:344c).<sup>89</sup> The *Second Letter*, though perhaps not authentic,<sup>90</sup> even explains this feature, it seems, as a way to protect the teaching from falling into the hands of un-instructed men. "The best precaution is not to write, but to learn by heart; for it is impossible for things written not to become known. This is why I have never written on these things" (*Ep.* 2:314b–c).<sup>91</sup> The reason here is that writing is public,<sup>92</sup> while some teaching should be kept within a limited circle of enlightened people.

We shall select one more author, from a later time and from a different philosophical line of thought than Plato, to exemplify the attitude to the written word. Seneca, the influential moral philosopher of the later Stoa, was active at the time when the gospel tradition was emerging. He betrays the same ambivalent attitude as Plato. Modern scholars of rhetoric often refer to him as support for the notion of the written letter as constituting a speech. The letter should be a kind of conversation that takes place as two people sit together in each other's company or take walks together; it should be spontaneous and easy. That is Seneca's defence for writing his letters somewhat carelessly (*Ep. Mor.* 75:1). But this is not the whole story, because the invention of the written letter could also be explained by the simple need to preserve memoranda.<sup>93</sup> The same passage in Seneca's *Epistulae* indicates his awareness of the difference between letter and oratory in matters of delivery. "Even if I were arguing, I should not stamp the foot, or toss the hand about, or raise the voice; but I should leave that to the orator" (*Ep. Mor.* 75:2).<sup>94</sup> Seneca's letters convey no such strained and artificial characteristics.<sup>95</sup> Thus, in response to Lucilius' request to send him the philosophical books, Seneca expresses his

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<sup>89</sup> ὅταν ἴδῃ τίς τοῦ συγγράμματα γεγραμμένα εἴτε ἐν νόμοις νομοθέτου εἴτε ἐν ἄλλοις τισὶν ἄττ' οὖν, ὡς οὐκ ἦν τοῦτ' αὐτὰ σπουδαιότατα, εἴπερ ἔστ' αὐτὸς σπουδαῖος.

<sup>90</sup> So Green, "The Spoken and the Written Word", p. 48.

<sup>91</sup> μεγίστη δὲ φυλακὴ τὸ μὴ γράφειν ἀλλ' ἐκμανθάνειν· οὐ γὰρ ἔστι τὰ γραφέντα μὴ οὐκ ἐκπεσεῖν. διὰ ταῦτα οὐδὲν πάποτ' ἐγὼ περὶ τούτων γέγραφα.

<sup>92</sup> For the public uses of writing in ancient Greece, see Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, pp. 65–72. It should be remembered, of course, that even a "public" writing was normally available only to a few people.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Aesch., *Prom.* 460–461 (cf. 789); Eur., *Fr.* 578 (Nauck, pp. 153–154); Gorg., *Pal.* 30 (Diels/Kranz, II, pp. 301–302).

<sup>94</sup> *Etiam si disputarem, nec supploderem pedem nec manum iactarem nec attollerem vocem, sed ista oratoribus reliquissem.*

<sup>95</sup> For further examples of such distinctions, see Byrskog, "Epistolography, Rhetoric and Letter Prescript", pp. 30–34.

preference for the close company of one another. “However, the living voice and the sharing of someone’s daily life will be of more help than a treatise”,<sup>96</sup> he replies (*Ep. Mor.* 6:5). He clings to the ideal that the reading of written material should be avoided,<sup>97</sup> because true teaching can be learned best from the daily intimacy with a teacher. It is a matter of how things should – or could – be learned.

What is then the function of the written word, according to Seneca? For Plato (Socrates), as we saw, it served mainly as a reminder of what a person already knew. Seneca, in a somewhat polemical tone, expresses a similar notion (*Ep. Mor.* 33:9):

“Why should I even listen to what is possible to read? ‘The living voice’, it may be answered, ‘counts for a great deal’. Not that indeed which is accommodated to another’s words and made to serve as a reporter”.<sup>98</sup>

He here ridicules those who use the living voice merely to pass on what has already been said or written by others. Such matters can be learned from books. Written material, Seneca implies, is inferior to the living voice as a means to convey new memorable sayings, but supplementary when it comes to conveying what is already familiar.

### c. *Philosophical Esotericism?*

These texts must suffice to illustrate the cultivation of the faculty of memory as a rationale behind the scepticism towards the written word in the Greek and Roman environment. Are there further significant rationales? Loveday C. A. Alexander discusses several other texts: from the rhetoricians, the crafts and the schools, with special attention to Galen as representative of the two latter settings.<sup>99</sup> The rhetoricians had a natural preference for live performance, but there is no wholesale prohibition against writing; the crafts stressed, of course, that practical skills could be best learned as the student observed the master himself, but again, there were authors who did attempt to explain practical matters in writing; the schools recognized that oral teaching and tradition had a high authenticity value, but written texts were also used to express essentially the same teaching as that which had already been given orally. When it comes to a fourth category, the philosophical esotericism to which Plato’s writings

<sup>96</sup> *Plus tamen tibi et viva vox et convictus quam oratio proderit.*

<sup>97</sup> For *oratio* as denoting a written treatise here, see Alexander, “The Living Voice”, p. 232 n. 1.

<sup>98</sup> *Quid est quare et audiam, quod legere possum? “Multum”, inquit, “viva vox facit”. Non quidem haec, quae alienis verbis commodatur et actuari vice fungitur.*

<sup>99</sup> Alexander, “The Living Voice”, pp. 221–247.

belong, Alexander detects an emphasis on an oral body of teaching which cannot be written down because of its secret, different content.

Alexander rightly calls attention to the resemblances with the rabbinic doctrine of oral torah. However, that emphasis probably arose as a reaction against the priestly reliance on what was written. The distinction between the written and the oral torah evidently had a quite practical background in the Pharisaic attempt to counter-act the Sadducean emphasis on the written torah.<sup>100</sup> Already Josephus indicates that this was a central item of dispute between the two parties (*Ant.* 13:297–298) and rabbinic texts associate the discussion with early masters.<sup>101</sup> It is thus questionable whether we are really to link the rabbinic attitude to the Platonic one, as Alexander is inclined to do.<sup>102</sup> Its didactic, pedagogical rationale comes through in the use of special terminology for the study of each part of the torah, קרא for the written torah and שנה for the oral torah, so that the two, as objects of study, become מקרא and משנה respectively.<sup>103</sup> A depreciation of the written text as such also runs counter to the rabbinic conviction that the elementary education of reading the torah goes back to Simeon ben Shetah circa 90 BCE (*y. Ket.* 32c), or that Joshua ben Gamala circa 60–70 CE arranged that elementary teachers were appointed in each district and in each town of Israel (*b. B. Bat.* 21a).

One might even doubt if the Platonic esotericism had much influence at all on the question of oral and written media in Jewish circles.<sup>104</sup> The Qumran community comes perhaps closest to a kind of esotericism,<sup>105</sup> though being influenced by the Hellenistic culture and regarding themselves as part of the Israelite nation, they relativized the sectarian self-understanding.<sup>106</sup> However, since men were more or less defiled and unable to attain knowledge (*CD* 5:11; *1QS* 3:2–3), certain matters should be communicated only to specific persons within the community (*1QS* 8:18; 9:17, 22).<sup>107</sup> Here a spirit of knowledge provided opportunity for in-

<sup>100</sup> Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, pp. 22–25.

<sup>101</sup> For further documentation, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 156–157.

<sup>102</sup> Alexander, “The Living Voice”, p. 244.

<sup>103</sup> Cf., e.g., *m. Qid.* 1:10; *m. Abot* 5:21.

<sup>104</sup> Frede questions whether the Platonic critique against writing was that influential at all (“Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit”, pp. 48–54).

<sup>105</sup> For a more detailed account of the following discussion, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 152–153, 166–169.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. the cautious remarks by Stegemann, “Die ‘Mitte der Schrift’”, pp. 152–157. For the Hellenistic influence in Qumran, see Hengel, “Qumrān und der Hellenismus”, pp. 333–372.

<sup>107</sup> Davies, “‘Knowledge’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls”, pp. 121–122.

creasing knowledge (1QS 3:6–8; 9:3, 15–16). Some of that knowledge might have been conveyed orally, such as the identity of the Righteous Teacher or the exact demarcation of which traditions came from him. After all, their salvation depended on his teaching.<sup>108</sup> But most of it, as far as we can tell, was evidently recorded in writing.<sup>109</sup> There is no prohibition against the written word in the Dead Sea scrolls. On the contrary, Josephus, for what it is worth,<sup>110</sup> reports that a person who desired to enter the group of Essenes will not attain immediate admittance. The promise of that person not to report any of the secrets of the group to others is followed by an emphatic insistence on the importance of the books of the Essenes (*Bell.* 2:142):

“He swears, moreover, to hand over the doctrines to no one differently than as he received them, to abstain from robbery and to preserve in like manner both the books of their group and the names of the angels”.<sup>111</sup>

Philo confirms indirectly Josephus’ statement. Comparing the Essenes with the Therapeutae, he points out that the latter group indeed had writings (συγγράμματα) from their founder (*Vit. Cont.* 29). We might well envision that some of the teaching of the Righteous Teacher was also preserved in writing. All in all, it shows that we are rather far removed from the Platonic ideal of allowing a certain kind of secret knowledge to be communicated orally only. The notion that writing was more public than the oral word was evidently not all that prevalent in the Qumran community.

It is probably fair to conclude, thus, that the inferiority of the written medium to the oral one was not entirely constant. Rosalind Thomas has brought attention to several non-rational uses of writing in ancient Greece: symbolic, magical and monumental.<sup>112</sup> The Jewish culture testifies to other uses. And in the ancient Israelite culture, orality and literacy emerge not as opposites or alternatives, but as ends of a continuum, with va-

<sup>108</sup> Cf. CD 6:7–10; 20:27–34; 1QpHab 2:2; 8:1–3; 1QpMic 8–10:6–7; 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 1:19. See further Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 51–52.

<sup>109</sup> I am still not convinced by the theories claiming that Khirbet Qumran contains the remnants of a villa or fortress unrelated to the scrolls found in the caves. See already Shanks, “Blood on the Floor”, pp. 63–68; Shanks, “The Qumran Settlement”, pp. 62–65.

<sup>110</sup> Beall gives good arguments for assuming that Josephus is here actually speaking of things prevalent in Qumran (*Josephus’ Description of the Essenes*, pp. 85, 87–89).

<sup>111</sup> πρὸς τοῦτοις ὄμνυσιν μηδενὶ μὲν μεταδοῦναι τῶν δογμάτων ἑτέρως ἢ ὡς αὐτὸς μετέλαβεν, ἀφέξεσθαι δὲ ληστείας καὶ συντηρήσειν ὁμοίως τὰ τε τῆς αἰρέσεως αὐτῶν βιβλία καὶ τὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων ὀνόματα.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, pp. 78–88.

rious types of literature to be placed at one point or the other along the spectrum.<sup>113</sup> Where the inferior status prevailed in antiquity, we have to envision a world in which most activities were carried out without writing. A papyrus could even be placed in storage rather than put into general circulation. Diogenes Laertius claims, for instance, that Heraclitus hid his book *Περὶ φύσεως* in the temple of Artemis and made it the more obscure in order that none but adepts should approach it (Diog. L. 9:6).<sup>114</sup> *Writing was usually seen as supplementary to the oral discourse.*<sup>115</sup> Orators should avoid note-books that were too detailed. One is reminded of Quintilian's criticism of Laenas' dependence on such notes and his clear-cut advice: "For my own part, however, I think we should not write anything which we do not intend to commit to memory" (X 7:32).<sup>116</sup> The commonplace was that the written word was meant to be heard rather than read silently;<sup>117</sup> it was somehow mostly related to speech.<sup>118</sup> *Writing was not avoided as such, but functioned mainly as a memorandum of what the person already should remember from oral communication.*

<sup>113</sup> This is the main thesis of Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. already Aesch., *Suppl.* 947 (ἐν πτυχαῖς βιβλῶν κατεσφραγισμένα).

<sup>115</sup> Andersen discusses the origin of the Greek, phonetic alphabet and rightly stresses its intimate connection to oral speech: "Die Schrift der Griechen steht somit vom Anfang an *im Dienst des gesprochenen Wortes*" ("Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit", p. 33). Cf. also Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, pp. 53–56. In a fascinating brief essay, Svenbro has recently illustrated the supplementary character of writing in ancient Greece (*Myrstigar*, pp. 7–29). He discussed the beginnings of literacy in Greece more fully in his earlier study *Phrasikleia*.

<sup>116</sup> *Ego autem ne scribendum quidem puto, quod non simul memoria persecuturi.*

<sup>117</sup> The classical study of this topic, with a broad survey of the texts, is the one by Balogh, "Voces Paginarum", pp. 84–109, 202–240. He concludes: "Der Mensch des Altertums las und schrieb in der Regel laut; das Gegenteil war zwar nicht unerhört, doch immer eine Ausnahme" (p. 220). Balogh's conclusion stands, though today we know of some more texts which indicate silent reading, texts that are earlier than Augustine's well-known reference in *Conf.* 6:3 to the fact that Bishop Ambrose was reading while "his voice and tongue were silent" (*vox autem et lingua quiescebant*). See Gilliard, "More Silent Reading", pp. 689–696, with a survey of the previous discussion. The most recent discussion of Gavrillov and Burnyeat rightly challenges scholars to pay more attention to the practice and advantages of silent reading in classical antiquity, but exaggerates, in my view, its importance *vis-à-vis* reading aloud (Gavrillov, "Techniques of reading in classical antiquity", pp. 56–73; Burnyeat, "Postscript on silent reading", pp. 74–76).

<sup>118</sup> Goody states: "You hear speech and see writing; speaking with mouth, listening with ear; writing with hand, reading with eyes" (*The interface between the written and the oral*, p. 186). As far as antiquity is concerned, this statement certainly makes a false controposition of the channels of communication for speech and writing.

### 3. Orality and Literacy as Oral Source and Written Source

What happens when the written medium becomes the bridge from the present to the past, when it becomes a source or channel through which the inquirer becomes “contemporaneous” with the past, as is partly the case in the gospel tradition? Granted the modern “document-minded” attitude to the written text did not exist in antiquity,<sup>119</sup> one cannot assume that its function as a source of the past was merely that of reminding the inquirer of things s/he already knew from autopsy and hearing. Other aspects might have been added. There may be different kinds of information in the written source as compared to the oral source, so that the use of both media is a means to broaden the scope of knowledge. Can we also speak of a practice of cross-checking the oral information with the written material, or vice versa, assuming that both media cover in part the same historical phenomena? These are capacities of writing with which the modern oral historians are well acquainted. The ancient historians epitomize the persons who live between the past and the present and are therefore best suited to help us clarify how the modalities of orality and literacy served as means to relate to the past through oral and written sources.

#### a. *The Explicit Comments: Polybius*

We shall start with the most explicit comments, those of Polybius in his critique of Timaeus. The latter’s dependence on written material is to Polybius a grave error. According to XII 25<sup>d</sup>:1, Timaeus made a great mistake in considering his access to written material in Athens as a sufficient qualification to write history. After explaining the three parts of *πραγματική ιστορία* in XII 25<sup>e</sup>:1–2 – the study and collation of written sources, the autopsy and the political experience – Polybius ranks the first one as of limited value to anyone writing contemporary history. It is even “absolutely foolish”, he says (XII 25<sup>e</sup>:7), to rely only upon the mastery of written material, as Timaeus evidently did. He was too “bookish” (XII 25<sup>h</sup>:3). “From these [considerations]”, Polybius concludes, “each one would evidently agree that the study of written sources is [only] a third part of history and stands in the third place” (XII 25<sup>i</sup>:2).<sup>120</sup>

Polybius might have had his own reasons for criticizing Timaeus. As Klaus Meister correctly points out, he probably exaggerated the critique

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, pp. 93–100.

<sup>120</sup> ἔξ ὧν πᾶς ἂν εἰκότως συγκατάθοιτο τρίτον εἶναι μέρος τῆς ἱστορίας καὶ τρίτην ἔχειν τάξιν τὴν ἐκ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων πολυπραγμοσύνην.

against Timaeus' "Stubengelehrsamkeit".<sup>121</sup> Yet, that critique reflects Polybius' own methodological convictions. The rationale is not a depreciation of the writing as such, but the isolation from the practical realities that follows. What he misses in Timaeus' writing is precisely the vividness of facts, "as this can only be produced by the personal experience of the authors" (XII 25<sup>b</sup>:4).<sup>122</sup> We shall explore more fully in the next chapter the historians' insistence on personal experience and involvement. Here we should note that their negative attitude towards writing has its own reasons: if not combined with direct and/or indirect autopsy, the reliance on written sources gives a one-sided and distorted relationship to past realities.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that most historians used written sources to supplement other visual and oral/aural means of gaining information. Polybius himself, for all we know, had written sources at his disposal.<sup>123</sup> For the period before 220 BCE, he mentions four historians at some length: Aratus of Sicyon (3rd cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 231) and Phylarchus (3rd cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 81) for Greek events;<sup>124</sup> and Philinus of Acragas (3rd cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 174) and Fabius Pictor (3rd cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 809) for the first Punic war.<sup>125</sup> It is possible, moreover, that he used historians such as Timaeus himself (*FrGrHist* 566), Calisthenes (4th cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 124) and Ephorus (4th cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 70) for the account of events before 220.<sup>126</sup> For the subsequent period, he probably read widely.<sup>127</sup> He continued to use Fabius Pictor for the Hannibalic war (III 8–9); he refers to Chaereas (3rd cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 177) and Sosylus of Lacedaemon (3rd cent. BCE.; *FrGrHist* 176) specifically – and critically – as telling "the common gossip of a barber's shop" (III 20:5). For events in Greece and Asia, he mentions the Rhodian historians Antisthenes (3rd–2nd cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 508) and Zeno (3rd–2nd cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 523), again in a censoring fashion.<sup>128</sup> While Polybius is more or less critical of most of these authors, it is evident that he had read and studied their works carefully.

<sup>121</sup> Meister, *Historische Kritik*, pp. 47–48.

<sup>122</sup> διὰ τὸ μόνον ἐκ τῆς αὐτοπαθείας τοῦτο γίνεσθαι τῆς τῶν συγγραφέων.

<sup>123</sup> Cf., e.g., Scala, *Die Studien des Polybios*, pp. 259–268; Ziegler, "Polybios", cols. 1560–1564; Walbank, *Commentary*, I, pp. 26–33; Walbank, *Polybius*, pp. 77–84.

<sup>124</sup> II 56:1–2 (Aratus and Phylarchus); II 56:1–63:6 (Phylarchus).

<sup>125</sup> I 14–15 (Philinus and Fabius); I 58:4–5 (Fabius); III 26:1–5 (criticism of Philinus).

<sup>126</sup> Walbank, *Commentary*, I, pp. 27–28; Walbank, *Polybius*, p. 79.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. III 6:1; III 47:6; V 33:2–3.

<sup>128</sup> XVI 14:2–15:8 (Antisthenes); XVI 14:2–20:7 (Zeno).

In addition, he had letters at his disposal;<sup>129</sup> and he might have used archives and inscriptions, though only to a limited extent.<sup>130</sup> He probably also used written notes – memoranda – of others and of himself, though he never says so explicitly.<sup>131</sup>

### b. The Early Historians

Moving backwards in time, one usually finds a similar double way of relating to the past in other historical works. It is difficult to estimate Xenophon's use of written sources, and indeed we find no reason to claim with Édouard Delebecque that he actually possessed some kind of library.<sup>132</sup> What we find are several references to book-rolls in his works.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, in *Historia Graeca* III 1:2 he refers explicitly to a certain Themistogenes the Syracusan as a writer concerning Cyrus' battle against his brother.<sup>134</sup> Xenophon knows that work well enough to conclude that it is unnecessary for himself to make a further account of the same event.<sup>135</sup> He might have used Herodotus;<sup>136</sup> and it is not impossible that he used writings which are no longer extant.<sup>137</sup> What seems probable, in addition, is that he was familiar with Thucydides' writing. Ancient writers were

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<sup>129</sup> X 9:3 (a letter from Scipio Africanus to Philip V of Macedon).

<sup>130</sup> For archives, cf. the reference in XVI 15:8 to an archive in the Rhodian *prytaneum*. It is uncertain, however, if Polybius saw the archive himself or merely knew of it from elsewhere. He never says expressly that he used archives. For inscriptions, cf. the reference in III 33:18 and III 56:4 to an inscription left by Hannibal on a bronze tablet on the Lacinian promontory. In XII 11:2, however, Polybius polemically speaks of Timaeus' use of inscriptions.

<sup>131</sup> Gelzer, *Kleine Schriften*, III, pp. 161–190. – Polybius uses the term *ὑπόμνημα* both for his own composition (I 1:1; I 35:6; III 32:4; IX 2:7) and the composition of other historians, such as Aratus (II 47:11) and Timaeus (XII 25<sup>a</sup>:4), as well as for some kind of written source used in historical research (XII 25<sup>e</sup>:1; XII 25<sup>i</sup>:2; XII 27:3; XII 28<sup>a</sup>:4, 7). It is difficult to know, therefore, if the latter category refers to written notes as aids to memory or to written compositions of larger measure.

<sup>132</sup> Delebecque, *Essai sur la vie de Xénophon*, p. 241.

<sup>133</sup> *An.* VII 5:14; *Mem.* I 6:14; IV 2:1, 8, 10; *Sym.* 4:27.

<sup>134</sup> But cf. the references in *An.* I 8:27 (Ctesias); II 6:4 (no name of the writer); *Eq.* 1:1; 11:6 (both times a reference to Simon's treatise on horsemanship).

<sup>135</sup> Breitenbach believes this passage to be a pseudonymous reference to Xenophon himself and his *Anabasis* (*Historiographische Anschauungsformen Xenophons*, p. 26). But there is nothing in the text to support this notion.

<sup>136</sup> So, e.g., Brown, "Echoes from Herodotus", pp. 97–101.

<sup>137</sup> Breitenbach mentions names such as Dionysius of Miletus, Hellanicus, Xanthus and Charon of Lampsacus as possible sources for the *Cyropaedia* ("Xenophon", col. 1709).



convinced that he aimed to complete Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*.<sup>138</sup> With the curious phrase μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα οὐ πολλοῖς ἡμέραις ὕστερον, he starts his *Historia Graeca* approximately where Thucydides ended in the middle of a paragraph. Delebecque's elaborative theory that Xenophon's first two books constitute the completion of Thucydides' work on the basis of written notes drafted by Thucydides himself, is indeed based on very meagre evidence,<sup>139</sup> as W. P. Henry has shown;<sup>140</sup> yet, the similarities to the Thucydidean annalistic pattern in the first two books of the *Historia Graeca* suggest a certain dependence,<sup>141</sup> though later interpolators complicated the chronology by additions reminiscent of Thucydides.<sup>142</sup> While Xenophon might not have known exactly how Thucydides intended to continue and complete his work, he did know, it seems, what Thucydides had already written.<sup>143</sup>

Or take Ctesias, who was active concurrently with Xenophon. Coupled with his insistence on direct and indirect autopsy, which we noticed in the previous chapter,<sup>144</sup> is a certain reliance on written archives, at least as far as the *Persica* is concerned. His long stay at the court of Darius II and Artaxerxes II gave him ample opportunity to consult the official records. Diodorus Siculus knows to tell that he spent seventeen years in the service of the Persian emperor,<sup>145</sup> reporting what Ctesias said, "... from the royal archives, in which the Persians used to record their ancient deeds according to a certain law of theirs, to have carefully investigated the facts about each one" (II 32:4).<sup>146</sup> The phrase that follows relates this activity directly to the writing and publication of his history: "... and having composed the history, to have published it to the Greeks".<sup>147</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Dion. Hal., *Pomp.* 4; Diog. L. 2:57; Marcellin., *Vit. Thuc.* 45.

<sup>139</sup> Delebecque, *Essai sur la vie de Xénophon*, pp. 39–54.

<sup>140</sup> Henry, *Greek Historical Writing*, pp. 14–88.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Thuc. V 26:1 with, e.g., Xenoph., *Hist. Graec.* I 3:1; I 6:1.

<sup>142</sup> Henry rejects this piece of evidence (*Greek Historical Writing*, pp. 39–45). There is not much evidence, he concludes, that Xenophon "was even acquainted with Thucydides' history or came under its influence in any respect" (*ibid.*, p. 49). But even the barest reminiscences of the annalistic pattern suggest that Xenophon was familiar with Thucydides' work.

<sup>143</sup> Anderson, *Xenophon*, p. 64.

<sup>144</sup> See above Chap. 2, A:1.

<sup>145</sup> For the chronological problems inherent in Diodorus' statement, cf. Brown, "Suggestions for a Vita of Ctesias", pp. 1–19; Boncquet, *Diodorus Siculus*, pp. 200–204; Auburger, in Ctésias, *Histoires de l'Orient*, pp. 6–10.

<sup>146</sup> ... ἐκ τῶν βασιλικῶν διφθερῶν, ἐν αἷς οἱ Πέρσαι τὰς παλαιὰς πράξεις κατὰ τινι νόμον εἶχον συντεταγμένας, πολυπραγμονῆσαι τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον.

<sup>147</sup> ... καὶ συνταξάμενος τὴν ἱστορίαν εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐξενεγκεῖν.

The double path to the past, that of the oral and the written source, is to be found also in Thucydides' writing. Despite his insistence on direct and indirect autopsy, with his use of oral sources, it is evident that some of his sources consisted of written material. He relied occasionally on oracles, poets – especially Homer (cf. III 104:4–6) –, inscriptions and archaeology, though it might be difficult to decide whether one should define these sources as written or oral.<sup>148</sup> Although he is somewhat critical of Herodotus, his indebtedness to him as a recorder of facts is well-known.<sup>149</sup> Further unacknowledged written sources are the Sicilian history by Antiochus of Syracuse (5th cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 555), which Thucydides probably used in the excursus on the colonization of Sicily (VI 2–5), and perhaps Hecataeus of Miletus (6th–5th cent. BCE; *FrGrHist* 1), from whom he might have derived some of his geographical notes on remote localities.<sup>150</sup> Hellanicus of Lesbos (5th cent. BCE), who wrote a history of Athens preserved in fragments (*FrGrHist* 4, 323a), is the only historian whom Thucydides mentions by name, acknowledging his indebtedness to him while at the same time criticizing him for inaccuracy in regard to chronology (I 97:2).

With Herodotus it becomes more difficult to isolate the written sources. Hecataeus is mentioned by name as an author,<sup>151</sup> a λογοποιός, but we must grant the observation that his writing is nowhere referred to explicitly as a written source.<sup>152</sup> It is certainly likely that Herodotus sometimes had to rely on hearsay also in regard to literary sources, especially those written in languages which he did not know.<sup>153</sup> In 2:125 he gives a brief indication of his use of an interpreter (ἑρμηνεύς) in reading an inscription “in Egyptian letters” on – or perhaps inside – the pyramid. Yet, it is probable that he consulted various archaeological remains, inscriptions, literary testimony and pieces of a more documentary nature. Perhaps he even had access to certain documents concerning, for instance, the

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<sup>148</sup> See Hornblower, *Thucydides*, 81–93.

<sup>149</sup> The only direct evidence for a personal link between Herodotus and Thucydides, however, is anecdotal. Marcellinus, of perhaps the fourth century CE, says that Thucydides burst into tears after hearing Herodotus recite (*Vit. Thuc.* 54). Marcellinus does not say exactly why Thucydides cried. Usher seems to take this anecdote as reflecting a real event (*The Historians of Greece and Rome*, p. 23).

<sup>150</sup> So Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, pp. 36–40.

<sup>151</sup> 2:143; 5:36, 125–126; 6:137. For further discussion, see Lloyd, *Herodotus*, I, pp. 127–139.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Fehling, *Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot.*, p. 62; Verdin, *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus*, p. 83.

<sup>153</sup> Gould, *Herodotus*, pp. 24–27.

taxation of the Persians (cf. 3:89), their royal road (cf. 5:52–53), their ships (cf. 7:89; 8:66, 130), etc.<sup>154</sup>

### c. *The Written Source as a Permanent Record*

Judging from Polybius' comments on the use of oral sources, one is led to assume that written sources were of limited independent value to the historians. It is significant that we usually have to isolate these sources through very indirect means; the historians almost never speak of them explicitly. When they speak of sources, that is, when they are to defend their writings, they speak of autopsy and oral reports. That is how they themselves related to history. The pattern is consistent as we move on to the time of the New Testament. The only exception to this attitude among the major historians of the time is Livy, the influential Roman historian, whose extreme reliance on written sources was a rather unique development of the historians' rhetorical training.<sup>155</sup> But take Josephus. He utilized indeed Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek sources for the *Antiquitates Judaicae* and *Contra Apionem*,<sup>156</sup> the voluminous history of Nicolaus of Damascus (*FrGrHist* 90) being the most important.<sup>157</sup> Yet, as the most essential criterion for a good and accurate report concerning historical events, he preferred to bring out his own direct involvement in matters of history.<sup>158</sup> Even the translation of the "sacred writings" in the *Antiquitates* is, he says, conditioned by a certain kind of involvement: "I have translated from the sacred writings, being a priest by birth and well versed in the philosophy of these writings" (*Ap.* 1:54).<sup>159</sup>

Why did they care to consider the written sources at all? For Josephus there was of course a difference between the historiographical notions of a translation like the *Antiquitates* and those of *Bellum Judaicum*.<sup>160</sup> But we might still assume, from a more general perspective, that the basic value which the historians accorded to the written source had to do with its permanent character. While written texts were used orally, and in that matrix often supplemented and elaborated, the writing down of an item inevitably meant that this piece of information was given a certain abiding

<sup>154</sup> See further Fritz, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, I, pp. 411–413.

<sup>155</sup> See below Chap. 5, A:2b.

<sup>156</sup> References in Varneda, *The Historical Method of Flavius Josephus*, pp. 266–272.

<sup>157</sup> See Wacholder, "Josephus and Nicolaus of Damascus", pp. 147–172.

<sup>158</sup> See above Chap 2, A:5 and below Chap. 4, A:3.

<sup>159</sup> ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων μεθρημήνευκα γεγονῶς ἱερεὺς ἐκ γένους καὶ μετεσχηκῶς τῆς φιλοσοφίας τῆς ἐν ἐκείνοις τοῖς γράμμασι.

<sup>160</sup> This is pointed out by Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, pp. 240–241.

character. *The written text is not permanent in the sense that it is entirely stabilized, but in the sense that it is available as a fixed record for a longer period of time.* It is not merely there for the moment, but can be repeated and embellished at a later point. That was the essential reason for consulting written material.

We detect this rationale by noticing how several ancient historians regarded their own writings. Herodotus looked at his writing as a publication “in order that so the [memory of] past things may not be blotted out from among mankind by time” (1:1).<sup>161</sup> Writing can endure time, he implies, and is thus an aid for remembering what might otherwise be forgotten. Thucydides is critical of persons who are interested in fabulous matters which they enjoy for a brief time, because his own *History* “is indeed composed as a possession for all time rather than as a prize essay to be heard for the moment” (I 22:4).<sup>162</sup> The writing endures the moment of time and is therefore an aid to remember also events which are contemporary to the historian.<sup>163</sup> Josephus cherishes a similar view: “In fact, the work of committing to memory those things which have [not] previously been investigated and of commending to posterity the things of one’s own time is one which merits praise and acknowledgement” (*Bell.* 1:15).<sup>164</sup> He immediately refers to his own writing as a *μνήμη τῶν κατορθωμάτων*, “a memorial of great achievements” (*Bell.* 1:16), and thus reveals his own attitude to the written word. It is a memorial, something that should help the Greeks and Romans to remember the war. Even Quintilian, though not a historian himself, realizes that history is different, not being written for immediate effect or the instant necessities of forensic strife, “but for the memory of posterity and the fame of its author’s genius” (X 1:31).<sup>165</sup> Writing thus stands between the past and the present; for the historians it is a way to the distant as well as the recent past. It does not serve the modern documentary purpose, but it is a means to preserve the past in order to make it a part of the present memory.

<sup>161</sup> ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται.

<sup>162</sup> κτήμιά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται.

<sup>163</sup> Malitz states: “Thukydides’ Werk ist allem Anschein nach damals als erstes aller Prosawerke bewußt an die Schriftlichkeit der Vermittlung gebunden gewesen” (“Das Interesse an der Geschichte”, pp. 332–333). I find that to be an exaggerated view, because it neglects the oral aspects involved in any ancient reading of Thucydides’ work.

<sup>164</sup> τό γε μὴν μνήμη τὰ [μῆ] προϊστορηθέντα διδόναι καὶ τὰ τῶν ἰδίων χρόνων τοῖς μεθ’ ἑαυτὸν συνιστάνειν ἐπαίνου καὶ μαρτυρίας ἄξιον.

<sup>165</sup> *sed ad memoriam posteritatis et ingenii famam componitur.*

*d. Possible Uses of the Written Source*

From this basic character of the written source, other functions emerge. Sometimes, one has to assume, the written source was the only available record of a particular event. The reason why Polybius, after all, employed written sources was probably that they provided the sole means to gain information concerning certain matters. It is evident that on some occasions the written material served to broaden the scope of historical knowledge. Granted the historians usually tried to combine the use of written material with direct and/or indirect autopsy, one must certainly infer that the written medium was sometimes the only channel through which the inquirer could become “contemporaneous” with certain parts of the past history, be it periods of time, a king, a place, a taxation, a war, some ships, etc.

When other sources were available, one may indeed envision also a certain kind of cross-checking. Yet, that practice must have been far removed from the modern habit of relying on written material. If any cross-checking took place, it usually consisted of a comparison between different oral accounts or between hearsay and autopsy. The latter phenomenon, that of checking an oral report by personal observation, is a natural inference from the basic primacy of sight. Herodotus also sometimes reports different accounts of the same event, and he is aware of the discrepancies.<sup>166</sup> Only once, to my knowledge, is some kind of written material – an inscription – brought out in order to settle an issue, but Herodotus actually refutes the correctness of that piece of evidence (1:51).<sup>167</sup> Thucydides certainly also knew of several conflicting accounts concerning the same things (I 22:3), but only rarely is he willing to relate the different versions, instead leaving the hearers/readers to focus on other matters;<sup>168</sup> and when he, quite exceptionally, does so in II 5:5–6, the two versions are presented as oral accounts – what “the Thebans say” and what “the Plataeans deny”. Sometimes he might have cross-checked a written account with an oral account, but even on these occasions the latter seems to have gained the upper hand. When he states in VI 55:1 that he knows “even through hearsay (καὶ ἄκοῆ) more accurately than others”, it is not unlikely that oral informants had supplemented and cor-

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<sup>166</sup> Cf., e.g., 1:5; 2:2–3, 45, 55.

<sup>167</sup> Lang refers to 6:137 (“Herodotus: Oral History with a Difference”, p. 96), where Herodotus mentions what the Athenians say and what Hecataeus maintains ἐν τοῖσι λόγοις. But here Herodotus merely reports the two versions quite passively; he does not cross-check them.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Kitto, *Poiesis*, pp. 289–290, 349–350.

rected what he knew from written sources available in the works of Herodotus and Hellanicus.<sup>169</sup>

In his methodological statements Polybius suggests indeed that written sources – he calls them ὑπομνήματα – should be compared in regard to their content (XII 25<sup>e</sup>:1).<sup>170</sup> But it is with Josephus that we detect more extensive glimpses of such cross-checking. For him the ideal was that several sources – oral and written – should agree: “For the sign of true history is whether all say as well as write the same things concerning the same events” (*Ap.* 1:26).<sup>171</sup> That is precisely what he misses in the Greek historians whom he criticizes, because the Greeks neglected, according to Josephus, to keep official records of current events (*Ap.* 1:19–22). He was tired of their repeated καινολογεῖν (cf. *Ap.* 1:222); they were always seeking the novelty of language.<sup>172</sup> The Jews, by contrast, have preserved their records with scrupulous accuracy (*Ap.* 1:28–43). While autopsy and personal involvement remains the most essential source of the historian’s information, the written material thus also plays an important role. He indicates that the *commentarii* of certain imperial commanders, probably the ones of Vespasian and Titus,<sup>173</sup> supplemented his own recollection (*Ap.* 1:56). And somewhat later in *Contra Apionem*, for instance, as he defends himself against Apion’s accusation concerning the Jewish veneration of an ass, he refers to the fact that Antiochus found nothing in the temple to deserve such ridicule and urges Apion to consider this evidence as “these things are attested by many sober historians”,<sup>174</sup> mentioning several of the historians by name (*Ap.* 2:83–84). Evidently the written confirmation of many authorities was better than one, so that the “social memory” of the Jews could be cross-checked by consulting a number of literary pieces of evidence.

Tacitus must be mentioned at this point. Ronald Syme claims that there is nothing in the old notion that he “merely selected a single author whom he proceeded to transcribe and stylize, with little care for variants and none at all for documentation”.<sup>175</sup> That is said of the *Annales*, but similar

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<sup>169</sup> So Gomme/Andrewes/Dover, *Commentary*, IV, p. 323; Hornblower, *Thucydides*, p. 84.

<sup>170</sup> The text is quoted above Chap. 2, A:4.

<sup>171</sup> τῆς μὲν γὰρ ἀληθοῦς ἐστὶ τεκμήριον ἱστορίας, εἰ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἅπαντες ταῦτὰ καὶ λέγοιεν καὶ γράφοιεν.

<sup>172</sup> So Schäublin, “Josephus und die Griechen”, p. 321.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. *Vit.* 342, 358.

<sup>174</sup> The text is part of the long lacuna common to all the Greek MSS. The Latin version of Cassiodorus reads: *multi et digni conscriptores super hoc quoque testantur.*

<sup>175</sup> Syme, *Tacitus*, I, p. 298.

statements can be found for the *Historiae*.<sup>176</sup> In the latter work Tacitus refers a number of times to a plurality of written sources;<sup>177</sup> in the former work he claims to have consulted most writers on Tiberius, even finding some valuable information in a source – the *commentarii* of Agrippina, the mother of Nero – which they did not consult (*Ann.* 4:53),<sup>178</sup> and to follow his sources for Nero where they are unanimous and record them under the name of their sponsors where they disagree (*Ann.* 13:20). Although Tacitus is not entirely successful when it comes to live up to his ideal, as Syme points out,<sup>179</sup> he seems to have supplemented oral/aural information with an ambitious reading and comparison of several written sources. “Much has come my way that deserves recognition, even though unnoticed by others”,<sup>180</sup> he says by reference to other writers (*Ann.* 6:7).

### *e. The Supplementary Character of the Written Source*

As one thus tries to generalize the pattern emerging from a rather diverse group of historians, one finds that Polybius’ outburst towards Timaeus’ use of written sources cannot be taken at face value as an indication of their complete rejection of such material. The point was rather that *a one-sided reliance on written sources isolated the historian in abstract notions of past reality*.

The general characteristics of orality and literacy as information technologies here spill over to a situation where the two media function as bridges from the present to the past, that is, as sources. Autopsy as orality, and orality as such, have priority over writing. That priority remained even when written sources were employed, because their actual use was normally an oral/aural event and required the active involvement of its users. *The basic characteristic of the written source that distinguished it from the oral source was its permanent character*. However, that did not make it more reliable. It helped to secure information which might otherwise have been forgotten; *it was an aid to memory*, and as such part of the broader function of writing, but it did not to any significant extent provide the exclusive means to an authoritative check of information. Even in Josephus and – to a somewhat lesser extent – Tacitus that function

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Syme, *Tacitus*, I, p. 190.

<sup>177</sup> *Hist.* 2:37 (*auctores*); 2:101 (*scriptores temporum*); 3:29 (*omnis auctores*); 3:51 (*celeberrimos auctores*); 5:3 (*plurimi auctores*); 5:6 (*veteres auctores*). Cf. also *Hist.* 4:83.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. also *Ann.* 1:81; 3:3; 4:11.

<sup>179</sup> Syme, *Tacitus*, I, p. 290.

<sup>180</sup> *nobis pleraque digna cognitu obvenere, quamquam ab aliis incelebrata.*

is intertwined with a profound emphasis on direct and indirect autopsy, personal observation and involvement, and interrogation of eyewitnesses.

#### 4. Orality and Literacy in the Gospel Tradition

As we saw in a previous section of this chapter,<sup>181</sup> there was a close interaction between autopsy and orality during the formation and development of the gospel tradition, to the extent that one might regard autopsy as a form of orality integrated into acts of hearing. The preceding considerations of the rationale behind the ancient scepticism towards writing and the regular priority of the oral source *vis-à-vis* the written one have helped us to establish a sensitivity to the dynamics of orality inherent in those parts of the gospel tradition that were put to writing, both in regard to the sources of the gospels as well as the gospel narratives themselves. We have become attuned to a way of thinking which approaches the literacy displayed in the gospel tradition as, in essence, a form of “secondary” orality, no matter the rather advanced literary level of some of the writings. *What we have is “memorative literature”, written from memory to memory.* It had no life of its own; the written texts, whether on a scroll or on a codex,<sup>182</sup> were mostly “transitional” in the sense that they presupposed and supplemented oral modes of communication, regularly returning to oral modalities. This view finds a high degree of continuity between the spoken and the written word on several stages of the gospel tradition and is thus in essential agreement with one of the tenets of the early form criticism.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Chap. 3, A:4.

<sup>182</sup> Young argues that by turning to the codex the Christians relativized the written text and kept to the living and abiding voice, while the Jews, by maintaining the parchment roll, continuously centered on the written text (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 10–16, 288–289). But how does that theory explain the emerging Pharisaic and rabbinic emphasis on oral torah and oral transmission – in reality supplemented by the use of note-books – and the strong advice to learn torah directly from a teacher, not to speak of the insistence that even the torah written on a roll had to be memorized? The Jews of the first centuries CE were not centered around the sacred text written on a roll; they were torah-centered.

<sup>183</sup> I thus agree, at this point, with what Koester says about the importance of the oral medium in relation to the synoptic gospels: “Writings that were later called ‘gospels’ came into existence as alternative forms of the continuing oral tradition in three different genres. All three were functional; that is, they were optional and convenient aids designed to strengthen the role that the tradition about Jesus played in the churches” (“Written Gospels or Oral Tradition?”, p. 294).



It has, however, been severely attacked by some more recent scholars. Walter Schmithals has repeated his view that the synoptic tradition was literary from its inception and that the adherence to the form-critical model, even in a modified form, no longer rests on scholarly grounds but on nostalgia.<sup>184</sup> Everything we know of the ancient information technologies and the importance of the spoken word contradicts, however, Schmithals' one-sided emphasis on the written medium.

*a. The Dichotomy of Orality and Textuality: Werner H. Kelber*

The most influential critique came from a different corner. It did not indeed deny the existence of oral currencies in early Christianity, but focused on a strict distinction between the oral character of the pre-synoptic genres, on the one hand, and the written gospel narratives, on the other hand.

That critique constituted one of Erhardt Güttgemanns' candid questions to the form-critical approach.<sup>185</sup> And Werner H. Kelber developed Güttgemanns' observation, receiving much attention for his insistence on the sharp dichotomy between orality and literacy – or textuality, as Kelber says – that is visible primarily in the Markan disruption of the oral legacy of the pre-Markan transmission.<sup>186</sup> Kelber certainly realizes, in distinction to Güttgemanns, that in orality one cannot differentiate strictly between synchronic and diachronic rules, because transmission entails composition.<sup>187</sup> Yet, for him the written gospel is not the logical outcome of oral proclivities and forces inherent in orality. While “synoptic oral traditions preceded the gospel, entered into it, bypassed it, and continued long after its composition”, as Kelber indeed asserts,<sup>188</sup> the collective memory of these traditions was transformed and reconstructed by the gospel as a linguistic force of textual and literary integrity. Several other New Testament scholars, like Barry W. Henaut,<sup>189</sup> recognize correctly that orality and textuality do not represent two incompatible media of transmission and communication, but they continue nevertheless to insist that the oral phase of the tradition is forever lost behind a series of gospel texts and pre-gospel sources.

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<sup>184</sup> Schmithals, “Vom Ursprung der synoptischen Tradition”, pp. 288–316.

<sup>185</sup> Güttgemanns, *Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, pp. 69–166, 252.

<sup>186</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, pp. 1–139, 184–299.

<sup>187</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, p. 43 n. 224.

<sup>188</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, p. 184.

<sup>189</sup> Henaut, *Oral Tradition and the Gospels*.

In essence, this is another way of saying that the story is story and the history is history, and the two cannot co-exist. The story is a highly textualized entity of its own, one seems to argue, with little or no connection to the oral, living reality of the history which it describes. The oral history is disrupted by the story of the written narrative. According to this view, the story has captivated history entirely in its highly textualized pattern.

*b. Narrative as Oral Communication in Textualized Form*

This view is problematic for several reasons, more general ones as well as more specific ones. I shall not here repeat the critique of others, but focus on aspects relevant to the oral history approach. Anyone familiar with this approach finds Kelber's distinction strange. To the extent that the past history is within our reach by means of the oral accounts of its observers and participants, our perception of the textualized version of that history is severely distorted the moment we isolate it from its living roots. One imprisons the text in notions of textuality, while it springs in fact from forces which cross the neat borders of scholarly distinctions between the two media of transmission and communication. Kelber copes indeed with a significant – in my view even exaggerated – existence of an oral legacy at the pre-gospel stage of tradition and transmission; and once we recognize a diachronic, oral dimension of the gospel tradition, we encounter immediately a context of interaction between living people and between oral accounts and written texts. To select one isolated textual account from that multifaceted matrix and regard it as entirely estranged from the oral legacy which nourished it, challenges everything we know from antiquity – as well as from modern anthropological studies – of how written texts interact with other forms of human, cultural discourse.

Oral historians often listen to oral stories about the past. Rarely do the informants provide abstract description concerning matters of history. History is presented in a narrativized form, history as story. One might argue, as a matter of fact, that the story as a means of communication reflects in itself an oral legacy. Certain characteristics of the Markan story make Kelber look at it as a highly textualized entity, but he seldom reflects on the story as a way to narrativize and communicate matters concerning one's own existence. Oral cultures, as is well-known, are not so much interested in what something "is" as such, as in events, in actions and happenings. They narrativize their own existence and environment.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 140–141; Ong, "Orality-Literacy Studies", p. 378.

Stories or narratives – we may here use the two terms interchangeably – consist to a large extent of events, placing various actions and happenings in a particular temporal and causal sequence.<sup>191</sup>

Eric A. Havelock has related this narrativizing tendency to ancient concepts of orality. In his extremely influential book *Preface to Plato*, he claims not merely to have pointed out the effects of the alphabetization of the Greek language and the rise of literacy, which Kelber brings attention to,<sup>192</sup> but also indicates the character of the oral mind-set behind Plato's censoring attitude towards the Homeric poets. In book ten of the *Republic*, Plato criticizes these poets who with their crippling of the mind are unable to think in abstract terms and reflect on the thing *per se*. In Havelock's judgement, the Platonic state of mind marks the revolt of the new literate mentality,<sup>193</sup> which the oral poets did not possess. The oral hegemony of the Homeric culture expressed their "opinion" (δόξα) in a tribal encyclopaedia of pluralized and visually concrete happenings, not in abstract thoughts integrated into systems of cause and effect. The poets regularly located the doings and happenings in episodes; and they gave the episodes their narrative association and relevance by placing them within a narrative situation which, in turn, was located, according to Havelock, "in the context of a great and compendious story".<sup>194</sup>

Havelock's argument is of significant value for our understanding of the gospels as stories. In the midst of our appreciation of the narrative qualities of the gospels, we often fail to fully appreciate the implication of our insights. *The gospels, then, while indeed gaining from the feedback of literacy, are as stories reflective of an oral mind-set.* The authors never speak of the Gospel, the heart of their message, in abstract terms or by exact definitions, but continuously express their "opinion" concerning it through a story of visually concrete happenings in the past. They tell

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<sup>191</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp. 45–48.

<sup>192</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>193</sup> One might of course question whether the Platonic drive actually stems only from the invention of the alphabet and the increasing literacy. I have already referred to Harris' reserve towards the idea of an extensive spread of literacy during the entire classical Greek, Hellenistic and Roman imperial period (above Chap. 3, B:2a). And as Kullmann points out ("Der Übergang von der Mündlichkeit zur Schriftlichkeit", p. 68), Havelock neglects to discuss Platon's own reaction against literacy. Cf. also Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, pp. 17, 54–56. A list of important reviews of Havelock's book is given by Burns, "Athenian Literacy", p. 373 n. 18.

<sup>194</sup> Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, p. 176. In one of his last contributions, Havelock surveyed the broader background and implications of his theory ("The oral-literate equation", pp. 11–27).

episodes which have a significant narrative association in the story about Jesus. In chapters five and six we shall explore more fully how history becomes narrativized in a story. Already here we may indeed feel how problematic it is to speak of an ancient story as a distortion of a previous oral legacy.

c. *"A True Sense of Pastness" and Orality*

Kelber touches another vital point of concern when he denies that the oral genre exhibits any interest in past history at all, clinging to the old notion that no distinction existed between the words of the historical Jesus and those of his followers.<sup>195</sup> "It is only with writing that a true sense of pastness is possible", he boldly asserts.<sup>196</sup>

Kelber operates, it seems, with a rather Western and modernized view of what constitutes the past. I doubt that the majority of scholars of social anthropology and ethnology, except Jack Goody and Ian Watt,<sup>197</sup> would make such a statement today.<sup>198</sup> What is "a true sense of pastness" after all? Is it to be equated with a sense of historical truth, which is a rather culture-specific notion? Already in the introduction, we pointed out that some oral societies indeed betray an awareness of historical truth.<sup>199</sup> Or are we to assume that each generation of an oral culture really generates its own past, neglecting entirely the link to the ancestors? Are all the traditions of origin and genesis not, after all, representative of "a true sense of pastness", just because anthropologists tend to term them as myths or because they have functions for the present society? Are not the archaisms in an oral tradition a sign that there hardly exists a total homeostatic and functional congruence between an oral group and its traditions, as both Jan Vansina and Paul Thompson, for instance, point out?<sup>200</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, pp. 199–207.

<sup>196</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, p. 209.

<sup>197</sup> In their influential article from 1968, they state it quite clearly: "The pastness of the past, then, depends upon a historical sensibility which can hardly begin to operate without permanent written records" (Goody/Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy", p. 34).

<sup>198</sup> Schuster, a professor of ethnology, gives a characteristic remark: "Das Schreiben-können und das Geschichtehaben werden also in einer aus der europäischen Wissenschaftstradition leicht verständlichen Verwechslung von Geschichte mit dem Umfang und der Zuverlässigkeit ihrer Dokumentenation ursächlich und funktional miteinander verknüpft" ("Zur Konstruktion der Geschichte", p. 57). Schuster's article displays a nuanced sensitivity to the notion of pastness in oral cultures.

<sup>199</sup> See *Introd.*, B:1. Cf. also below Chap. 4, B:2.

<sup>200</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, pp. 120–123; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 147. Cf. above *Introd.*, B:1; Chap. 1, B:1 and B:2. Ong realizes and admits that archaisms do

Goody himself, who initiated the theory of homeostasis together with Watt,<sup>201</sup> is now somewhat more balanced in his view,<sup>202</sup> though indeed maintaining his basic position. And as far as Greek antiquity is concerned, one should compare with Wolfgang Kullmann's careful use of his detailed knowledge of the material. "Offenbar ist die 'oral society' doch nicht so homogen wie proklamiert", he insists.<sup>203</sup> Even the *Iliad*, he elsewhere argues, reflects a limited historical consciousness.<sup>204</sup> Everything is not fiction; there is a sense of pastness. Kelber's claim raises indeed question upon question.

We should recall the attitude of the historians. Kelber is aware of the ancient scepticism towards the written word, but fails to ask what happens when the medium of communication becomes the bridge from the present to the past. The historians of antiquity betray a keen sense of pastness; and they were capable of writing; they were familiar with and employed written sources. Yet, despite all that, their primary means to relate to the past, to become "contemporaneous" with it, was not the written medium, as we have seen, but the various, interrelated oral modalities of seeing, speaking and hearing. Such a consistent pattern of developing a sense of history would certainly be surprising were the oral sources themselves totally void of an inherent retrospective dimension. Indeed, one might surely assume that they could serve as sources for historically oriented persons because they were specifically felt to display important information about the past. The oral genre, as it thus appears, cannot be inherently opposed to history in its pastness.

I have already referred to Vansina, whose special interest is precisely the oral tradition as history, and given a sample of an oral genre which is

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survive, but only, he asserts, through their current use (*Orality and Literacy*, p. 47). Yet, I would argue, the fact that an archaism is used is not sufficient to uphold an extreme functional theory concerning traditions, because the current use must then relate to the current meaning, which is not always the case. Cf. Hultkrantz' discussion of "survivals" – some scholars call it "cultural lag" – in his *Metodvägar*, pp. 108–109.

<sup>201</sup> Goody/Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy", pp. 27–68.

<sup>202</sup> Goody, *The interface between the written and the oral*, pp. 174–182. Already in the original presentation of the theory, Goody and Watt expressed some reservations: "Formalized patterns of speech, recital under ritual conditions, the use of drums and other musical instruments, the employment of professional remembrancers—all such factors may shield at least part of the content of memory from the transmuting influence of the immediate pressures of the present" ("The Consequences of Literacy", p. 31).

<sup>203</sup> Kullmann, "'Oral Tradition/Oral History' und die frühgriechische Epik", pp. 184–196; quotation from p. 189.

<sup>204</sup> Kullmann, "Homer and Historical Memory", pp. 95–113.

defined in terms of its capacity to reproduce ancient “fact” in distinction to “fiction”.<sup>205</sup> Certainly this genre definition betrays a keen sense of what is believed to be the true past. It is one thing to say that personal or societal present-day concerns always interact with the historical intentionality of an oral account, as does Vansina, and another to claim that only writing makes possible a true sense of pastness, as does Kelber. An oral tradition can be regarded as a “historiology” of the past, says Vansina, an account of how people have interpreted their history,<sup>206</sup> and thus be reflective of a sense of pastness. At the core of Thompson’s oral history approach stands also the conviction that the oral evidence is retrospective: it takes seriously the informant’s own feelings about the past, assuming that such feelings do exist.<sup>207</sup> *The oral legacy is indeed the matrix of an existential feeling of living not merely in the present, but between the past and the present.*

d. “A True Sense of Pastness” and the Resurrection Belief

Kelber’s thesis, that there was no distinction between the words of the historical Jesus and those of his followers, is an old one; and on this occasion he seems to be clearly dependent upon the old form-critics. As is well-known, Bultmann argued that all the words of Jesus served as a vehicle for the voice of the risen Lord, so that the early Christian communities could, for instance, incorporate prophetic oracles into the dominical tradition without any concern to keep the two separated.<sup>208</sup> There was no real interest in the past. Also Martin Dibelius, despite his comments on the authenticity of the tradition,<sup>209</sup> believed that the early Christians had all their attention and hope directed towards the future.<sup>210</sup> Inspirational words infused by the spirit of the Lord and regulatory words from the historical Jesus functioned on the same level in the paraenetic activity of the communities, because they were all said “in the Lord”.<sup>211</sup> Dennis Nineham finds himself in agreement with this emphasis and relates it to the phenomenon of autopsy. Given the contemporary attitude to historical narrative, one may ask, according to Nineham, whether it is really sur-

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<sup>205</sup> Above Introd., B:1.

<sup>206</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 196.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. above Chap. 1, B:1.

<sup>208</sup> Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, pp. 134–136, 156, 176, 393 *et passim*.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. above Chap. 1, C:1.

<sup>210</sup> Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, p. 10.

<sup>211</sup> Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, p. 242.

prising if the gospel narrative “was moulded by forces other than conformity to historical testimony, even when such testimony was available”.<sup>212</sup> The same view comes through also in more recent studies, as in Eugene M. Boring’s attempt to trace Jesus sayings back to Christian prophets.<sup>213</sup>

The issue is complex and Nineham is cautious not to make too much out of his observation. It is beyond doubt that belief in the resurrected and present Christ in some measure coloured the Jesus tradition. Even a first glance at the gospel narratives shows that they reflect the post-Easter situation of faith. But once that is fully recognized, *one may certainly ask whether such a belief necessarily was opposed to a sensitivity to the past, historical dimension of the tradition.* Why, in that case, is the story still told as history, as something that happened in the past? Why, in that case, do the evangelists, for all we know, care to use traditions at all?

In a previous study I tried to show at some length that as far as the Matthean community is concerned, the notion of Jesus as a unique teacher was accentuated in the post-Easter situation to form a decisive motive and criterion of transmission, fostering the preservation and elaboration of the Jesus tradition for its own sake and in a setting separated from the other activities of the community. Even the sayings that Boring and others regard as strongly influenced by creative and inspired prophets in the Matthean community are, by closer scrutiny, to be seen as interpreted and actualized versions of the teaching which the available tradition attributed to the earthly Jesus.<sup>214</sup> In addition, the early work of Jürgen Roloff should be mentioned, where he concludes that even the episodes about Jesus exhibit historicizing tendencies throughout the transmission process.<sup>215</sup> More recently, Eugene E. Lemcio also claims to have detected an idiomatic use of vocabulary, which shows that the evangelists produced

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<sup>212</sup> Nineham, “Eye-Witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition, II”, p. 250. Cf. also Nineham, *The Gospel of St Mark*, pp. 18–21, 24–25.

<sup>213</sup> Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus*, pp. 189–272. Boring realizes the inherent tension between the prophetic form of “sayings of the risen Jesus” and the historicizing narrative form of the gospels, yet his concluding words sound quite categorical: “The Palestinian-Syrian church handed on the tradition of Jesus’ words but made no sharp distinction between them and sayings of Christian prophets in its midst” (*ibid.*, pp. 269–270).

<sup>214</sup> Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 349–368.

<sup>215</sup> “Unsere Untersuchung hat zu dem Ergebnis geführt, daß historisierende Motive innerhalb des von uns überschaubaren Gestaltungs- und Tradierungsprozesses der Jesusgeschichten von den Anfängen an eine weit größere Rolle gespielt haben, als vielfach angenommen worden ist” (Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesus*, p. 270).

narratives distinguishing Jesus' time from their own.<sup>216</sup> In short, therefore, it must be admitted, at least, that belief in the resurrected and present Christ should not be taken to exclude *a priori* the possibility of a real historical sensitivity among the early Christians.

e. "A True Sense of Pastness" and the Prophetic Q Source

The so-called Q source represents for Kelber all the non-historical and charismatic characteristics of orality. Here the lack of a true sense of pastness is evident, according to Kelber, and forms a sharp contrast to the textualized patterns of the Markan narrative. A central part of Kelber's argument is that the Markan author deliberately avoided and abandoned the oral speech mode of the Q material with the intention of presenting a textualized alternative. In Q most things were swallowed up in the enthusiasm of the prophetic interest in the present and the future; in the Markan text the authority of the living Lord was for the first time historicized and put into a pre-Easter framework; and once that was made, according to Kelber, the oral "defect" of Q was neutralized, clearing the way for its inclusion in the writings of Matthew and Luke. We have already dealt with the notion of pastness in oral contexts and within the matrix of an enthusiastic interest in the present and the future. What about the prophetic character of Q?

Kelber avoids the problem of the pre-gospel interaction of the two media by emptying that period, it seems, from any extensive forms of textuality. Yet, granted the Q material contained significant prophetic characteristics, one cannot, to begin with, immediately equate a prophetic consciousness with an aversion to writing. Although significant uncertainties exist,<sup>217</sup> most experts of Q today think of it as a (growing) written corpus.<sup>218</sup> "Like Mark, Q is a written text", Harry T. Fleddermann as-

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<sup>216</sup> "I intend to show that the Evangelists, to an extent heretofore unrecognized, produced narratives distinguishing Jesus' time from their own" (Lemcio, *The past of Jesus*, p. 1). His statements sound quite categorical: "Kerygmatic expressions of 'faith' found outside of the gospels were *not* projected back onto the narrative" (*ibid.*, p. 2). Lemcio concludes: "The hardest available evidence from the gospels has confirmed the thesis that the Evangelists produced narratives about Jesus of Nazareth that were free of blatant attempts to infuse and overlay his story with their own later and developed estimates of his teaching, miracles, passion, and person" (*ibid.*, p. 108). Personally, I would hesitate to go that far.

<sup>217</sup> Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, pp. 103–108.

<sup>218</sup> Cf., e.g., Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q*, pp. 42–51; Sato, *Q und Prophetie*, pp. 16–17; Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity*, p. 38. Some further scholars are listed in Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, p. 336 n. 1.



serts against Kelber.<sup>219</sup> To speak of Q as “an oral genre”, as does Kelber,<sup>220</sup> is therefore either to neglect a broad tendency in recent research on Q or to assume a process where the written corpus constantly returned to and became dominated by an oral currency and hermeneutic.<sup>221</sup> Even in the latter case, one would have to admit the existence of writing at the pre-synoptic stage of transmission.

Moreover, there is ample evidence that prophetic movements made use of the written medium.<sup>222</sup> Susan Niditch, in her recent book *Oral World and Written Word*, has brought attention to the profoundly oral character of ancient Israelite culture and how this orality might affect the interpretation of the Old Testament writings. The prophetic literature, in her view, constitutes one of four modalities of continuity and discontinuity between oral and written literary registers within the Old Testament, exhibiting written transcriptions of memorized or dictated oral compositions.<sup>223</sup> The prophetic message was, after all, eventually written down, without losing its vital prophetic character,<sup>224</sup> as already Walther Zimmerli pointed out.<sup>225</sup> Writing might also have been part of the prophetic activity itself. Isaiah 8:16 speaks of a testimony to be bound and a torah – teaching – to be sealed among the prophet’s disciples; literary documents are normally sealed in the Old Testament (1 Kgs 21:8; Jer 32:10–14, 44).<sup>226</sup> Yahweh also tells the prophet Isaiah to write down certain utterances (Isa 8:1–2; 30:8). Jeremiah, we are told, composed written scrolls

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<sup>219</sup> Fleddermann, *Mark and Q*, p. 20. Cf. also Risto’s critique of Kelber in “Thomas and the oral gospel tradition”, pp. 14–15.

<sup>220</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, p. 201.

<sup>221</sup> Kelber would probably choose the latter alternative. In the new introduction of the reprint he states it explicitly: “With a majority of scholars I recognize the written existence of the sayings of gospel Q” (*The Oral and the Written Gospel*, p. xxi). Yet, he does not explain how that view accords with his insistence on Q as an oral genre.

<sup>222</sup> For a most recent discussion of the evidence for literacy in ancient Israel, see Young, “Israelite Literacy, I”, pp. 239–253; Young, “Israelite Literacy, II”, pp. 408–422.

<sup>223</sup> Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, pp. 117–120.

<sup>224</sup> I am not persuaded by Young’s attempt to separate “the original Sitz im Leben of prophetic material and the occasion of its transition to a written form” (“Israelite Literacy, I”, p. 253). Especially the book of Jeremiah links prophetic and scribal activity closely.

<sup>225</sup> Zimmerli aptly concludes his treatment of this subject: “Die Buchwerdung des Gotteswortes versetzt die lebendige Anrede des lebendigen Herrn nie in den Ruhestand. Dieses kan jäh in ein neues Heute hinein zu reden beginnen” (“Vom Prophetenwort zum Prophetenbuch”, col. 495). Cf. also Willi-Plein, “Spuren der Unterscheidung von mündlichem und schriftlichem Wort”, p. 83.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. also CD 5:2 (בספר החוררה החחום).

through Baruch and wrote down his message, betraying several links to prominent scribal families;<sup>227</sup> Ezekiel was acquainted with the written mode of communication;<sup>228</sup> Habakkuk 2:2 suggests perhaps that the prophet should set up a clearly legible public notice of his vision;<sup>229</sup> Ben Sira, the eminent scribe, might have legitimized his authority with prophetic labels, indicating the overlap between the scribal and the prophetic activity;<sup>230</sup> and the highly literate Qumran movement likewise attributed prophetic labels to their cherished Teacher.<sup>231</sup> Certainly, for all we know, there is nothing to suggest that a prophetic movement was seen as inherently opposed to the written medium. In all these examples oral currencies and written currencies are thought to co-exist and interact. Q might therefore indeed have been a (growing) written corpus, as most scholars assert, and as such reflect a certain interaction between a literate and an oral legacy without therefore losing any of its characteristic prophetic character.

By the same token, one cannot immediately equate a prophetic consciousness with a lack of any real sense of pastness. As a parallel to the development of the Q material, Migaku Sato brings attention to the phenomenon of “Fortprophetie” behind the Old Testament prophetic writings.<sup>232</sup> The disciples of a prophet continued to prophesize, and they did so by employing the language of the prophetic master himself, the “Meistersprache”. This is most evident in the book of Isaiah. Not only do we find secondary material in Isaiah 1–39 which reflects Isaiah’s own diction, but, as it seems, both Second Isaiah and Third Isaiah – at least according to Isaiah 60–62 – linked their prophetic message substantially with the tradition attributed to Isaiah of Jerusalem. And they never identified themselves as independent prophets; they remained anonymous, assuming the identity of the prophetic master to whom they adhered. Even external influences from other prophets, which might have been somewhat foreign to the Isaiah tradition, were integrated and attributed to the one specific prophet of Jerusalem. Neither the prophetic disciples themselves nor other prophetic authorities are identified as authors; only the one person of past history, Isaiah of Jerusalem, comes to the fore. We can

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<sup>227</sup> Jer 29:1–32; 30:2; 36:2–32; 45:1; 51:60–64.

<sup>228</sup> Ezek 2:9–3:3; 24:2; 37:16, 20; 43:11.

<sup>229</sup> So Floyd, “Prophecy and Writing”, pp. 462–481.

<sup>230</sup> This is however denied by Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, pp. 177–270. I have discussed the evidence in *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 81–84.

<sup>231</sup> Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 122–126.

<sup>232</sup> Sato, *Q und Prophetie*, pp. 323–336, 398–399.

find similar phenomena behind other prophetic books, as I have tried to show elsewhere.<sup>233</sup> The new material that is regularly added to the tradition is not shaped as an entirely new conception of the present reality, but lingers between the past and the present, constantly expressing the concerns of the present by a dynamic interpretation of the past. *Prophetic circles do have a real sense of pastness, despite their intense feelings concerning the contemporary situation.* Instead of focusing only on the relevance of the present and future as a motive for the transmission in Q, Sato thus adds the motive of “Erinnerung”.<sup>234</sup> The two need to be held together. One finds both “Weitertradierung” and “Neuschöpfung” in Q, inseparably linked with each other.<sup>235</sup>

### 5. Conclusion: Orality and Literacy as Re-Oralization

The perspective which thus comes through when we studied the ancient people’s use of oral and written sources generally is not, as it seems, severely distorted as we approach the gospel tradition. The thesis that written texts usually had no life of their own but presupposed and supplemented oral modes of communication has not been demolished by Kelber’s intriguing argument. He rightly stresses the oral legacy of the pre-gospel tradition, but exaggerates the disruption of that legacy, the disruption between oral history and written story, we might say, by failing to see (1) that the genre of a gospel narrative might in itself reflect an oral mind-set; (2) that oral genres generally, and not only written ones, do betray a true sense of the past; (3) that the enthusiastic resurrection belief was not opposed to a real historical sensitivity; (4) and that the prophetic Q material probably was written down and interacted with oral tradition, exhibiting a particular interest in past history. In a later publication Kelber seems to admit that he drew the divide between oral tradition and gospel text somewhat too sharply,<sup>236</sup> but the new introduction in the re-

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<sup>233</sup> For extensive documentation of sources and literature, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 140–148, 176–188.

<sup>234</sup> Sato, *Q und Prophetie*, pp. 393–394.

<sup>235</sup> Sato, *Q und Prophetie*, p. 396.

<sup>236</sup> In an article published eleven years after the first edition of *The Oral and the Written Gospel* Kelber states: “The concept of tradition as biosphere suggests that the great divide thesis, which pits oral tradition vis-à-vis gospel text, can in the end not supply the answer to questions concerning tradition and gospel. If the emphasis in *OWG* fell on that division, it was because a novel approach requires a strong thesis” (“Jesus and Tradition”, p. 159).

print of his book shows that the various comments from numerous scholars have, in his view, caused no reason for a revision of his thesis.

By way of conclusion, we shall consider a more comprehensive label to account for the interplay between orality and literacy as the gospel tradition originated and developed. Margaret A. Mills, a professor of folklore, has employed the expression “re-oralization”.<sup>237</sup> The phenomenon implicit in this label helps us to conceptualize in a much better way the interaction between orality and literacy during the formative development of the gospel tradition. It describes scripture’s perpetual return to oral currency, “called for by the very nature of scripture as a peculiarly authoritative kind of text, as words to live by in the profoundest sense”.<sup>238</sup> *The transition from speaking to writing was thus not a transition from sound to silence.* Re-oralization is somewhat similar to the phenomenon of “recitation composition” that Vernon K. Robbins has brought attention to, focusing on how an ancient writer perceived an antecedent oral or written text as a performance and how a new performance perpetuated as much or as little verbatim wording as was congenial to the writer.<sup>239</sup> In addition to being applicable to a broader range of cultural manifestations, as William A. Graham has shown,<sup>240</sup> the concept of re-oralization centers very much on the social functions of each performance. The scriptural re-oralization often takes place in small groups that are negotiating for shared meaning and cohesion, according to Mills, generating multivocal and contestive interpretations in diverse contexts.

Granted the characteristics of Q sketched above, nothing speaks against regarding it as a textualized supplement to a rich oral tradition which was nourished by a keen concern to understand one’s present and future existence in light of the past. I shall not enter into (another) attempt to define the characteristics and the development of the Q material, but to the extent that it shared the common currencies of how ancient people related to the past, it probably grew through a constant process of textualization, re-oralization, textualization, re-oralization, etc., with a steady feedback between the two media. *Oral and written transmission are not mutually exclusive alternatives and do not follow the logic of first oral then writ-*

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<sup>237</sup> Mills, “Domains of Folkloristic Concern”, pp. 231–241.

<sup>238</sup> Mills, “Domains of Folkloristic Concern”, p. 232.

<sup>239</sup> Robbins, “Writing as a Rhetorical Act”, pp. 142–168; “Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures”, pp. 75–91.

<sup>240</sup> Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*. Graham does not, however, employ the term “re-oralization”. Cf. above Introd. B:3. For a helpful discussion of Graham’s work, see Jaffee, “Oral Culture in Scriptural Religion”, pp. 223–225. For the use of Graham’s study in relation to the gospel tradition, cf. Balch, “The Canon”, pp. 183–205.

ten.<sup>241</sup> In fact, even the ancient scribes, who were among the most literate in their society, can be seen as performers, not merely copyists, of written texts, being deeply influenced by the oral culture in which they lived.<sup>242</sup> To envision the written Q material as entirely isolated from an oral environment, exhibiting its own idiosyncratic view, is an anachronistic projection of our scholarly book mentality!<sup>243</sup> The so-called “Mark-Q overlaps” indicate that elements of the Q material were known in other communities of interpretation as well,<sup>244</sup> either independently of Q or by direct dependence.<sup>245</sup> And Matthew and Luke illustrate well how persons acquainted with Q freely integrated it with other traditional and non-traditional elements. For all we know from the ancient interaction of the written and the spoken word, the written material of Q was regularly employed in oral and aural activities; these activities fused the written and the oral traditions into a new synthesis; further material from the oral tradition entered into the written body of material; that material was again performed orally and aurally, etc., etc. – a constant process of re-oralization and feedback in early communities of interpretation.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Vouga expresses a similar view: “Daß Aphorismen, paradoxe Sprüche und Maximen Jesu sehr früh notiert worden sind, weil man daran weiterdenken wollte, um dann weiter erzählt und dann früh oder spät gesammelt zu werden, ist sehr plausibel. Das bedeutet nichts anderes, als daß Teile der Jesus-Tradition abwechselnd mündlich und schriftlich überliefert worden wären” (“Mündliche Tradition”, p. 196). Vouga does not follow up this important insight but adheres in his discussion of Mark and Paul mostly to the position of Kelber.

<sup>242</sup> Person, “The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer”, pp. 601–609.

<sup>243</sup> Schmithals, for instance, while being extremely critical towards the hypothetical character of the form-critical notion of oral traditions, isolates the Q community as a group with its own beliefs and traditions, stating quite confidently: “Jedenfalls aber hat die Q-Gemeinde ihr Eigenleben lange Zeit bewahrt” (“Vom Ursprung der synoptischen Tradition”, p. 308).

<sup>244</sup> I am thinking primarily of the temptation narrative (Mark 1:12–13/Q 4:1–13), the Beelzebul controversy (Mark 3:22–30/Q 11:14–23), the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30–32/Q 13:18–19), the mission charge (Mark 6:7–13/Q 10:1–16), the request for a sign (Mark 8:11–12/Q 11:29–30) and parts of the eschatological discourse (Mark 13/Q 17:22–37). (The Q material is listed according to its appearance in Luke.)

<sup>245</sup> Some recent scholars have thus pointed to the close relationship between Q and Mark. Meadors concludes that Q is not from a “second sphere of Christianity” but is compatible with Mark in regard to the sayings about the kingdom of God – and perhaps the Son of Man, eschatology and discipleship –, “because the two are both dependent upon authentic Jesus tradition” (*Jesus the Messianic Herald of Salvation*, p. 316). Fledermann argues even for a direct literary dependence. “Mark knew and used final Q”, he concludes (*Mark and Q*, p. 214).

<sup>246</sup> This is not to say that the process was uncontrolled. It is a grave mistake to think

The production of a written gospel narrative would in this perspective not constitute such a radical and revolutionary invention as is often proposed. Albert B. Lord once labelled the gospels as “oral traditional literature”,<sup>247</sup> and although he neglects, in my opinion, the possible presence of written material in the transmission process behind them,<sup>248</sup> he has a point in stressing the textual fluidity of the written gospel narratives. In view of our previous discussion, the Markan story emerges not as a new, decisive disruption of the oral legacy, but as an unusually extended and sophisticated textualization of the oral and written tradition in the context of regular interaction between orality and textuality.<sup>249</sup> Exactly what this tradition looked like is extremely difficult to know,<sup>250</sup> with the possible exception of the passion narrative.<sup>251</sup> The Matthean and the Lukan story, perhaps even the Johannine one,<sup>252</sup> show that the extended textualization

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that oral currencies necessarily involve only vague, fluid and haphazard forms of transmission. Even very learned, scribal groups of teachers employed the oral medium, as the whole rabbinic movement amply illustrates. The classical study of the technical and preservative side of oral transmission is the one by Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, now in a new edition with prefaces by Gerhardsson and Neusner. Neusner’s preface shows that the one-sided (American) critique of Gerhardsson’s contribution can no longer be sustained.

<sup>247</sup> Lord, “The Gospels as Oral Traditional Literature”, pp. 33–91.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Talbert, “Oral and Independent or Literary and Interdependent?”, pp. 93–102.

<sup>249</sup> Boomershine and Bartholomew, in their critique of Kelber, stress that Mark was written in order to be read aloud (Boomershine, “Peter’s Denial as Polemic or Confession”, pp. 47–68; Bartholomew, “Feed My Lambs”, pp. 69–96). This is confirmed by the study of Bryan, *A Preface to Mark*. Kelber might agree, but one cannot, it seems, maintain a view of Mark as a disruption of an oral legacy and at the same time hold on to the idea that an *intentional* oral element was present in the process of its composition.

<sup>250</sup> For a review of various proposals, cf. Telford, “The Pre-Markan Tradition”, pp. 693–723.

<sup>251</sup> Kelber has repeatedly denied the pre-Markan existence of the passion narrative (in, e.g., *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, pp. 185–199). The weakness of his arguments have been pointed out by Halverson, “Oral and Written Gospel”, pp. 191–194. Telford sums up the scholarship as it looked in 1990: “Despite the Kelber volume (1976) which threw doubt on the hypothesis, the consensus is still in favour of a PMPN [pre-Markan passion narrative] of some kind” (“The Pre-Markan Tradition”, p. 702). Cf. also, somewhat more recently, Bryan, *A Preface to Mark*, pp. 133–135.

<sup>252</sup> It is, of course, debated whether the Johannine author knew the Markan story in written form. I do not find it unlikely, but it would extend the limits of the present study to argue the point here. For a discussion of the similarities between the two in structure and detail, see Kieffer, “Jean et Marc”, pp. 109–125. For a recent, selective survey of the discussion concerning John and the synoptics, see Neiryneck, “John and the Synoptics in Recent Commentaries”, pp. 386–397.

of Mark was followed, in turn, by a process of further re-oralization,<sup>253</sup> resulting in yet other literary performances. We know, for instance, that the Lukan author employed a written version of Mark, and perhaps Q. Still, with the phrase καθὼς παρέδοσαν ... ἔδοξε κάμῳι ... γράψαι, “just as they transmitted ... it seemed appropriate also for me ... to write”, of the prologue (1:2–3), he indicates that he regarded his own and others compositional activity as part of an ongoing oral transmission process.<sup>254</sup> If Kim Paffenroth is correct in his recent estimation of the L material of Luke 3–19, viewing it as a written sayings source with a high level of orality,<sup>255</sup> we have an additional illustration of the dynamics at play behind the formulation in the Lukan prologue. The Lukan author’s use of Mark and Q can be seen from a similar perspective of literary performance, though this is rarely done.<sup>256</sup> The written texts, it seems, entered regularly into the oral currencies of the communities, being supplemented with information from other sources, eventually to be textualized in yet other kinds of written stories.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> For the re-oralization of the Markan story in the Matthean community, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 341–349. It would lead me too far afield here to apply the same perspective in a detailed study of Luke and John; but I am confident it can be done. I find Breytenbach’s discussion of the episode concerning the anointing at Bethany in Mark 14:3–9 and John 12:1–8 suggestive of how the Markan narrative was re-oralized by individuals in the Johannine community (“MNHMONEYEIN”, pp. 548–557).

<sup>254</sup> Schmithals denies that the prologue speaks of oral transmission and points to the mention of written sources, indicated through the use of διήγησις (“Vom Ursprung der synoptischen Tradition”, pp. 290–291 n. 14). But the διήγησις is not, strictly speaking, presented as a source; and further, while it is true that παραδιδόναι can be used for the transmission of written sources (e.g., Isoc., *Panathen.* 149: τοῖς γράμμασι τοῖς ἐξ ἐκείνου τοῦ χρόνου παραδεδομένοις ἡμῖν), how can one escape the impression that eyewitnesses and ministers of the word transmit by word of mouth? What is the alternative understanding of the phrase? That these persons transmitted written tradition? Schmithals gives no answer.

<sup>255</sup> Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus according to L*, pp. 146–149.

<sup>256</sup> To take one example, I find Witherington’s conclusions concerning the careful use (editing) of Mark and Q by the Lukan author convincing (“Editing the Good News”, pp. 324–347), but I miss a discussion of that “editing” from the perspective of the oral dynamics involved in the use of written material. The term “literary performance” instead of “editing” might better convey what was at stake.

<sup>257</sup> I am still convinced that the so-called two source hypothesis, supplemented with a keen sensitivity to the phenomenon of re-oralization, is the best working model for conceptualizing the relationship between the synoptic gospel narratives. I agree with Tuckett’s evaluation of the evidence for the so-called two gospel (or Griesbach) hypothesis: “Much of the evidence is, and remains, reversible and explicable on different sources theories” (“Review”, p. 363).

We have to envision this process as a more dynamic one than the mere technical procedure of passively reproducing and supplementing written material. The activity of supplementing other written sources was hardly in the form of extensive cross-checking. We have seen that historians rarely cross-checked between various written sources. F. Gerald Downing has also pointed out that such an activity by an author using two sources is quite unlike that of any other writer we know about in the ancient world.<sup>258</sup> One did not pick apart the written sources. Among the historians, Livy is illustrative in his extreme use of only written material, sometimes even speaking of *auctores* where *auctor* would be more suitable to describe his reliance on one particular source (e.g., XXIX 27:13).<sup>259</sup> Although Livy is exceptional and must be compared with, for instance, Tacitus' more ambitious use of various oral and written sources, the general pattern is that one broadened the scope of information, supplemented it, but one did not cross-check and unpick the sources. The continued use of the Markan narrative is therefore better accounted for when we take seriously the phenomenon of re-oralization. If any cross-checking took place, it was probably an oral procedure. Various oral versions could be compared; they could exist side by side, sometimes perhaps partially textualized and read out aloud, until the more extensive textualization of the tradition eventually forced a certain selection.<sup>260</sup>

*This constant interaction of written and oral material in a process of re-oralization is thus an essential ingredient of the gospel tradition during all stages of its formation.* I am aware of stating my perspective somewhat programatically, but that might be permitted for the moment. The oral history approach alerts us to the extremely anachronistic implication of the modern, equally programmatic, tendency of literary studies to speak of the semantic autonomy of a written story. It is indeed essential to realize that written and oral communication systems are not neutral means of conveying information; and for that reason, when orality studies deal with meaning in texts, the matrix for that meaning is, as Martin S.

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<sup>258</sup> Downing, "Compositional Conventions", pp. 69–85.

<sup>259</sup> The theory that Livy selected a single source for each section of his narrative was developed by Klotz, *Livius und seine Vorgänger*. It is criticized by Laistner, *The Greater Roman Historians*, pp. 83–84. Cf. also Oakley, *Commentary*, I, pp. 13–20. Klotz was, however, aware of certain complexities: "Wir müssen also damit rechnen, daß Livius ... gelegentlich auch seine Vorlagen ineinanderarbeitet" (*ibid.*, III, p. 101). For balanced discussion and documentation, see Walsh, *Livy. His Historical Aims and Methods*, pp. 141–143; Walsh, *Livy*, pp. 13–16.

<sup>260</sup> For the selective procedure of the historians, see below Chap. 6, A:1.



Jaffee puts it, “decisively ‘off the page’”.<sup>261</sup> The medium plays a significant semantic role.<sup>262</sup> Rather, *history and story, story and history, in constant interchange, thus the ancient model!* The written material, to be sure, segmented step by step the tradition and gave it a permanent imprint as a textualized story. Eventually this imprint would take over, and literate persons achieved increasing acknowledgement as church leaders.<sup>263</sup> But this was so only in the sense that it was a more or less stabilized text that returned to the oral currencies of reading and hearing in successively new communities of interpretation.<sup>264</sup> It is a modern misconception that Christianity was spread initially by means of the written word in itself. Even when we take seriously that one usually produced several copies of a writing,<sup>265</sup> we are struck by the small number of papyrus fragments of books of the New Testament dating from earlier than 200 CE. It indicates perhaps, as William V. Harris believes,<sup>266</sup> the rather modest use of written material. The distribution of Christian literature was, as most ancient literature, in the form of private copying, not by commercial book-trade.<sup>267</sup> During the formative process of development and growth, the text was not as stabilized as it later became, but served as an aid for reflection and discussion concerning the present and the future in the light of the past. One lived indeed between the past and the present.

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<sup>261</sup> Jaffee, “Oral Culture in Scriptural Religion”, p. 223.

<sup>262</sup> Sellin observes this semantic role of the oral medium: “Erzähler und Hörer befinden sich in einer zeitlich-räumlichen Einheit. Dadurch spielen Gesten, Stimmodulation, Intonation usw. eine semantische Rolle” (“‘Gattung’ und ‘Sitz im Leben’”, p. 316).

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Lucian’s remark in *Pergr. Mort.* 11 concerning how Peregrinus quickly acquired status in the community for his ability to deal with Christian texts: “And he interpreted and explained some of the books, and even composed many, and they revered him as a god” (καὶ τῶν βιβλῶν τὰς μὲν ἐξηγεῖτο καὶ διεσάφει, πολλὰς δὲ αὐτὸς καὶ συνέγραψεν, καὶ ὡς θεὸν αὐτὸν ἐκείνοι ἠδοῦντο). It is also to be noted that the bishops were among the best educated Christians from the second century onward.

<sup>264</sup> The informative article of Löhr, discussing the move towards the textualization of the canon (“Kanongeschichtliche Beobachtungen”, pp. 234–258), neglects, in my view, this dynamic interaction between the written text and its constant oral actualization in certain communities of interpretation.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Ellis, “New Directions”, pp. 91–92.

<sup>266</sup> Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 299.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Gamble, *Books and Readers*, pp. 82–143. However, in this chapter Gamble exaggerates somewhat, in my view, the importance of the written word in early Christian congregations, neglecting the oral/aural dimensions of written texts.

## Chapter 4

# The Present in the Past: Autopsy Interpreted

Trying to conceptualize the existence of the eyewitnesses between the past and the present, we approached, in the previous chapter, the phenomenon of autopsy within the context of ancient information technologies. Autopsy is essentially a form of orality, I argued, where seeing, speaking, hearing and writing regularly interact as the inquirer employs them as means to reach from the present to the past. The eyewitnesses of Jesus – the local people, Peter, the women, his family – lived and communicated their experiences of the past within the dynamic matrix of these interrelated modalities.

In this chapter we shall move one step further away from the past event itself, focusing on how the present affects the perception of the past *during the process of inquiry*.<sup>1</sup> The eyewitness is a living person with her or his own frame of mind; and the evangelist, or the historian, is even further removed from the historical event, approaching it from the viewpoint of her or his particular interests. As a way to the past, *autopsy, whether direct or indirect, is thus not merely related to a complex of different modes of orality, but, by the same token, bracketed with subjective constructions informed by conscious and unconscious ideological factors*. Although it is true that several modern historians have neglected to relate the sifting of sources to a critical reflection on the conception and communication of historical knowledge,<sup>2</sup> oral historians show a keen sensitivity to the issue. One of the things that makes oral history different, says Alessandro Portelli, is precisely that it tells us less about events than about

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<sup>1</sup> The next two chapters focus on how the present affects the notion of the past during the process of composition and narrativization.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. LaCapra's quest for an interactive model of historical discourse that allows for the mutual interchange of "documentary" and "rhetorical" dimensions of language (*History & Criticism*, pp. 15–44).

their meaning; and what informants believe, he continues, is indeed a historical fact as much as what really happened.<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth Tonkin stressed this interpretative factor in regard to the eyewitnesses themselves. They are “social beings who *must* bring previous understandings to their lived experience in order to interpret it”.<sup>4</sup> And as Paul Thompson rightly noticed, the oral historian is not only to display an array of various sources, but to carefully evaluate the material according to suitable patterns of interpretation, because each account is from beginning to the end reflective of what people imagined happened rather than what actually did happen.<sup>5</sup>

We have to reckon, therefore, with an interpretative dimension of autopsy on at least two levels, that of the eyewitness and that of the inquirer. As far as the Greek and Roman antiquity is concerned, the former comes to us mostly through the latter. But there are exceptions. If the letter of James, for instance, is to be traced back to the Lord’s brother, we have a unique opportunity to see an eyewitness of Jesus at work. How did his involvement and subjective interpretative preferences affect the emerging gospel tradition? Moreover, some ancient historians epitomize in one and the same person both the perspective of an eyewitness and that of an oral historian, because in creating their history they build on their own observation as well as on the interrogation of other eyewitnesses, on both direct and indirect autopsy. They thus illustrate well not only what we might know about ancient people concerned to explore the past by employing a number of sources, but also what might have been the prevalent attitudes among some of the eyewitnesses themselves. They give us a comparative clue as to how certain eyewitnesses interacted with their past observations and experiences as the gospel tradition developed. It is to that point, to the “now” of the eyewitnesses, that we first direct our attention.

## A. The Eyewitness as Interpreter

### 1. Autopsy as Understanding

As is well-known, οἶδα, “I know”, means essentially “I have seen”. Knowledge comes from seeing. Several terms that denote some kind of know-

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<sup>3</sup> Portelli, “What makes oral history different”, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Chap. 1, B:1.

ledge – ἴστωρ, ἱστορία, φαίνεσθαι, θεωρία – relate also to seeing. The Latin has *videre*. This philological state of affairs corresponds to the ancient phenomenon of autopsy. Autopsy was never merely a passive form of registering the outside world; it had to do with gaining knowledge and understanding. People may see without really seeing, just as they may hear without really hearing.

The Jesus of the gospels incorporates this notion from Isaiah 6:9–10 (Mark 4:10–12 par.; Mark 8:18; John 9:39), but it reflects old, Greek philosophical wisdom. In the hymn to Hermes, the Son of Maia, who is the slayer of Argus, tells the old wine farmer that “while having seen, he should be like someone who has not seen” (*Merc.* 92),<sup>6</sup> continuing with a similar statement concerning hearing. Autopsy was given its prominent place as related to νοῦς and γνώμη.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, in another hymn, the one to Aphrodite, the common Homeric expression ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὄραν, “to see with the eyes”, is replaced with ὀφθαλμοῖσιν νοῆσαι. The hero Anchises should not, it is said, “be frightened when he perceives her with the eyes” (*Ven.* 83).<sup>8</sup>

In the heritage of Heraclitus, which stressed the importance of sight,<sup>9</sup> the same Homeric attitude comes through. Heraclitus’ claim that eyes are surer witnesses than ears should be seen in conjunction with another statement. “Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for human beings having barbarian souls”,<sup>10</sup> he is also reported to say (Diels/Kranz, 22B frg. 107). Evidently for the first time in the extant literature, “soul” is here used for the power of rational thought.<sup>11</sup> The background is philosophical; it has to do with cognition. An uneducated soul, Heraclitus implies, experiences the direct vision and hearing of things like the babbling of an unknown tongue. *Sight is not to be merely a matter of passive observation; it has to do with active understanding.* As such, it constituted an active epistemological category according to which reality, it was believed, was envisioned as it really was.

Aristotle’s theory of knowledge must be mentioned. Already Plato ponders the issue. “Do you not say that seeing is perceiving and sight is per-

<sup>6</sup> καί τε ἰδὼν μὴ ἰδὼν εἶναι.

<sup>7</sup> Rudberg states: “Bei den Sinnesanalogien ist das Sehen oft das Aktive” (“Hellenisches Schauen”, p. 179). He does not, however, consider the function of νοῦς and γνώμη.

<sup>8</sup> μή μιν ταρβήσειεν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσι νοήσας. Cf. *Il.* 15:128–129, where hearing is equated with having understanding (νοός).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Chap. 2, A:1.

<sup>10</sup> κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὄτα βαρβάρους ψυχᾶς ἐχόντων.

<sup>11</sup> Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, p. 107.

ception?" (*Theaet.* 163d),<sup>12</sup> he asks rhetorically with the voice of Socrates as he discusses with Theaetetus if remembering actually means knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Aristotle brings this a step further. For him sight is indeed the basis of true knowledge, as he asserts at the very beginning of the *Metaphysica*, in paragraph 980a:

"All men by nature desire to know. A sign of this is the affection for the senses; for apart from the usage, they are loved for their own sake, and most of all the sense of sight. [...] The reason is that of the senses this one best makes us understand things, and discloses many distinctions".<sup>14</sup>

The sense of sight does not provide merely a passive picture of things, but it is the means whereby one interprets and understands things within a certain frame of mind.<sup>15</sup> As he expounds his theory in his treatise on the soul, *De Anima*, imagination becomes the faculty which functions as the intermediary between observation and thoughts. Real thinking comes to effect when the raw material of sight has been absorbed into the faculty of imagination and formed as mental pictures. "For this reason", he says, "no one could ever learn or understand anything without perception; and even when one thinks theoretically, it is necessary to have some mental picture with which to theorize" (*An.* 432a).<sup>16</sup> The soul never thinks without a mental picture, according to Aristotle. "And mental pictures are similar to objects perceived, except that they are without matter" (*An.* 432a).<sup>17</sup> His use of the term *ιστορία* seems to accord with this interplay between the particular and the general.<sup>18</sup>

This philosophical and cognitive aspect of autopsy was always present in one way or the other, even in contexts where sight had very practical implications. We have seen, for instance, that medical writers favoured

<sup>12</sup> ἄρα τὸ ὄραν οὐκ αἰσθάνεσθαι λέγεις καὶ τὴν ὄψιν αἰσθησιν;

<sup>13</sup> For sight and memory, see section A:5e of the present chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει. σημεῖον δ' ἡ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἀγάπησις; καὶ γὰρ χωρὶς γῆς χρείας ἀγαπῶνται δι' αὐτάς, καὶ μάλιστα τῶν ἄλλων ἢ διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων. [...] αἴτιον δ' ὅτι μάλιστα ποιεῖ γνωρίζειν τι ἡμᾶς αὕτη τῶν αἰσθήσεων, καὶ πολλὰς δηλοῖ διαφοράς.

<sup>15</sup> Stigen brings out some qualifications to be added to any claim that sight was the most important of the senses according to Aristotle ("On the Alleged Primacy of Sight", pp. 15–44).

<sup>16</sup> καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὔτε μὴ αἰσθανόμενος μὴθὲν οὐθὲν ἂν μάθοι οὐδὲ ξυνεῖη ὅταν τε θεωρῆ, ἀνάγκη ἅμα φάντασμα τι θεωρεῖν.

<sup>17</sup> τὰ γὰρ φαντάσματα ὡσπερ αἰσθήματα ἐστὶ, πλὴν ἄνευ ὕλης.

<sup>18</sup> Louis thus concludes his survey of the use of the term: "ιστορία, c'est la connaissance des faits particuliers à partir desquels s'élabore la science" ("Le mot *ιστορία* chez Aristote", p. 44).

autopsy for the very simple reason that it provided a direct access to the matter of interest.<sup>19</sup> Yet, one finds even here an awareness that sight is essentially something more. The author of *De Arte*, for instance, finds it inconceivable “how someone could regard as non-existent what he can both see with the eyes and with his mind think that it exists. ... the existent is always seen and known” (*De Arte* 2:5–10).<sup>20</sup> There was no naive trust in autopsy as isolated from the mind. The acts of seeing and hearing correlated with the *voûs*; they were functions of the mind.

## 2. The Eyewitness as Socially Involved

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the ancient eyewitnesses who served as informants for people eager to seek out the past were as much interpreters as observers. This is true from early on. The historians, to be sure, rarely identify their informants by name or classify them into particular groups, but when they do, one often senses the peculiar interpretative drive of the eyewitnesses. An obvious stimulus for this drive was, of course, the social circumstances of the eyewitnesses. They had a social setting in life, which influenced their notions and frame of mind. We shall take some examples.

Although Herodotus is remarkably explicit about what he saw and heard, he mostly uses rather vague terms or phrases when he speaks of his informants. One may find only a single term, such as λέγεται (*e.g.*, 1:103), λέγουσι or φασί (*e.g.*, 1:137) and πυνθάνομαι (*e.g.*, 1:92); or one encounters expressions like λόγος δὲ ἐστί (2:75), οἱ δὲ τινὲς λέγουσι (2:131), ὡς δ' ἔγωγ οἶδα ἀκούσας (3:117), λόγους ... ἤκουον (4:81), ὡς ἢ φάτις μιν ἔχει (7:3), ἔχει δὲ τινὰ φάτιν (9:84), etc.<sup>21</sup> The information gathered from these sources is not limited merely to mythological and legendary material, but includes geographical and ethnographical matters as well. Evidently we have to do with rather uncontrollable hearsay conveyed to Herodotus through unidentifiable channels of the ordinary “folk”, some kind of rumour, a “floating narrative”.<sup>22</sup> The informants

<sup>19</sup> Chap. 2, A:1; Chap. 3, A:1.

<sup>20</sup> ὅπως ἂν τις αὐτὰ νομίσειε μὴ εἶναι, ἃ γε εἶη καὶ ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδεῖν καὶ γνώμη νοῆσαι ὡς ἔστιν ... τὰ μὲν εἶναι αἰεὶ ὀραταὶ τε καὶ γινώσκονται.

<sup>21</sup> Further examples are listed by Jacoby, “Herodotus”, cols. 399–400.

<sup>22</sup> Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, p. 271. – Murray speaks of Herodotus’ oral tradition as belonging firmly in the category of free texts and contrasts this with Dibelius’ and Bultmann’s form-critical view of the oral tradition behind the gospels (“Herodotus and Oral History”, p. 98). The contrast to Dibelius and Bultmann is not clear to me.

were part of the broad masses of the people of the time, cherishing their own notions and convictions.

Three times Herodotus refers to his informant by name.<sup>23</sup> We have already brought attention to his encounter with the Spartan Archias, according to 3:55,<sup>24</sup> who informed Herodotus of his grandfather's exploits. A certain Tymnes is mentioned in 4:76 as the source of Herodotus' acquaintance with the genealogy of the Scythian royal house. Tymnes is characterized as the king's ἐπίτροπος, which evidently implies that he was well suited to provide Herodotus with information.<sup>25</sup> Thersander, thirdly, is referred to in 9:16. He informs Herodotus about a banquet which a Theban called Attaginos gave for the Persian commander Mardonios and fifty leading Persians together with fifty leading Thebans some day before the battle of Plataea in the summer of 479 BCE. Herodotus stresses that Thersander was one of the most notable men of Orchomenus and himself present at the meeting, even part of the central conversation there. None of these three persons is entirely neutral to what was seen and heard. On all three occasions, as one realizes, the informant is chosen not on account of his distanced objectivity, but because he was somehow socially involved and therefore able both to convey valuable pieces of information and to understand and interpret them correctly.

This kind of involvement is perhaps most evident on those numerous occasions when the local people serve as eyewitnesses and informants. We have already noticed the importance of the local people and their oral history.<sup>26</sup> I mentioned in passing Herodotus', Thucydides' and Polybius' use of epichoric information. In Herodotus' work phrases such as Πέρσαι λέγουσι or Πέρσαι τε καὶ Φοίνικες λέγουσι (1:5) indicate that he regarded the source as a fixed whole. The local character of the source is sometimes accentuated with the addition of αὐτοί (1:65, 70, 171, 172, etc.). On several occasions, he shows also that he was himself in direct contact with the local tradition of the inhabitants of a particular area. He quotes the ἐπιχώριοι, who informed him of historical, geographical and

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<sup>23</sup> How/Wells, *Commentary*, I, p. 29; Verdin, *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus*, pp. 88–93. Cf. also the naming of the three priestesses – or prophetesses – at Dodona in 2:55 and of Dicaeus in 8:65. In these cases, however, it is not evident that Herodotus consulted the named persons directly.

<sup>24</sup> Chap. 2, B:6a.

<sup>25</sup> Powell translates the various instances of ἐπίτροπος in Herodotus' work with "guardian of a minor", "steward" and "governor" (*A Lexicon to Herodotus*, p. 139). In 4:76 the term means "steward", according to Powell.

<sup>26</sup> Chap. 2, B:2.

ethnographical matters.<sup>27</sup> Their exact identity is irrelevant to Herodotus.<sup>28</sup> What is important is that kind of information which comes from people who are at home at the very place where certain significant things had happened. The ἐπιχώριοι can be the direct witnesses themselves or they can be related through a chain of transmitters to the person(s) observing the actual phenomenon of interest. In the latter case, the ἐπιχώριοι-quotations represent an extension of autopsy into an interpreted local tradition.<sup>29</sup>

We have also noticed that Thucydides sought out oral information from family members.<sup>30</sup> The two texts in I 138:6 and VI 55:1 suggest so.<sup>31</sup> Information was available also from the local people. In II 5:5–6 he, quite exceptionally, points to two versions of the same event: “This is what the Thebans say and they allege that they [viz., the Plataeans] took an oath. The Plataeans do not agree ...”.<sup>32</sup> In II 48:2 he tells of the plague which first fell upon the inhabitants of Piraeus, “so that it was even said by them that the Peloponnesians had put poison in the wells”.<sup>33</sup> Or take III 88:3, where he refers, in passing, to a local belief on the Aeolian islands: “These people [viz., of this region] believe that Hephaestus has his forge in Hiera”.<sup>34</sup> And in VI 2:2 he reveals his knowledge of the Sicilians’ claim to

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<sup>27</sup> 2:60, 63, 150; 3:12, 18; 4:81, 184; 7:176, 201; 8:129; 9:51. Cf. also 7:188 (οἱ περὶ ταῦτα τὰ χωρία οἰκημένοι), 197 (ἐπιχώριον λόγον). Jacoby includes all references to quotations of certain people in the category of ἐπιχώριοι-quotations (“Herodotus”, cols. 397–400).

<sup>28</sup> Jacoby identified the Athenian ἐπιχώριοι as λόγιοι ἄνδρες from the ruling classes (*Arthis*, p. 216). But this is difficult to prove, at least as far as Herodotus is concerned. The information from the ἐπιχώριοι does not appear to be especially related to an upper élite. Cf. Verdin, “Notes sur l’attitude des historiens Grecs”, pp. 188–189.

<sup>29</sup> Verdin, *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus*, pp. 142–145. Cf. also, more broadly, Verdin, “Notes sur l’attitude des historiens Grecs”, pp. 183–200.

<sup>30</sup> Chap. 2, B:6a.

<sup>31</sup> I 138:6 is part of Thucydides’ excursus on Pausanias and Themistocles (I 128–138), which, according to Westlake, might build on written material from Charon of Lampsacus (5th cent. BCE) or other predecessors or older contemporaries of Thucydides (*Studies in Thucydides*, pp. 1–18). But the case remains “a very flimsy one”, as Westlake himself admits (*ibid.*, p. 13). The available fragments of Charon’s work (*FrGrHist* 262) are extremely scanty and contain only remote reference to the experience of Themistocles in exile (*FrGrHist* 262 F 11), nothing at all about the death of Pausanias.

<sup>32</sup> Θηβαῖοι μὲν ταῦτα λέγουσι καὶ ἐπομόσαι φασὶν αὐτοῦς Πιλαταιῆς δ’ οὐχ ὁμο-  
λογοῦσι ...

<sup>33</sup> ὥστε καὶ ἐλέχθη ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ὡς οἱ Πελοποννήσιοι φάρμακα ἐσβεβλήκοιεν ἐς τὰ φρέατα.

<sup>34</sup> νομίζουσι δὲ οἱ ἐκείνην ἄνθρωποι ἐν τῇ Ἱερᾷ ὡς ὁ Ἡφαιστος χαλκεύει.



have settled on the island before the Cyclopes and Laestrygonians – “indeed, as they themselves assert” (ὥς μὲν αὐτοὶ φασί), he remarks.<sup>35</sup>

A brief look at Polybius’ use of oral informants confirms the impression. Although he rarely names or classifies them, it is evident that he consulted several eyewitnesses. In III 48:12 he speaks with confidence about Hannibal’s crossing of the Alps, because not only had he seen the country and the passage of the Alps for himself, but he had inquired about the circumstances from men who were present at the occasion (τῶν παρατετευχόντων τοῖς καιροῖς); in IX 25:2, 4 he says that he received information concerning Hannibal’s and Mago’s love for money from the Carthaginians themselves and, in more detail, from king Massanissa;<sup>36</sup> in X 3:2 he mentions Gaius Laelius as his source for the anecdotes concerning Laelius’ friend Scipio Africanus;<sup>37</sup> in XXIX 8:10 he claims to have learned from Perseus’ friends about the negotiations between Perseus and Eumenes; according to XXXIV 16:1, extracted from Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* VIII 10:31,<sup>38</sup> the African prince Gulusa was the authority of Polybius’ account of the use of elephants’ tusks as door-posts and palings in certain parts of Africa. Polybius certainly interrogated many other important persons,<sup>39</sup> not least during his detention in Rome. All of them, it seems, were involved in or related to the event or the person of interest.

Accordingly, also Polybius knows to employ information from the persons who had their social setting in the region where the events took place.<sup>40</sup> His high esteem of such people is most evident in IX 25:2–3, where he, as we just noted, refers to what he received from the Carthaginians themselves (παρ’ αὐτῶν Καρχηδονίων). Like Herodotus, he stresses the local character of the account by adding the pronoun αὐτοί. He also

<sup>35</sup> Aune thinks that I 9:2 is a reference to Peloponnesian oral tradition (“Prolegomena to the Study of Oral Tradition”, p. 79). But here we have some evidence that other writers, primarily Hellanicus (*FrGrHist* 4 F 155 and F 157), treated the matter. See Gomme, *Commentary*, I, p. 109. Cf. also Hornblower, *Commentary*, I, p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> There is a hiatus after Μασσαννάσου. Perhaps there was originally a reference to him as king, τοῦ βασιλέως. Massanissa was king of Numidia. See Walbank, *Commentary*, II, p. 154. For Polybius’ encounter with Massanissa, see Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe*, pp. 555–560.

<sup>37</sup> Laqueur suggested a written source from Laelius concerning Scipios’ siege of New Carthage (“Scipio Africanus”, p. 208). But for the anecdotes he estimates differently: “Auch standen hier keinesfalls eigene schriftliche Notizen zur Verfügung” (*ibid.*, p. 212). For what it is worth, X 3:3 refers to the source with ἔφη.

<sup>38</sup> LCL (erroneously) refers to Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* VIII 47.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of a number of such persons, see Scala, *Die Studien des Polybios*, pp. 269–278.

<sup>40</sup> Verdin, “Notes sur l’attitude des historiens Grecs”, pp. 194–198.

goes on to praise the ἐγγώριοι: “For natives do not only know best the directions of the winds, according to the proverb, but also the character of the native people” (IX 25:3).<sup>41</sup> Other texts, such as X 28:3 and XII 5:5,<sup>42</sup> confirm Polybius’ high regard of epichoric reports.<sup>43</sup> His insistence on the importance of direct autopsy found its concrete application in the use of material that originated in the social setting of the eyewitnesses themselves.

As it thus appears, the eyewitnesses and informants of the historians must be seen in conjunction with their social identity. The historians are interested in them not merely as individuals, but as persons with a socially definable setting, whether a very broad one or a more limited one. As individuals they belong somewhere; and *it is the “social memory” of that larger setting which constantly nourishes the interpretative drive of the eyewitnesses* as their oral history emerges and develops into forms of oral tradition.<sup>44</sup>

### 3. The Eyewitness as Participant

A fundamental tenet of the oral history approach is the notion that the participants of history are to be permitted to shape our understanding of the past. The “objects” of history become its “subjects”; they create history. The eyewitness and informant is often involved also in a sense which is somewhat different from her or his social involvement. Far from being a passive observer, s/he participates directly in the course of events themselves. The eyewitness is a participant, and her or his understanding of the event is coloured by that participation.

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<sup>41</sup> ἐγγώριοι γὰρ οὐ μόνον τὰς τῶν ἀνέμων στάσεις κατὰ τὴν παρομίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἐγγωρίων ἀνθρώπων ἦθη κάλλιστα γινώσκουσιν. – For discussion of translations, see Walbank, *Commentary*, I, p. 111. Cf. already Wunderer, *Polybios-Forschungen*, I, pp. 28–29.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. also II 16:12; III 6:2; IV 78:3–4; VI 11:11; X 29:3; XII 17:3.

<sup>43</sup> For further comments on these texts, Devroye/Kemp, *Over de historische methode van Polybios*, pp. 190–192.

<sup>44</sup> Murray regards the group as the most obvious and fundamental characteristic of oral tradition (“Herodotus and Oral History”, p. 100). But that emphasis easily leads to wrong implications, because transmission in the sense of deliberate acts of communication is after all an activity of the individuals of that group. I do not reject the use of labels such as “social memory” or “collective memory”, but wish to safeguard them against a neglect of the memory of the individual and her or his activity of remembering and recalling. Cf. further my comments at the beginning of Chap. 6.

The historians preferred the participating eyewitness to the passive observer. Involvement was not an obstacle to what they perceived as historical truth. It was rather the essential means to a correct understanding of what had really happened. We actually detect a development among the Greek historians, with an increasing emphasis on direct participation.

Thucydides is the first one. Although he does not say explicitly that autopsy involves direct participation, he probably regarded the passive observation of Herodotus as insufficient. Describing a disease, for instance, he legitimizes his own account by reference to the subjective experience in conjunction with the personal observation: “for I was sick myself and saw others suffering” (II 48:3).<sup>45</sup> He had, in addition, been a man of action, and the image he provides of an eyewitness is a person who is present at the speech or event itself, not merely someone who observes the place of the speech or the event afterwards.

Xenophon confirms this ideal. Several ancient writers – in distinction to several modern scholars – regard him as a very prominent historian.<sup>46</sup> Lucian even classifies him together with Thucydides and Herodotus (*Hist. Conscr.* 2); he is a “just historian” (*Hist. Conscr.* 39). He was indeed eminently equipped to write history from personal participation and experience. Like the less historically oriented *Anabasis* and *Agesilaus*,<sup>47</sup> the *Historia Graeca* describes almost contemporary matters. It all ranges within the life-time of Xenophon, taking up the story of the Peloponnesian war at 411 and carrying the history of Greece down to the fall of the Theban supremacy at the battle of Mantinea in 362 BCE. An Athenian by birth and training, Xenophon served in the army of Cyrus the Younger. He lived for considerable periods in Sparta and, as an exile, in Scillus, near Elis and in Corinth. Through personal experience he became acquainted with the Greeks of Asia and with the Persian Empire. He had been a devoted follower of Socrates, while in later years he was a close friend of the Spartan king Agesilaus, whom he accompanied on several

<sup>45</sup> αὐτός τε νοσήσας καὶ αὐτὸς ἰδὼν ἄλλους πάσχοντας.

<sup>46</sup> See Breitenbach, *Historiographische Anschauungsformen Xenophons*, pp. 11–13; Tuplin, *The Failings of the Empire*, pp. 20–29. Tuplin (*ibid.*, p. 22 n. 32) is, in distinction to Breitenbach (*ibid.*, p. 11), rightly careful about using Polyb. VI 45:1 as a reference to Xenophon.

<sup>47</sup> Nickel classifies the *Anabasis* and *Agesilaus* under the heading “Die historischen Schriften” (*Xenophon*, pp. 38–56). He states however the following: “Aber es spricht vieles dafür, daß die ‘Anabasis’ gar nicht dem *historischen* Genos zuzurechnen ist” (*ibid.*, p. 43); and further: “Da Xenophon mit dem ‘Agesilaos’ ‘ein schön gefärbtes Idealbild’ schafft und den König so schildert, wie ihn seine Zeit sehen wollte, kam es ihm auch gar nicht auf die historische Wahrheit oder Analyse an” (*ibid.*, p. 54).

campaigns.<sup>48</sup> He had all the opportunity of personal participation in the events described; and it is indeed likely that many of the matters he recorded are based on his own participation and experience. Although the *Historia Graeca* cannot be classified as his memoirs,<sup>49</sup> because the central feature of putting the author at the center of attention in memoirs is lacking, his primary source of information was probably his own memory, perhaps supplemented with some written notes.<sup>50</sup>

In the second century BCE, Polybius draws the development of autopsy from observation to direct participation and personal experience to its extreme. We have seen how he criticizes Timaeus primarily on this basis,<sup>51</sup> and it is not necessary to elaborate that point further. When he chose an informant, he was interested in finding out to what extent that person had an active part in the matters of interest. This is evident in his presentation of Laelius' credentials as an informant concerning Scipio Africanus.<sup>52</sup> One of the persons who knew best the character of Scipio was Gaius Laelius, "who from youth participated with him in every word and deed until death" (X 3:2).<sup>53</sup> As for Polybius himself, the involvement in the events was of fundamental importance for his entire activity as a writing historian. He was induced to write as if starting on a fresh work, he states in III 4:13, "chiefly because I was not only an eyewitness of most [of the events], but of some a participant and of others even an administrator".<sup>54</sup> Direct participation was vital, be it the more active *αὐτουργία* or the more passive *αὐτοπάθεια* (XII 28<sup>a</sup>:6).<sup>55</sup>

For Josephus, as we have seen,<sup>56</sup> autopsy in the sense of direct participation in the events was more or less taken for granted as an essential

<sup>48</sup> The fullest treatment of Xenophon's life is the study by Delebecque, *Essai sur la vie de Xénophon*. It suffers, however, from some fanciful conjectures. See the balanced account by Breitenbach, "Xenophon", cols. 1571–1578.

<sup>49</sup> Scholars of this opinion are listed by Tuplin, *The Failings of the Empire*, p. 14 n. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Anderson, however, sees no evidence that Xenophon took notes while events were still fresh in his mind (*Xenophon*, p. 62).

<sup>51</sup> Chap. 2, A:4; Chap. 3, B:3a.

<sup>52</sup> For the development of the Scipionic legend, see Walbank, *Selected Papers*, pp. 120–135.

<sup>53</sup> ἀπὸ νέου μετεσχηκῶς αὐτῷ παντὸς ἔργου καὶ λόγου μέχρι τελευτῆς.

<sup>54</sup> τὸ δὲ μέγιστον διὰ τὸ τῶν πλείστων μὴ μόνον αὐτόπτῆς, ἀλλ' ὧν μὲν συν-εργός, ὧν δὲ καὶ χειριστὴς γεγονέναι.

<sup>55</sup> For *αὐτουργία*, cf. also IX 14:4; XII 25<sup>h</sup>:6; for *αὐτοπάθεια* and *αὐτοπαθής*, cf. also III 12:1; III 108:2; VIII 17:7; XII 25<sup>i</sup>:7; XII 28:6; XV 17:1. A fuller discussion is provided by Sacks, *Polybius on the Writing of History*, pp. 32–35.

<sup>56</sup> Chap. 2, A:5.

criterion of the suitability of a person intending to write about the recent past. The basic qualification of his own work was his participation coupled with his observation. Thus, as he looks back at his previous writing, he states emphatically: “I wrote the history of the war, having been an actor in many, and an eyewitness of most, of the events, hence not being ignorant of anything whatever that was said or done (*Ap.* 1:55).<sup>57</sup> He had been both *αὐτουργός* and *αὐτόπτης* of the war, and thus eminently qualified to write its history. Composing the actual history some twenty years earlier, he began similarly by criticizing those who wrote rhetorically stylized accounts of the war from hearsay and without having taken part in the action (*Bell.* 1:1),<sup>58</sup> continuing to assert that he himself both fought against the Romans and, in the sequel, was forced to be present (*Bell.* 1:3). He was even able to describe the sufferings of the Roman prisoners, he later asserts, from observation or personal share in them, *ὡς εἶδον ἢ ἔπαθον* (*Bell.* 1:22). He repeats essentially the same critique against other historians and the same claim for himself when he commences his next major work (*Ant.* 1:1–4). Throughout his writings, therefore, Josephus insists that he has given extraordinary value to autopsy, and in particular to that kind of autopsy which, as Polybius emphasized,<sup>59</sup> includes direct participation in and personal experience of the events.

Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius and Josephus are eyewitnesses as well as historians. Approaching the time of the emerging gospel tradition in early Christianity, it is evident that autopsy was not only an integrated part of the historians’ methodological repertoire, but also closely linked to their own life-stories and experiences. The historians are, to a certain extent, their own sources. They illustrate clearly in their own person that

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<sup>57</sup> τοῦ δὲ πολέμου τὴν ἱστορίαν ἔγραψα πολλῶν μὲν αὐτουργός πράξεων, πλείστων δ’ αὐτόπτης γενόμενος, ὅλως δὲ τῶν λεχθέντων ἢ πραχθέντων οὐδ’ ὀτιοῦν ἀγνοήσας.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. also *Bell.* 1:30. In *Bell.* 1:14 Josephus praises ancient historians who wrote of their own times, because their connection with the events added lucidity to their record. Modern writers, whoever they were according to Josephus (cf. Lindner, “Eine offene Frage zur Auslegung des *Bellum-Proömiums*”, pp. 254–259), are their inferiors.

<sup>59</sup> Bilde clearly recognizes the importance of autopsy in Josephus’ writings but relates it only to Herodotean and Thucydidean principles: “Josefus er for det første optaget af de herodotske og thukydidiske principper om selvoplevelse och samtidsbeskrivelse” (*Josefus som historieskriver*, p. 179; but cf. Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, pp. 200–206). I would see Josephus’ emphasis here in line with Polybius’ development of the phenomenon of autopsy into active participation and experience. *Ap.* 1:55, which links *αὐτουργός* and *αὐτόπτης*, is perhaps the clearest evidence of this. Cf. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 79 n. 22, 177; Lindner, “Eine offene Frage zur Auslegung des *Bellum-Proömiums*”, p. 259; Alexander, *The preface to Luke’s Gospel*, pp. 38–39.

the ideal eyewitness is the one who is closest to the events, involved and participating. The direct participation and the personal involvement were essential, because they provided together the adequate experience to understand correctly the past history from the viewpoint of the present.

#### 4. Professional Traditionists: Detached and Involved

Some societies and groups have their own traditionists. These persons are involved in the matters which they transmit only to a certain degree; primarily they are appointed and trained to preserve and communicate the tradition faithfully. Whether one thinks, for instance, of the griots of a West African society, the *שׂוּנִים* or *תַּנְאִים* of the rabbis, the *μνήμονες* of ancient Greece, or the *διδάσκαλοι* of the early Christian communities,<sup>60</sup> one realizes that the visions and experiences of the eyewitness have here become stylized into fixed patterns of tradition with particular forms of transmission.

The ancient historians, it seems, were not in a position to employ such information regularly. We find possible traces of it primarily in Herodotus. In his writing one detects a certain interest not only in informants who are ethnically or socially defined, but also in those that are defined by profession. There are especially two such groups: the Egyptian priests and the Persian *λόγιοι*.

The former group appears as informants in book two.<sup>61</sup> They are related to places such as Heliopolis, Memphis and Thebes. Herodotus received from them information concerning religion, culture, history and geography, and he may even have asked them to verify certain Greek traditions.<sup>62</sup> It is difficult to determine their exact identity further. Herodotus shows no such concern. Because of the alleged inaccurate and heterogeneous traditions on Egyptian history in Herodotus' writing, some scholars have thought of them as priests of a very low grade, or even denied that Herodotus derived information from Egyptian priests at all.<sup>63</sup> The latter

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<sup>60</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, pp. 109–110 (on the griots); Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, pp. 93–112 (on the *שׂוּנִים/תַּנְאִים*); Simondon, *La mémoire*, pp. 293–301 (on the *μνήμονες*); Zimmermann, *Die urchristlichen Lehrer* (on the *διδάσκαλοι*).

<sup>61</sup> 2:2, 3, 10, 13, 19, 54, 55, 99–142, 143. Herodotus also refers to priests without using the term *ἱερεύς*.

<sup>62</sup> See Lloyd, *Herodotus*, I, pp. 90–94.

<sup>63</sup> For a survey of various hypotheses concerning the peculiarities of Herodotus' presentation of Egypt, see Oertel, *Herodots ägyptischer Logos*, pp. 8–18.

theory, in its extreme form, is unlikely.<sup>64</sup> And although it is possible that Herodotus was occasionally received by a subordinate priest or a scribe at the temple (cf. 2:28),<sup>65</sup> such a view is not mandatory on the whole. Alan B. Lloyd, in the first volume of his analysis of Herodotus' second book, argues convincingly that we have no justification for assuming that the Egyptian priests would recall and speak of their history in any sense which we understand as accurate.<sup>66</sup> Their documents would be theologically oriented,<sup>67</sup> and so would the information conveyed to Herodotus. The presentation of history was rooted in the priests' own idea of what constitutes history. They were priests, perhaps of high rank, known as "the Priests of the House of Life", "the repository of Egyptian learning" according to Lloyd,<sup>68</sup> having the theological mind-set of priests. Herodotus evidently regarded this group of officials as separate from the rest of the Egyptians. Egyptians living in the cultivated country can indeed be praised for their excellent memory (2:77),<sup>69</sup> but the words of the priests are singled out from what the Egyptians in general say (2:142). While Herodotus is sometimes sceptical about their exact knowledge (2:54, 56; cf. 2:28),<sup>70</sup> he basically considers them as an extremely valuable source of information. He knows of their excellent learning. "For the priests of Heliopolis are said to be the most learned of the Egyptians",<sup>71</sup> he states as he cross-checks different oral versions from various priests concerning the rearing of children (2:3).

The Persian λόγιοι are mentioned already at the outset of the *Histories*. They have informed Herodotus concerning the Phoenicians. He does not

<sup>64</sup> Heidel argued that the priest-tales of the second book "are based on the work of his predecessor, Hecataeus of Miletus" (*Hecataeus and the Egyptian Priests*; quotation from p. 119). Vogt, in his review of Heidel's work, while being positive to several aspects of the theory, rightly questions if it can adequately explain Herodotus' own profound appreciation of the Egyptian priests ("Review", pp. 525–530).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Wilson, *Herodotus in Egypt*, p. 2. Later on Wilson does state that Herodotus received information from "professional priests" belonging to "the elite class" (*ibid.*, p. 9). Other scholars, however, place the priestly scribe mentioned in 2:28 in the upper order of the priesthood. So Evans, *Herodotus*, p. 136.

<sup>66</sup> Lloyd, *Herodotus*, I, pp. 95–113, 188–189.

<sup>67</sup> 2:100 states explicitly that the priests recited from a papyrus roll (ἐκ βύβλου).

<sup>68</sup> Lloyd, *Herodotus*, I, p. 113.

<sup>69</sup> Lateiner claims that no one exercised memory in a more systematic way than the Egyptians (*The Historical Method of Herodotus*, p. 102).

<sup>70</sup> Verdin, *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus*, pp. 97–100.

<sup>71</sup> οἱ γὰρ Ἡλιοπολίται λέγονται Αἰγυπτίων εἶναι λογιώτατοι. With Lloyd (*Herodotus*, I, p. 89; *Herodotus*, II, p. 16), I understand Ἡλιοπολίται as a reference to priests of Heliopolis.

define their identity further, but the use of the term *λόγιοι* indicates their special skill. W. W. How and J. Wells, in their commentary on Herodotus, rendered it “skilled in history”;<sup>72</sup> likewise, J. Enoch Powell, in his standard lexicon to Herodotus, translated the term “versed in history”.<sup>73</sup> We have already noticed the use of *λογιώτατοι*, “most learned”, in 2:3. In 2:77 Herodotus uses the same term for certain inhabitants of Egypt. They are the “most learned” (*μάλιστα λογιώτατοι*) of all men to cultivate memory. In 4:46 he speaks of the dull-witted men within the region of Pontus, because he knows of no “wise man” (*ἄνδρα λόγιον*) born there.<sup>74</sup> Evidently, by labelling some Persians *λόγιοι*, he is again referring to a special group of people who possessed an exceptional skill in preserving information concerning the past.<sup>75</sup>

Granted these persons were not eyewitnesses themselves but served to extend the oral testimonies into a reliable oral tradition, *one cannot maintain too strict a distinction between an activity which passively repeats what is learned and an eyewitness who is more actively involved*. The West African griot was a distinguished and feared member of the group whose oral history he preserved, being influenced by the particular goals he chose to pursue; the ancient Greek *μνήμων*, for all we know, was in the service of public or private interests; the rabbinic tanna was severely criticized by the rabbis for being only half educated and advised to complement his knowledge of the interpretative tradition of the Scriptures and the Mishnah (b. Sot. 22a); and the early Christian teacher was appointed for service in the community in close association with, for instance, the prophet (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor 12:28–29).<sup>76</sup> The Egyptian priests, as Lloyd points out, formulated history in accordance with their own theological outlook. It is evident that the traditionists were not entirely detached from social involvement; and while their duty was normally that of not allowing this involvement to distort the testimonies of the alleged eyewitnesses, the ideal of preserving and communicating the past unaltered was often intertwined with an interpretative ideal that approached the eyewitness accounts from the conceptual framework of the present.

<sup>72</sup> How/Wells, *Commentary*, I, p. 53.

<sup>73</sup> Powell, *Lexicon*, p. 209.

<sup>74</sup> LCL translates “notable man”. This is misleading. The context speaks of being clever, wise. Fritz considers “wise men” to be the basic meaning of *λόγιοι* on all occasions in Herodotus (*Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, I, pp. 346–347).

<sup>75</sup> Nagy argues that Herodotus himself was a *λόγιος* (“Herodotus the *Logios*”, pp. 175–184). But although Herodotus used them as informants, his whole enterprise clearly went beyond what we may reasonably know was the activity of the *λόγιοι*.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. also Eph 4:11; *Did.* 10:7–11:2, 10; 13:1–2; 15:2; *Mart. Pol.* 16:2.



## 5. Memory and Recall

The use of traditionists as informants is quite exceptional among the historians. One mostly encounters, as we have seen, native people, family members or persons with an active experience of the event, if not the historian himself, as eyewitnesses and informants. The elected and trained traditionists normally come into the process at a later stage, when the event has already been formed into a tradition of particular status.

*a. The Divine Sanction of Memory: Mnemosyne*

Not only the traditionists were to remember the past, but each eyewitness who served as an informant employed in one way or the other her or his memory to recall the past. At a time when the spread of reading and writing was repeatedly intersected with various forms of orality, memory became exceedingly important. We noticed already the ancient fear that writing would weaken the important faculty of memory.<sup>77</sup> That faculty was of essential importance as a means to preserve information. “Early history preserved the memory of the past”, says Gordon S. Shrimpton, “rarely attempting to re-construct it from documents. It was communication”.<sup>78</sup>

It is not by accident, therefore, that from early on Mnemosyne was regarded as one of the most ancient deities. Earth lay with Heaven, says Hesiod, and from this union Mnemosyne was born, among others (*Theog.* 133–136); she, in turn, united with Zeus and gave birth to the Muses (*Theog.* 53–63). And when Hermes discovered the lyre, says the hymn, he sang the story of the immortal gods and honoured Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses, as the first among them (*Merc.* 429–430). Memory is thus given divine sanction. It is only when writing is permitted to take over that the ancient goddess fades into the background.<sup>79</sup>

Michèle Simondon, in her investigation *La mémoire et l'oubli dans la pensée grecque jusqu'à la fin du V<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J.-C.*, stresses the importance which the Homeric Muse had for the ancient Greek historians: “la

<sup>77</sup> Chap. 3, B:2b.

<sup>78</sup> Shrimpton, *History and Memory*, p. 186.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. already Notopoulos, “Mnemosyne in Oral Literature”, pp. 465–493. Notopoulos' uncritical reliance on Milman Parry was understandable at the time of the writing of the article; today the scholarly situation is different. Yet, Notopoulos' insistence on the central importance of Mnemosyne in oral contexts remains valid. For a more recent, full discussion, see Simondon, *La mémoire*, pp. 103–127.

Muse homérique est vraiment la Muse de l'histoire".<sup>80</sup> Yes, she is the one that has actually seen the details of the past. "Ce rôle de la Muse manifeste la supériorité de la vue sur toute autre forme d'appréhension de la vérité", Simondon continues.<sup>81</sup>

And indeed, the historians were keenly aware of the importance as well as complexities of memory and recall. Herodotus, as we have seen,<sup>82</sup> introduces his entire work as an attempt to prevent the memory of the past to be blotted out from among mankind by time (1:1). Human memory, evidently, needed writing as an aid to remember. Most well-known is perhaps Thucydides' complaint concerning the difficulty of remembering with accuracy (διαμνημονεύειν τὴν ἀκριβείαν) what had been said at an event, both for himself as well as for his informants (I 22:1). He utters a similar complaint concerning τὰ ἔργα. His endeavour to ascertain these matters was laborious, because his informants reported varying things according to their championship or memory (I 22:3). The emphasis on contemporary history and autopsy from the time of Thucydides and onwards betrays implicitly a repeated concern with the memory of men. Mnemosyne was held in high regard.<sup>83</sup>

#### b. Aristotle's μνήμη and ἀνάμνησις

The whole issue evolves, it seems, around the question of how the memory of the past can be actualized in the present activity of recall. It is a matter of course that the two were closely related.

Aristotle made this intricate interaction explicit in his discussion of μνήμη and ἀνάμνησις. While for Plato there was a strict separation between the two, the former being the conscious preservation of something which one had seen or learned by rational thinking (cf., e.g., *Theaet.* 163e) and the latter being the recollection by association of something that is latent within the soul but forgotten (cf., e.g., *Phaed.* 73c–d), Aristotle brings them closer together as a way in which the present interacts with the past. For him μνήμη is the preservation not of any notion learned by experience or thinking, but specifically of something which has to do with the past: ἡ δὲ μνήμη τοῦ γενομένου (*Mem.* 449b:15). It is, as Herwig Blum expresses it, "das In-Erinnerung-haben eines Vergangenen als eines Vergangenen".<sup>84</sup> Recollection, ἀνάμνησις, is the deliberate ef-

<sup>80</sup> Simondon, *La mémoire*, p. 259.

<sup>81</sup> Simondon, *La mémoire*, p. 259.

<sup>82</sup> Chap. 3, B:3c.

<sup>83</sup> For Herodotus and Thucydides, see further Simondon, *La mémoire*, pp. 259–273.

<sup>84</sup> Blum, *Die antike Mnemotechnik*, p. 70. Cf. Simondon, *La mémoire*, pp. 314–315.

fort to find one's way by means of association and order among the contents of *μνήμη* (*Mem.* 451b:12–20). One hunts, so to say, among its contents for what one is trying to recollect, moving through the memories of the past by means of certain present structures governing the recall. *Memory and recall thus form the locus of an activity which exhibits indeed, one could say, the present in the past.*

### c. The Image of the Wax Tablet

It would certainly be a grave mistake to assume that the present takes over entirely any conception of the past. The historians' anxiety testifies to the contrary; and Aristotle is concerned, as we saw, to point out that the memory is the memory of the past in its pastness.

One also frequently encounters, in Aristotle's writings and elsewhere,<sup>85</sup> the notion of the memory as a wax tablet. Already Plato has Socrates assume that there is a lump of wax (*κίρινον ἐκμαγεῖον*) in our souls, which is the gift of Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses; our perceptions and thoughts are imprinted upon it (*Theaet.* 191c–d).<sup>86</sup> The notion became very common. Quintilian gives expression to its wide diffusion, asserting that "many hold the view that certain traces are impressed on the soul, just as the signs of signet rings are preserved on wax" (XI 2:4).<sup>87</sup> The other two Latin sources for the ancient mnemonic also mention it (*Her.* III 17:30; Cic., *De Orat.* II 86:354; II 88:360).

It was of course the contemporary use of the tablet for writing that caused its frequent use as a metaphor for the memory. And the writing, while subject to changes and elaborations, was more permanent, though not necessarily more reliable, than the spoken word. The metaphor of the wax tablet implied therefore that *the memory was not merely a fluid collection of reminiscences*, but an impression with a certain fixidity and perpetuity.

### d. Memory and Memorization

It was of importance to remember the right things. The texts depicting the extraordinary capability of certain persons to recall detailed information are revealing. The sophist Hippias of Elis, says Plato, was able to re-

<sup>85</sup> For Aristotle, cf. *An.* 424a. The broader ramification of this notion is discussed by Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 16–32. For further references to images of memory, cf. Farrell, "The Phenomenology of Memory", p. 373 n. 2.

<sup>86</sup> For further discussion, see Blum, *Die antike Mnemotechnik*, pp. 63–67.

<sup>87</sup> *plerique imprimi quaedam vestigia animo, velut in ceris anulorum signa servantur, existimant.* Cf. similarly Cic., *Tusc.* I 25:61.

peat fifty names after hearing them only once (*Hi. Maior* 285e). And Pliny the Elder brings together an anthology of memory stories, asserting that Cyrus knew the names of all the men in his army, that Lucius Scipio knew the names of all the Roman people, that Cineas repeated the names of all the senators and knights of Rome within a day of arriving there, that Mithridates addressed his subjects in twenty-two different languages, that Charmadas recited by heart any book in the libraries (*Hist. Nat.* VII 24:88–89). Pliny evidently knew also of other such stories.<sup>88</sup>

Some of them cause amazement and scepticism, such as the stories concerning Lucius Scipio and Charmadas. Exaggerations were truly part of the stories. The children at school competed sometimes for memorization prizes,<sup>89</sup> and this might have caused further overstatements. When Seneca the Elder, the Roman rhetorician, boasts of having been able in his youth to repeat two thousand names read to him and to recite in reverse order over two hundred verses that his fellow students told him, and when he praises this achievement of his as a *miraculum* (*Contr.* 1 pref. 2), one realizes indeed the deep impression conveyed by the assertion of a good and accurate memory.

Regardless of whether these stories are true or not,<sup>90</sup> it is evident that the more detailed and the more voluminous the scope of information stored in the memory could be shown to be, the more impressive it was. The present truly affected the account of the past, but not to the extent that the past lost its pastness. The recall should be exact and precise, as detailed as possible, a recapitulation of what was stored in the memory. That was the ideal.

#### e. Mnemonic Techniques and Visual Memory

Michèle Simondon, as we saw, pointed to the connection between Mnemosyne and the importance of sight among the ancient Greek historians. And the visual experiences, what we call autopsy, came to serve as an essential means to cultivate the complex process of memory and recall.

The specialized mnemonic techniques initiated by Simonides of Ceos (c. 556–468 BCE) and further developed by Hippias (5th cent. BCE) and

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. his statement in VII 24:88: “As to memory, the most necessary boon of life, it is not at all easily said who most excelled in it, so many have gained glory from it” (*Memoria necessarium maxime vitae bonum cui praecipua fuerit haud facile dictu est tam multis eius gloriam adeptis*).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Marrou, *A History of Education*, p. 272.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. similarly, e.g., Xenoph., *Sym.* 3:5–6; Plat., *Menex.* 236b–c; Cic., *Tusc.* I 24:59.

Theodectes the Tragedian (c. 377–336 BCE),<sup>91</sup> are based on the mental construction of places (*loci*) in which the images (*imagines*) are placed as an aid for the memory of things (*memoria rerum*) and the memory of words (*memoria verborum*).<sup>92</sup> As the story goes, Simonides was able to identify Scopas and the other people on whom the roof of the banqueting hall fell in because he could recall the places at which they had been sitting at the table (Cic., *De Orat.* II 86:352–353). He had seen it; he had a visual imprint on the memory. When the technique eventually became more elaborated, there was a repeated stress on the tiresome practice of developing for oneself places and images sufficiently concrete and detailed to serve as inner visual associations to the things or the words that were to be recalled at a particular moment.

It is impossible to estimate exactly the diffusion of this ancient mnemonic technique. We are certainly not to assume that each eyewitness and informant was familiar with it, even less that s/he was trained in it. Although the student of rhetoric was at least introduced to this technique, as we might infer from the prominence of the art of memory in rhetorical writings,<sup>93</sup> it is far from evident that all rhetoricians practised it. Cicero defends it, but he realizes that “this method cannot be used to draw out the memory if it [*viz.*, the memory] has not been given by nature” (*De Orat.* II 88:360).<sup>94</sup> It was an excellent supplement to the ordinary training of the memory, “if one was used to it” (*si consueris*), he elsewhere suggests (*De Orat.* I 34:157). Quintilian also implies that its value was not taken for granted in leading rhetorical circles in Rome. Some people, he says in III 3:4, divide rhetoric into only three parts, because *memoria* and *actio* are given to us “by nature not by art” (*natura non arte*). His last word on the mnemonic techniques breathes utter scepticism towards its advanced practitioners: “Therefore, Charmadas and Metrodorus of Scepsis, to whom I just referred, of whom Cicero says that they used this method: may they keep it for themselves. We teach simpler things” (XI 2:26).<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> For a detailed discussion of the history of ancient mnemonics, see Blum, *Die antike Mnemotechnik*, pp. 38–149. Cf. also Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp. 27–49.

<sup>92</sup> *Her.* III 16:28–40; Cic., *De Orat.* II 85:350–88:360; Quint. XI 2:1–26.

<sup>93</sup> Quint. XI 2:7 goes as far as to regard memory as the basic reason for the success of oratory: “We should never have known how great is its power, nor how divine it is, but for the fact that it has brought oratory to the present position of glory” (*Nesciretur tamen, quanta vis esset eius, quanta divinitas illa, nisi in hoc lumen vim orandi extulisset*).

<sup>94</sup> *hac exercitatione non eruenda memoria est si est nulla naturalis.*

<sup>95</sup> *Quare et Charmadas et Scepsius, de quo mode dixi, Metrodorus, quos Cicero dicit usos hac exercitatione, sibi habeant sua; nos simpliciora tradamus.*

What we see is not the neglect of memory training as such but the questioning of the extreme and tedious use of the visual experience as a very specialized mnemonic technique. One realized perfectly well the visual character of the memory, and one did not deny its value. Among Quintilian's simpler precepts, for instance, is the attempt to see the ordinary writing as it was actually placed on the tablet or the page (XI 2:32–33). And as we know today from modern studies of visual memory,<sup>96</sup> most people recall – correctly or not – the past through images impressed on their memory. The ancient people were aware of this basic, human characteristic.

*The present act of recall was thus essentially a search for the visual images of the past stored in the memory.* To be sure, memory was also a process, a phenomenon in the present. Joseph Farrell, in a recent article, argues for the non-objectivist aspects of mnemonic behaviour in Roman culture. Memory, according to Farrell, was not a thing that was stored in a place and retrieved when needed but a process through which artefacts representing the past were constantly being consumed and reproduced.<sup>97</sup> There is of course a great deal of truth in this, but Farrell discusses only the story about Simonides, neglecting entirely to comment on Aristotle's important discussion of μνήμη and ἀνάμνησις and the texts that, as we saw, point to the ideal of recalling upon request a very detailed kind of information. There was, it seems, a certain amount of storing things in the memory also in the Roman culture.<sup>98</sup> Even more so with the visual experiences of the past. *Autopsy, so to say, continued to live as vivid, interpretative images in the memory of the observer;* the “now” of the eyewitness did not take over entirely, but travelled through the landscape of various mental pictures back to the experience of past events. In this sense, memory and recall reflect the dynamics of the present in the past.

## 6. The Involvement of the Eyewitness and the Gospel Tradition

The oral history approach takes very seriously the fact that accurate memory depends on social interest and need. *A person involved remembers*

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<sup>96</sup> Baddeley, *Human Memory*, pp. 10–18, 71–84, 209–210. For an introduction to the psychology of memory, cf. also Hobi, “Kurze Einführung in die Grundlagen der Gedächtnispsychologie”, pp. 9–31.

<sup>97</sup> Farrell, “The Phenomenology of Memory”, pp. 373–383.

<sup>98</sup> The rabbinic movement, of course, betrays a view of memory and recall that is extremely difficult to fit into Farrell's argument.

*better than a disinterested observer.* The informant is a social and psychological being, as Paul Thompson stresses, implying that the recovery of the past cannot side-step the subjective elements of recall but, on the contrary, finds it only by taking seriously the informant's own feelings about the past.<sup>99</sup>

#### *a. Involvement and Reliability*

In the diligent search for clarity and exactness, modern New Testament scholars sometimes, as it happens, pose false and simplified alternatives. One finds this tendency in discussions concerning the reliability of a tradition or of a person, an eyewitness. Either the ancient eyewitness was detached, and therefore reliable, or s/he was involved, and therefore unreliable. Objectivity means to many, it seems, an impartial standpoint which has to do with not being part of the event, effecting a historically accurate and unbiased account; subjectivity, by the same token, means partiality and has to do with being part of the event, resulting in a historically biased account. The infusion of the present in the past is decisively different depending on the involvement of the eyewitness. Thus the modern need for clear-cut alternatives.

Werner H. Kelber operates, for instance, with three different approaches to the gospel tradition: Rudolf Bultmann's model of evolutionary progression, Birger Gerhardsson's model of passive transmission and his own model of oral transmission as a process of social identification and preventive censorship.<sup>100</sup> The characteristics imposed on Bultmann and Gerhardsson suggest, quite misleadingly, that the latter's stress on the basic reliability of the gospel tradition stems merely from a view of transmission as entirely mechanical and detached, performed by persons who were not involved, passive. In Kelber's presentation it is distinctly different from Bultmann's approach. Although Kelber does not speak of eyewitnesses, his own model of social identification and preventive censorship implies, by contrast, the discontinuity and disruption of the past that emerges from the early Christians' keen interest and involvement in the matters of the present.

Barry W. Henaut, to take another example, discusses in passing the role of the eyewitnesses in the formation of the gospel tradition.<sup>101</sup> Quite surprisingly he has the ancient historians emphasizing that an eyewitness should not be involved in the action to the extent that her or his role af-

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<sup>99</sup> See above Chap. 1, B:1.

<sup>100</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, pp. 1–43.

<sup>101</sup> Henaut, *Oral Tradition and the Gospels*, pp. 43–44.

fectured what s/he saw and remembered. The gospels, he continues, are intuitively aware of this problem and offer an apologetic explanation as to why the information is still accurate: Jesus' sayings or actions baffled the disciples, thus ensuring recall. But in fact, Henaut believes, the reverse is far more likely as an explanation of the development of the gospel tradition. The recall of the early Christians was determined by the present emotions and expectations and followed the logical of "what must have happened". They filled in the gaps in the present perception of the past, according to Henaut. The present entirely overshadowed the past in its pastness. Somewhat misleadingly he uses Jan Vansina in support for this notion.

Henaut's statement about the ancient historians, while trying to counter Harald Riesenfeld's confident trust in the eyewitness testimony, is patently false. The historians were indeed aware of the bias of some eyewitnesses.<sup>102</sup> Yet, they preferred the eyewitness who was socially involved or, even better, had been actively participating in the events. They demonstrate thus that an ancient person who had the clear ambition to tell about the past regarded historical truth as embodied within the subjective and biased stories of the actors on the arena of history themselves. Why would the early Christians, concerned to tell the news of the past, have thought differently? Why would the involvement, the keen and enthusiastic attachment to the person and teaching of Jesus, be an obstacle to the truth of history for them? Was not historical truth, as they thought, instead embedded precisely within this matrix of involvement and dedication? Henaut misses the point of his criticism and exaggerates his own position, because it is quite unlikely that the early Christians would have felt the active involvement of the eyewitnesses to be as problematic to historical reliability as he claims. There was therefore no acute need to fill in the gaps of history.

#### *b. Autopsy in Epistolary Form: the Letter of James*

We have a unique opportunity to study an early Christian eyewitness at work in the letter of James. Among Jesus' relatives James is the one to be known for his acquaintance with the Jesus tradition.<sup>103</sup> This view, of course, accepts the hypothesis that he stands behind the letter mentioning

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<sup>102</sup> See below Chap. 4, B:1.

<sup>103</sup> Jude is perhaps the second person in importance after James, but even if one accepts the argument for the authenticity of the letter attributed to him (cf. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, pp. 171–178), a detailed study of that letter provides only scant information as to his involvement in the development of the Jesus tradition.



“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” as sender (Jas 1:1).<sup>104</sup> However, since several scholars are sceptical to this view,<sup>105</sup> it is necessary to spend some space here to that preliminary issue.

Although virtually no one doubts that the prescript actually refers to the Lord’s brother,<sup>106</sup> some critics have brought out various arguments to prove the attribution as historically false. Wilhelm Pratscher lists the most common ones:<sup>107</sup> (1) the language and elevated style of the letter suggests an author who used Greek as his mother tongue; (2) the neglect of the ceremonial law in the letter, and the one-sided emphasis on its ethical aspect fulfilled in the love of the neighbour, cannot be harmonized with the picture of James emerging in Galatians 2:11–14, taken to indicate that James strongly advocated the validity of the ceremonial laws for the Christian Jews; (3) the situation of the letter points to a late date, because it shows parallels to writings composed relatively late and indicates a structure of leadership, with teachers and presbyters, which had relevance after the death of the apostles and the rise of the bishopric; (4) the tardy reception of the letter into the canon is difficult to explain if the Lord’s brother was known as its author; (5) and most important, according to Pratscher, James 2:14, with its separation of faith and deeds, is post-Pauline.

The arguments *pro* and *contra* are extremely difficult to evaluate.<sup>108</sup> There is no reason to repeat them further here. James B. Adamson, to take a recent scholar of the letter,<sup>109</sup> has brought out a detailed case for the

<sup>104</sup> There exists no text-critical evidence to support the notion that the prescript of James was added later, as argued recently by Llewelyn, “The Prescript of James”, pp. 385–393.

<sup>105</sup> For lists of scholars holding either of the two views, cf. Davids, *The Epistle of James*, p. 4; Pratscher, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus*, p. 209 nn. 2, 3.

<sup>106</sup> Only two or three other persons in early Christianity are known to have carried this name, James the son of Zebedee (Mark 3:17 parr.; Acts 1:13) and James the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18 parr.; Acts 1:13). But according to Acts 12:2 the former was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I around the year 44; and the latter remains a largely unknown figure. “James the little” (Mark 15:40/Matt 27:56; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10) is not the Lord’s cousin or brother (Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, pp. 14–15).

<sup>107</sup> Pratscher, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus*, pp. 210–213.

<sup>108</sup> The difficult nature of the issue is indicated by Stuhlmacher’s change of opinion. In his dissertation he located the letter “ebenso in die späte zweite Hälfte des I. Jh. wie in den hellenistischen Bereich” (*Gerechtigkeit Gottes*, p. 192 n. 4), while later – “nach langen Überlegungen” – he regards it “nicht als ein spätes Pseudepigraphon, sondern als ein noch vor der Steinigung des Herrenbruders im Jahre 62 n. Chr. von Jerusalem ausgehendes Zirkularschreiben” (*Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments*, p. 234).

<sup>109</sup> Among scholars of previous generations, Kittel was perhaps most prolific in this

authenticity of the letter, trying to explain satisfactorily observations such as those listed by Pratscher;<sup>110</sup> and Luke Timothy Johnson finds several reasons for an early dating of the letter.<sup>111</sup> But certainty is impossible. Manabu Tsuji has again rehearsed the arguments, with opposite conclusions.<sup>112</sup> Yet indeed, the fourth argument mentioned above cannot easily be disposed of.<sup>113</sup> The attestation of the letter is unknown until the time of Origen,<sup>114</sup> who is aware, it seems, that some people still do not accept it (*Comm. in Joh.* 19:23).<sup>115</sup> Also Eusebius shows some ambiguity. To him “it is said” (λέγεται) – he does not here claim the view himself – that the first of the catholic letters is of James (*Hist. Eccl.* II 23:24), but he knows that others regard it as spurious (*Hist. Eccl.* II 23:25) and classifies it, together with Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John and 3 John, among the *antilegomena* (*Hist. Eccl.* III 25:3). In citing it as James’ letter, he might merely be following conventional practice, because “these letters” – viz., the catholic ones – have, according to himself, been used publicly in most churches (*Hist. Eccl.* II 23:25). The attempts to explain this late and ambiguous recognition of the letter by referring to its Jewish character, and its limited circulation and appeal as a consequence of that character, address only – at the best – its problematic canonical status, but not the fact that this feature evidently had to do with persisting doubts concerning its authorship.<sup>116</sup>

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regard (“Der geschichtliche Ort des Jakobusbriefes”, pp. 71–105; “Der Jakobusbrief und die Apostolischen Väter”, pp. 54–112).

<sup>110</sup> Adamson, *James*, pp. 3–52.

<sup>111</sup> Johnson, *The Letter of James*, pp. 118–121.

<sup>112</sup> Tsuji, *Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung*, pp. 38–44.

<sup>113</sup> So also Painter, *Just James*, pp. 235–236. As for the other arguments, all except the third one might cumulatively have a point, but taken by themselves the arguments often become circular (cf. Baasland, *Jakobsbrevet*, p. 186). I fail to see any force whatsoever in Pratscher’s third argument.

<sup>114</sup> It is absent from the Canon Muratori, usually dated around 180. The writings of the anti-gnostic fathers Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus are all, as far as I can verify, lacking in allusion to James.

<sup>115</sup> The text has the expression ἐν τῇ φερομένῃ Ἰακώβου ἐπιστολῇ (Brooke, II, p. 32 line 5). The precise connotation of the participle is debated. Ruwet takes it as an indication of Origen’s own doubts concerning the letter of James (“Les ‘Antilegomena’ dans les œuvres d’Origène”, p. 31).

<sup>116</sup> Adamson repeats this line of reasoning: “Its original handicap may be that it appealed, if at all, only to Jewish Christians, or that it lost all its prestige and authority after the fall of Jerusalem and the decisive rupture between Judaism and Christianity” (*James*, p. 38). I do not see why it lost its prestige and authority if one believed that its author was the Lord’s own brother. For all we know, his authority was never seriously questioned.

The discussion of the letter's authenticity cannot, it seems, be settled in too simple terms, such as either it was written by James and is authentic or it was written by someone else and is inauthentic. Jerome, though admittedly late, has an interesting comment which could do justice to both sides of the discussion. In *Liber De viris inlustribus* he says that James the Just wrote a single letter which "is claimed to have been published by some other person under his name" (*Vir.* 2).<sup>117</sup> As a matter of fact, several scholars today hold a view similar to the one reported by Jerome, whether they know it or not. Peter H. Davids, Ralph P. Martin, Wiard Popkes and Martin Hengel, to take four persons who have studied the letter in depth, while disagreeing on individual points, all take the evidence to point towards a certain editorial process based on the genuine teaching of James himself.<sup>118</sup> It is indeed not unheard of in antiquity and early Christianity that great personalities attracted students who cherished, preserved and elaborated their teaching, eventually to record it in various kinds of writings. As for letters, it is not unlikely that some of Paul's epistolary communication with the communities took shape in such settings.<sup>119</sup> There is some evidence that James also had co-workers. Acts 21:18 suggests that he was surrounded by a group of elders; and Galatians 2:12 identifies certain emissaries by reference to James, not by reference to the names of the emissaries.<sup>120</sup> Such a collective setting would explain well both the elements anchoring the letter of James in the life and

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<sup>117</sup> *ab alio quodam sub nomine eius edita adseritur* (Richardson, p. 7 lines 12–13). It is noteworthy that the *Second Apocalypse of James* from Nag Hammadi is introduced with a similar notion. A certain Mareim is said to have written down a discourse which James delivered in Jerusalem (2 *Apoc. Jas.* 44:13–16). Cf. the comments of Funk in *Die zweite Apokalypse des Jakobus*, pp. 87–88.

<sup>118</sup> Davids, *The Epistle of James*, pp. 2–22; Martin, *James*, pp. lxi–lxxvii (cf. Martin, "The Life-Setting of the Epistle of James", pp. 102–103 n. 25); Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, pp. 187–188; Hengel, "Der Jakobusbrief", p. 251; Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea*, p. 17. Cf. also recently Bernheim, *James*, p. 244, and the comment of Niebuhr: "Die Möglichkeit, daß ein für die Gemeinden in der Diaspora bestimmtes Schreiben des Herrenbruders in Jerusalem *übersetzt* worden ist, bleibt m.E. durchaus plausibel" ("Der Jakobusbrief", p. 431). Bauckham speaks of the assistance of a more hellenized Jew that James himself (*James*, p. 24). Further scholars are mentioned by Painter, *Just James*, p. 239 n. 37.

<sup>119</sup> See Byrskog, "Co-Senders, Co-Authors and Paul's Use of the First Person Plural", pp. 230–250, with reference to the pioneering work of Hans Conzelmann (*ibid.*, p. 250 n. 98). Cf. also Stuhlmacher, "Das Christusbild der Paulus-Schule", pp. 159–175.

<sup>120</sup> Bauckham argues that the substance of James' speech in Acts 15:13–21 derives from a source close to James himself, presumably from Greek-speaking members of the early Church in Jerusalem ("James and the Gentiles", pp. 154–184).

thought of the Lord's brother as well as the features pointing to the involvement of other persons.<sup>121</sup> The letter of James is, if that is correct, eyewitness testimony in epistolary form.

*c. James' Involvement in the Jesus Tradition*

One of the elements speaking in favour of James' own contribution is the profound familiarity with Jesus' teaching reflected in the letter.<sup>122</sup> While not being too much involved at the beginning, he must have seen and heard his brother speaking on several occasions, subsequently aiming to solidify and amplify his memories with further information in light of his Easter experience. The letter contains, accordingly, a proportionally large amount of suspected intertextual links to the Jesus tradition. A composite listing indicates thirty-six to forty-five possible parallels.<sup>123</sup> No other writing besides the gospel narratives contains such a large amount of allusions to the Jesus tradition.

We select James 5:12 as a representative sample; its close resemblance to Matthew 5:34–37 is undeniable. A comparison of the two texts reveals certain significant features of an eyewitness' relation to and use of the Jesus tradition:

*James 5:12*  
 μὴ ὀμνύετε,  
 μήτε τὸν οὐρανὸν  
 μήτε τὴν γῆν

μήτε ἄλλον τινὰ ὄρκον  
 ἦτω δὲ ὑμῶν  
 τὸ ναὶ ναὶ καὶ τὸ οὐ οὐ,  
 ἵνα μὴ ὑπὸ κρίσιν πέσητε.

*Matthew 5:34–37*  
 μὴ ὀμόσαι ὄλως·  
 μήτε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὅτι ...  
 μήτε ἐν τῇ γῆ, ὅτι ...  
 μήτε εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, ὅτι ...  
 μήτε ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ σου ὀμόσης, ὅτι ...

ἔστω δὲ ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν  
 ναὶ ναὶ, οὐ οὐ  
 τὸ δὲ περισσὸν τούτων  
 ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστίν.

<sup>121</sup> Tsuji rejects this hypothesis since one cannot separate in James the Greek and the Semitic elements (*Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung*, p. 44). I see no force in that argument, because a good student and secretary steeped in the teaching of his master is certainly capable of moulding the material into a coherent whole. Hahn and Müller speak of "die Verlegenheitslösung der Sekretärhypothese" ("Der Jakobusbrief", p. 63), but give no reason why that solution is more embarrassing than the proposal to locate it in a vague Hellenistic environment during the last third of the first century.

<sup>122</sup> For a survey of that debate, see Hahn/Müller, "Der Jakobusbrief", pp. 54–57.

<sup>123</sup> For a chart of possible parallels, see Davids, "James and Jesus", pp. 66–67. Hartin limits his chart to what appears to be close associations or allusions (*James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 141–142). The study of D. B. Deppe, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Epistle of James* (Chelsea, Michigan: Bookcrafters, 1989), was not available to me.

The comparison implies, to begin with, that the more primitive form of the Jesus tradition is to be found in James. The Matthean version of the sample above is steeped in the dominating tense of the entire story, the aorist,<sup>124</sup> and contains several explanatory elaborations suggesting a more developed form of the logion.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, its antithetical setting is probably Matthean.<sup>126</sup> Matthew 23:16–22, which is also part of the special M material, reflects perhaps a further elaboration of the author.<sup>127</sup> Justin's use of the logion is closer to Matthew than to James,<sup>128</sup> which implies that even if Justin would be independent of any of the two,<sup>129</sup> he also employs a more developed form than James.<sup>130</sup> This conclusion is confirmed by a study of other intertextual links with the Jesus tradition.<sup>131</sup> Most scholars agree today that James did not on any occasion rely on the synoptic gospel narratives,<sup>132</sup> because the passages in the letter do not agree entirely with any of them. One actually finds notable similarities with Lukan terminology,<sup>133</sup> in addition to the parallels in Matthew. The material in James testifies therefore to a pre-synoptic stage of transmission.

There are two related points to be made here. They both show that an eyewitness' personal experience of and involvement in the Jesus event furthers rather than hinders a reliable account of the past.

The first point emerges from the observation that the sample chosen above agrees with most other occasions of intertextual links in that its pri-

<sup>124</sup> See Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, pp. 253–254.

<sup>125</sup> So also, e.g., Tsuji, *Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung*, pp. 121–122.

<sup>126</sup> For details, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 391–395.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. also Matt 12:34–37.

<sup>128</sup> *Apol.* I 16:5: μή ὁμώσητε ἄλλως· ἔστω δὲ ὑμῶν τὸ ναὶ ναὶ, καὶ τὸ οὐ οὐ· τὸ δὲ περισσὸν τούτων ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

<sup>129</sup> Minear finds it most likely “that each of the three writers was incorporating catechetical materials which were still circulating orally in their several communities” (“Yes or No”, p. 7). I do not find it implausible, however, that Justin might be giving a condensed quotation of the Matthean version from memory.

<sup>130</sup> This is also the case with other extracanonical parallels. See Brooks, *Matthew's Community*, pp. 37–38.

<sup>131</sup> For a full discussion of the material, see Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 140–198. Cf. also his article “Call to be Perfect”, pp. 477–492. More sceptical, however, Penner, *The Epistle of James*, pp. 104–105, 265–266; Tsuji, *Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung*, pp. 118–132.

<sup>132</sup> Shepherd's attempt to show that an early 2nd century author of James is inaccurately citing Matthew from memory, having heard it read in his church somewhere in Syria (“The Epistle of James”, pp. 40–51), has rightly failed to win scholarly approval.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Adamson, *James*, pp. 173–178.

mary parallel is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount. The parallels are hence located in a pre-synoptic block of material. In the case of this particular sample, that material belongs to the M material. What the sample does not show is that on most other occasions a parallel can also be found in the Lukan Sermon on the Plain, which implies that the block was part of the Q material.

This observation is important for our purposes,<sup>134</sup> because it points to an eyewitness who was in touch with the major streams of the Jesus tradition from an early time. *The influence of this eyewitness in the development of the gospel tradition did not, in effect, mean the free incorporation of various scattered and personal memories of his.* James was faithful to his role as an early Christian teacher (cf. 3:1). He did not refer to uncontrolled items held together merely by the associations of what he could recall from the visual imprints of his own memory; he did not, as far as we can tell, fill in the gaps in the present perception of the past according to his own pattern of “what must have happened”. Rather, his own oral history, his own involvement and experiences, his own process of memory and recall, were integrated within definable blocks of traditional material. He surely must have interpreted his own observations, but not in total isolation from the picture of the past history that was available to him through the emerging gospel tradition.

The second point has to do with the fact that James neglected to identify the text as a tradition, and even less to attribute it to Jesus. This silence is remarkable in view of the Jewish character of the letter. The rabbis were extreme in attributing various teaching to the person believed to have first said it. In this way the deceased masters could continue to exert their influence, “to make their lips move in the grave”, as they said (b. Yeb. 97a).<sup>135</sup> We are familiar with a similar silence also from the Pauline letters. In that case, we normally have reason to assume that Paul, or someone else,<sup>136</sup> had previously taught the members of the communities vital parts of the tradition. But the letter to the Romans, which is full of implicit Jesus tradition,<sup>137</sup> shows that a reference to the audience cannot pro-

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<sup>134</sup> It is not necessary here to enter into further debate concerning what kind of document Q was to James. Did he know it in oral or written form? What version? Was it closer to Matthew than to Luke? The dynamic process of re-oralization of a written text such as Q is usually neglected in discussions of these matters.

<sup>135</sup> For texts and discussion, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 137–140. In addition to the literature referred to there, cf. also Neusner, “Evaluating the Attributions of Sayings”, pp. 93–111.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Schmeller, “Kollege Paulus”, pp. 260–283.

<sup>137</sup> Stuhlmacher, “Jesustradition im Römerbrief?”, pp. 240–250.

vide the full explanation for the lack of any kind of identification of the traditions used. There was no way for Paul to know if the Roman addressees recognized the material which he employed as unidentified Jesus tradition. Even less so for James, issuing a circular letter to various addressees. The best explanation seems to be, therefore, that there was a distinction between the actual transmission of the Jesus tradition, on the one hand, and its use for various purposes, such as in paraenesis and epistolary communication, on the other.<sup>138</sup> The basic observation to support that explanation is that sayings of Jesus were manifestly put to a variety of uses at different times and places, while the sayings themselves remained relatively constant as to their nucleus.<sup>139</sup> James 5:12 and Matthew 5:34–37 are examples of precisely this phenomenon.<sup>140</sup>

Applying this insight to our question, the reason why James did not identify a tradition as teaching from Jesus is simply that he did not consider himself to be transmitting a Jesus saying at this point.<sup>141</sup> He employed it for a certain purpose, he took it for granted, and in that activity he did not need to refer to it as a quotation;<sup>142</sup> he did not transmit Jesus tradition in the narrow and technical sense of the term;<sup>143</sup> he was, together with his

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<sup>138</sup> The starting-point for Gerhardtsson's influential proposal of a specific setting of transmission in early Christianity was his study of the letter of James. Cf. his comments in "Der Weg der Evangelientradition", p. 85. This study has never been published.

<sup>139</sup> Some examples are provided by Bauckham, "The Study of the Gospel Traditions", pp. 376–377. He concludes: "Such examples, of which more could be given, illustrate the *relative* immunity of the tradition of the sayings of Jesus from influence from the way in which they were understood and the circumstances to which they were applied in early Christian teaching" (*ibid.*, p. 377).

<sup>140</sup> Dautzenberg argues that the prohibition against swearing had no particular effect on the gospel tradition ("Ist das Schwurverbot Mt 5,33–37; Jak 5,12 ein Beispiel für die Torakritik Jesu?", pp. 63–65). It suffices here to refer to Minear, "Yes or No", pp. 1–13, an article with which Dautzenberg shows no acquaintance.

<sup>141</sup> Kittel's explanation, that the Jesus sayings did not yet carry the authority of γραφή ("Der geschichtliche Ort des Jakobusbriefes", pp. 92–93), contains a kernel of truth but does not suffice as a full explanation. It is one thing to say "it is written" and another simply to identify a tradition as coming from a certain person. James does neither in regard to the Jesus tradition.

<sup>142</sup> Hengel indicates that the reason for this feature was James' close relationship to Jesus and his prophetic authority ("Der Jakobusbrief", p. 264). That might indeed have been an additional factor behind his frequent and bold use of the Jesus tradition.

<sup>143</sup> Dautzenberg seems to imply that James did not transmit the prohibition against swearing as Jesus tradition ("Ist das Schwurverbot Mt 5,33–37; Jak 5,12 ein Beispiel für die Torakritik Jesu?", pp. 61, 63). Apart from neglecting the broad use of the Jesus tradition in the rest of the letter, Dautzenberg makes unwarranted generalizations merely from the practical use of a tradition in a letter.

fellow workers, composing a letter. And this, in turn, means that he must have familiarized himself thoroughly with the Jesus tradition before employing it. He was a teacher, and as a Christian teacher he was deeply involved in the tradition. The manner in which he integrated it into his own argument in the letter is a sign of how he lived within that tradition, how he had internalized it and made it his own.<sup>144</sup>

This is significant, because it shows that James had no need to criticize the available tradition as an eyewitness with his own personal memories, with his own oral history of how things “really” were. *The eyewitness account, his own interpreted story of the past, in all its subjectivity, was not felt to be in conflict with the emerging gospel tradition as he knew it.* He accepted it fully, as if he himself exerted a certain influence on its development.

## 7. Conclusion: Interpretation as Reliable Eyewitness Testimony

James might be exceptional and we must be aware of unwarranted generalizations. Yet, it is significant that the personal memories of an eyewitness of such extraordinary importance – a close relative of Jesus and a leading authority in the early Church – come through very smoothly in the gospel tradition. This suggests, as does the thrust of this entire section, that we refine, or redefine, our entire conception of historical reliability as we work with the ancient gospel tradition, trying to avoid the use of foreign and anachronistic models of historicity. The modern distinction between ideological preference and “history for its own sake” has come a long way from the ordinary character of ancient historical evidence.

*The historical reliability of an eyewitness has little or nothing to do with passive transmission or detachment from the event.* Engaged interpretation is part of the process from the very beginning; to see is to interpret with one’s own frame of mind; the present is always a part of the past; and this is an asset, not a drawback, even insofar as we are concerned with historical reliability.<sup>145</sup> James was, according to ancient stan-

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<sup>144</sup> Kittel recognized this aspect of early Christian transmission: “Dieser Tatbestand kann nur von da her erklärt werden, daß in dieser frühapostolischen Zeit die Menschen sehr viel stärker, als wir dies gemeinhin in Rechnung stellen, in der lebendigen unmittelbaren Jesustradition gelebt haben” (“Der geschichtliche Ort des Jakobusbriefes”, p. 93).

<sup>145</sup> Hemer states accurately: “Facts do not come in sealed packets untouched by human hand: selection and interpretation, at however rudimentary stage, are inseparable from historical information, and it is none the worse for that” (*The Book of Acts*, p. 69; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 86–87).



dards, the ideal informer. He observed certain matters of uttermost interest, he was socially involved in the most intimate way, he participated actively in the event after its decisive break-through, he had visual imprints on his memory that could be recalled, he was an eminently qualified interpreter, he manifested indeed the present in the past, autopsy interpreted. This matrix was the perfect framework for an adequate understanding of the past. And we see nothing of discontinuity and disruption on his part, of "preventive censorship", in the terms of Kelber. Instead, his social identification was done in the sphere of continuity and acceptance; his deep involvement did not cause rejection, but items of the emerging gospel tradition, for all we know from the letter of James, could be neatly integrated into his own present perception of what had really happened.

## B. The Oral Historian as Interpreter

We must move one step further. There were also other factors affecting the role of the eyewitness, besides her or his engaged interpretation of the past. We find other eyewitnesses besides James in early Christianity, persons whose involvement and interpretation were not, for some reason, felt to be as unproblematic. What about the women at the cross and the empty tomb, people lacking the stature of James? Could their testimony be accepted? In this case we have no direct access to the eyewitnesses. They come to us through the interpretative work of the early Christians who developed the gospel tradition and/or wrote gospel narratives. But how did they proceed as they sought out information from, let us say, the women? With James we saw the matter from the viewpoint of an eyewitness. We shall now change perspective, looking at the interpretative dimension of autopsy during the process of inquiry from the angle of the oral historians and the evangelists, that is, the people who were eager to gain information about the past by consulting the sources.

### 1. The Bias of the Eyewitness

It would indeed give a false impression if one argued that the engaged eyewitness testimony always was considered to be reliable. "Should seeing be believing?", David Henige entitles one of the sections of his book on oral historiography, illustrating various reasons for the possible bias of

an eyewitness.<sup>146</sup> The discussion above gives therefore only one part of the picture. Now we must consider the other part.

The oral history approach not only teaches us to evaluate the oral stories by means of certain patterns of interpretation, but also alerts us to the fact that its eminent retrospective potential emerges from its openness to critical evaluation.<sup>147</sup> The oral historian has, so to say, the chance of seeing the evidence “before it is cooked”. The facts are still fresh, interpreted only through the perceptions of a person who was involved. As Alessandro Portelli points out, oral sources might compensate chronological distance with a much closer personal involvement.<sup>148</sup> The oral historian may pose clarifying questions to his informant, detect contradictions and exercise a more direct criticism of what s/he is being told. The eyewitness is biased, to be sure, and that constitutes the challenging advantage of the oral historian.

The ancient historians were clearly aware that the eyewitness testimony could be biased. The ideal was to report history without any distortion whatsoever. In the words of Lucian: “Above all, let him bring the knowledge that is like a mirror, clear, gleaming-bright, accurately centered, and let him display the shape of events just as he receives them, free from distortion, faded colour and misrepresentation” (*Hist. Conscr.* 50).<sup>149</sup> Imitation through the medium of a mirror is as close to reality as one can get. Yet, the historians realized that the informants were biased. How could they live up to the high standard indicated by Lucian?

Herodotus takes an easy way out of the dilemma, at least theoretically, claiming to be a detached reporter: “I am obliged to say that which is told, but I am not obliged at all to believe [it]; and for me this saying should hold good for the whole history” (7:152).<sup>150</sup> The presentation of the inquiry is to carry the mark of strict impartiality. Accordingly, he is usually careful to state his sources.<sup>151</sup> Where real investigation is impossible, he refuses to make any statement at all (2:3). The sources, he implies, are biased, but it is not his duty to pose judgement in regard to their truth.

<sup>146</sup> Henige, *Oral Historiography*, pp. 111–112.

<sup>147</sup> Cf., e.g., Schlesinger, “The Historian as Participant”, pp. 346–353.

<sup>148</sup> Portelli, “What makes oral history different”, p. 68.

<sup>149</sup> μάλιστα δὲ κατόπτρῳ ἐοικυῖαν παρασχέσθω τὴν γνώμην ἀθόλῳ καὶ στιλπνῷ καὶ ἀκριβεῖ τὸ κέντρον καὶ ὁποίας ἂν δέξηται τὰς μορφὰς τῶν ἔργων τοιαῦτα καὶ δεικνύτω αὐτά, διάστροφον δὲ ἢ παράχρουν ἢ ἑτερόσχημον μηδέν.

<sup>150</sup> ἐγὼ δὲ ὀφείλω λέγειν τὰ λεγόμενα, πείθεσθαί γε μὲν οὐ παντάπασιν ὀφείλω, καὶ μοι τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος ἐχέτω ἐς πάντα λόγον. Cf. also 2:123; 3:9; 4:195.

<sup>151</sup> 1:1, 2, 3, 5, etc.

As we shall see below, Herodotus was unable to conform to his ideal. It is Thucydides, however, who is most explicit about the bias of the eyewitnesses. A casual remark in VII 44:1–3 shows that he was perfectly aware of the limited value of reports from eyewitnesses directly involved in a battle at day or – even worse – at night. But there is more to it. His complaint concerning the difficulty of remembering past words and actions has to do, as we brought attention to above,<sup>152</sup> with the varying character of the things reported by his informants (I 22:3). In I 20 he actually makes an extensive digression on the sloppiness of earlier inquirers. Epichoric accounts are especially problematic.<sup>153</sup> “For men accept from one another hearsay reports of former events without due examination, even those that belong to the history of their own country” (I 20:1).<sup>154</sup> A similar critical attitude towards indigenous reports is evident also elsewhere. We already noticed his use of local information in II 48:2 and VI 2:2.<sup>155</sup> Both are bracketed with scepticism. In the former case, Thucydides is disinclined to accept the inhabitants’ explanation of the disease, because anyone can speak about its probable origin according to his personal opinion; in the latter case, he immediately refutes the Sicilians’ claim, because it does not accord with the truth. Another example is VI 54:1. Thucydides sets out to prove that neither the Hellenes at large nor even the Athenians themselves give an accurate account about their own tyrants and a particular incident. He thus betrays openly his critical distance towards the eyewitness accounts.

We also mentioned Polybius’ high esteem of eyewitnesses who inhabited a certain place or had an active part in a particular event; but neither does Polybius trust them blindly. After referring to the local reports of the Carthaginians, he immediately goes on to mention that he had heard even more detailed information from the Numidian king Massanissa (IX 25:4); and it is Massanissa’s story that is subsequently reported. He also realizes that local people may have different versions of the same matter. It is perfectly clear to him that the natives of Alipheira dispute among themselves the origin of the statue of Athena (IV 78:3–4) and that it was impossible for the Romans to be entirely certain about the charac-

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<sup>152</sup> Chap. 4, A:5a.

<sup>153</sup> Verdin, “Notes sur l’attitude des historiens Grecs”, pp. 191–194.

<sup>154</sup> οἱ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι τὰς ἀκοὰς τῶν προγεγενημένων, καὶ ἦν ἐπιχώρια σφίσιν ἢ, ὁμοίως ἀβασανίστως παρ’ ἀλλήλων δέχονται. – Gomme believes that Thucydides here refers to all that has been said and written of the past (*Commentary*, I, p. 136). But the statement “men accept from one another hearsay reports” indicates oral communication.

<sup>155</sup> Chap. 4, A:2.

ter of their own constitution at its prime (VI 11:11). Despite his high regard of epichoric accounts, he maintains his critical and scrutinizing attitude, always eager to test the information. It is the task of a historian, he says elsewhere, “to believe those worthy of belief and to be a good critic of the reports that reach him” (XII 4<sup>c</sup>:5).<sup>156</sup> He thus trusts Laelius’ information concerning Scipio not merely because of Laelius’ eminent qualification as an informant, but “because his account seems probable on the face of it and in accordance with the performances of him [*viz.*, of Scipio]” (X 3:2).<sup>157</sup> For that reason, he is also concerned to safe-guard some information that he chooses to use. In X 28:3 he speaks of underground channels of water in the desert on the basis of “a true story transmitted by the local people”.<sup>158</sup> Again, in XII 5:5 he legitimizes his use of Aristotle’s account of the foundation of Locri by referring to the Locrians’ own transmission of the account: “For I know that they confess to people that the tradition handed down to them is the utterance from the fathers concerning the colony, [the utterance] which Aristotle said, not Timaeus”.<sup>159</sup> Polybius then goes on to present the proofs which the Locrians adduce for their claim.

These examples suffice for the present purpose. As should be clear by now, the ancient historians were to a significant extent oral historians, using the eyewitness testimony as a primary way to gain information concerning the past. From their perspective, the eyewitness with close links to the place and event of interest was exceedingly valuable. Yet, the historians also had their own preferences, their own opinions about matters of history, their own critical and interpretative framework. And these things played a significant role as they set out to gather information. It was not without the more or less careful weighing of the evidence that they listened to and evaluated the accounts of the more or less biased informants.

## 2. Historical Truth

The keen awareness of the biased accounts of some eyewitnesses indicates that historical, factual truth was of importance in the actual research of

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<sup>156</sup> πιστεύειν δὲ τοῖς ἀξίοις πίστεως, κριτὴν δ’ εἶναι τῶν προσπιπτόντων μὴ κακόν.

<sup>157</sup> διὰ τὸ δοκεῖν εἰκότα λέγειν καὶ σύμφωνα τοῖς ὑπ’ ἐκείνου πεπραγμένοις.

<sup>158</sup> ἀληθῆς παραδίδεται λόγος διὰ τῶν ἐγχωρίων.

<sup>159</sup> σύνουδα γὰρ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὁμολογοῦσιν ὅτι παραδόσμος αὐτοῖς ἐστὶν αὕτη περὶ τῆς ἀποικίας ἢ φήμη παρὰ πατέρων, ἣν Ἀριστοτέλης εἶρηκεν, οὐ Τίμαιος.

the historian. A fragment from the very first Greek historian whom we know of, Hecataeus of Miletus of the sixth and fifth century BCE, indicates the historian's concern about truth: "This I write, as it seems to me to be true. For the words of the Greeks, as they appear to me, are many and absurd" (*FrGrHist* 1 F 1a).<sup>160</sup> At the other end of the chronological spectrum we find again Lucian, this time with a strong word on the historian's duty to tell the truth: "the historian's task is one: to tell it as it happened" (*Hist. Conscr.* 39);<sup>161</sup> and moreover, "as I have said, this is the one particular characteristic of history, and to truth alone must sacrifice be made" (*Hist. Conscr.* 40).<sup>162</sup> His statements sound almost Rankean.

Yet, as we noted in passing above,<sup>163</sup> historical truth was embodied within the subjective and biased stories of the actors on the arena of history themselves. *The historians' preference for the involved and participating eyewitness, coupled with their sensitivity to the biased character of the eyewitness accounts, challenged them therefore sometimes to insist more clearly and emphatically on the importance of truth.*

In order to show the fundamental importance of this notion, we may, to begin with, take a look at a historian who has been accused of being rather inaccurate and sloppy. Xenophon, whom scholars throughout the years have indeed accused of these matters,<sup>164</sup> was not, after all, totally ignorant concerning what constituted historical truth.<sup>165</sup> We detect his concern in some significant expressions of uncertainty. He confesses it in regard to the exact circumstances of the death of Lysander, here indicating his wish rather to tell about what is clear (*Hist. Graec.* III 5:19). Similarly, after telling the first version concerning the death of the polemarchs, he plainly records what others say (*Hist. Graec.* V 4:7). Two

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<sup>160</sup> τάδε γράφω, ὡς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι: οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων λόγοι πολλοὶ τε καὶ γελοῖοι, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται, εἰσίν.

<sup>161</sup> τοῦ δὴ συγγραφέως ἔργον ἔν – ὡς ἐπράχθη εἰπεῖν.

<sup>162</sup> ἐν γάρ, ὡς ἔφην, τοῦτο ἴδιον ἱστορίας, καὶ μόνη θνυτέον τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

<sup>163</sup> Chap. 4, A:6a.

<sup>164</sup> Cf., e.g., Bury's statement: "To the circumstance that he is one of the very few classical Greek historians whose work has survived, he owes a prominence to which his qualities do not entitle him. In history as in philosophy he was a dilettante; ... his mind was essentially mediocre, incapable of penetrating beneath the surface of things" (*The Ancient Greek Historians*, p. 151). Recent scholarship, it should be added, betrays a more positive attitude. Cf. Gray, *The Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*; Tuplin, *The Failings of the Empire*; Dillery, *Xenophon and the History of His Times*.

<sup>165</sup> So Breitenbach, *Historiographische Anschauungsformen Xenophons*, pp. 23–26. Higgins, who reads Xenophon *qua* Xenophon's total *oeuvre*, stresses the historical heritage of Xenophon (*Xenophon the Athenian*, pp. 101–102).

further passages give the same impression. To his own day, he claims, there was uncertainty concerning Jason's actual intentions in regard to the sacred treasures of the Delphians (*Hist. Graec.* VI 4:30); and somewhat later, he likewise finds it necessary to include two accounts of why Alexander's wife hated her husband to the extent of arranging to have him killed (*Hist. Graec.* VI 4:37). Even Xenophon, evidently, knew and admitted that an account could be uncertain (ἄδηλον), thus betraying a sense of what actually constituted historical truth.

Thucydides and Polybius are of course much more explicit and emphatic than Xenophon.<sup>166</sup> We have already brought attention to Thucydides' digression in I 20. Here he also introduces, for the first time, the concept of truth, criticizing "the other Hellenes" – whoever they were – for holding mistaken opinions concerning matters belonging to the present: "Thus the search for the truth is not a painstaking act for most people, and they rather turn to what lies ready at hand" (I 20:3).<sup>167</sup> He afterwards uses the concept three times in rapid succession: the telling of the "truth" is contrasted to the recitation which cannot be tested (I 21:1); what was "truly" said is extremely difficult to recall, but the historian adheres to it as closely as possible (I 22:1); the "truest" explanation is rarely advanced, but Thucydides provides an account of it (I 23:6).

The methodological digression in I 20–22 places Thucydides' concept of truth within the context of clarity and accuracy. The notion of clarity was introduced already in I 1:3.<sup>168</sup> Its scantiness is there contrasted with those cases where trustworthy proofs, τεκμήρια, exist.<sup>169</sup> During his research Thucydides evidently achieved clarity by means of logical inference on the basis of adequate evidence.<sup>170</sup> In I 22:4 he states quite emphatically his general wish to be read by persons who are less interested

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<sup>166</sup> This is not to say that Herodotus had no sense of truth (cf. Moles, "Truth and Untruth", pp. 92–98). Josephus also, of course, liked to see himself in line with Thucydides and Polybius, as he, for instance, closes his work in *Bell.* 7:455 by stressing the truthfulness of his account (cf. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, pp. 241–242).

<sup>167</sup> οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἢ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. also I 9:2.

<sup>169</sup> For Thucydides' use of this term elsewhere, cf., e.g., I 20:1; I 21:1; II 15:4; II 39:2; II 50:2.

<sup>170</sup> Thucydides does not make a sharp distinction between σημεῖον as a fallible sign and τεκμήριον as an indication that the result will necessarily occur (cf. the discussion of Galen's use of this distinction by Diller, "ὄπισις ἀδήλων τὰ φαινόμενα", pp. 23–25). He can use the two terms almost interchangeably (cf. I 132:1 [σημεῖον] with I 132:5 [τεκμήρια]). See Hornblower, *Thucydides*, pp. 100–104.

in fabulous matters pleasing the ear and more interested to have a clear view (τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν) of past and future events. Lucian's image of the mirror may here be anticipated. "Truth" says J. L. Moles, "is 'the clearness', what has been *seen* by the historian himself or reliable eye-witnesses".<sup>171</sup>

The notion of accuracy is especially prominent in I 22. Thucydides complains about the difficulty of recalling τὴν ἀκρίβειαν of what was actually said in a speech (I 22:1); and similarly, he stresses that he has investigated each point of the events of the war ὅσον δυνατόν ἀκριβεία (I 22:2). In addition, the notion is present in V 26:5, where he points out his credentials for acquiring accurate information. Generally speaking, the term ἀκρίβεια may essentially mean "in conformity with reality", "Wirklichkeitstreue", as Dietrich Kurz puts it,<sup>172</sup> but Thucydides' complaint about Hellanicus' inaccurate chronology in I 97:2 – he treated it οὐκ ἀκριβῶς, according to Thucydides – shows that the term carried also connotations of exactness and precision,<sup>173</sup> especially in matters dealing with historical truth.

Polybius was very much concerned about the truth of history. He states it quite emphatically already in I 14:6: "For just as a living creature which has lost the eyesight is made completely useless, so all that is left of history stripped of the truth is an idle tale".<sup>174</sup> The importance of this statement is seen in Polybius' reference back to it in XII 12:3. Both passages are placed within the context of criticism against other historians; and as is evident from Marc Vercruysse's treatment of the subject,<sup>175</sup> Polybius' concern about the truth means that he spent considerable effort in censoring any distortion of it. One of the main objections to the sensa-

<sup>171</sup> Moles, "Truth and Untruth", p. 110.

<sup>172</sup> Kurz, *Akribeia*, pp. 40–61. Cf. similarly Egermann, "Zum historiographischen Ziel des Thukydides", pp. 438–447; Schepens, *L' 'autopsie'*, pp. 116–118, 138–143; Hornblower, *Thucydides*, p. 37; Hornblower, *Commentary*, I, p. 60.

<sup>173</sup> So LSJ, p. 55. Kurz perceptively detects both aspects of ἀκρίβεια at play in I 97:2: "Wirklichkeitstreue besteht also nicht nur darin, daß die einzelnen Fakten so, wie sie sind, 'deckungsgleich' in die Darstellung eingehen, sondern darüber hinaus auch darin, daß sich die zeitliche Ordnung der Ereignisse in der Darstellung mit der der Wirklichkeit deckt" (*Akribeia*, p. 58).

<sup>174</sup> ὥσπερ γὰρ ζῶον τῶν ὄψεων ἀφαιρεθεισῶν ἀχρειοῦται τὸ ὄλον, οὕτως ἐξ ἱστορίας ἀναηρεθείσης τῆς ἀληθείας τὸ καταλειπόμενον αὐτῆς ἀνωφελὲς γίνεται διήγημα.

<sup>175</sup> Vercruysse, *Het thema van de waarheidsverdraaiing*. Cf. also Vercruysse, "À la recherche du mensonge et de la vérité", pp. 17–38.

tional history is precisely that it obscures the truth.<sup>176</sup> This also holds true for certain speeches. Polybius is eager to condemn historians who set rhetorical composition in the mouths of their characters.<sup>177</sup> They must report what had been said in a speech κατ' ἀλήθειαν.<sup>178</sup> Although he indeed concedes to the distinction between intentional falsification and unintentional errors,<sup>179</sup> the standards he puts up are generally strict and non-negotiable. "For when one or two lies are found in the writings, and these prove to be deliberate ones, it is evident that nothing of the things said by such an author is any longer certain or reliable",<sup>180</sup> he criticizes Timaeus in XII 25<sup>a</sup>:2; moreover, "one should absolutely not accept a writer of political events who shows the least preference for anything but the truth",<sup>181</sup> he asserts emphatically in XXXVIII 4:5. He encourages the hearers/readers of his own work to apply the same strict standards in judging him (XVI 20:8; XXIX 12:12). We shall speak more concerning the art of telling the truth in the next chapter, but it should be evident here, by implication, that Polybius' harsh words against untruthful ways of presenting the inquiry are intimately linked with his insistence on the proper ways of performing the actual research into the past.

The impression one gains from statements such as these suggests indeed that some *ancient historians guided their actual research with an uttermost concern to find out the factual truth of history*. This must be stated clearly, to help militate against the common idea that an interest for factual truth did not exist in antiquity. Emilio Gabba's sweeping statement, that "the problem of the truth or credibility of the phenomena or facts, which were presented, was simply not raised, since the question of truth was not present in the minds of readers",<sup>182</sup> reflects a popular but misleading ge-

<sup>176</sup> Cf., e.g., II 56:11–12 (against Phylarchus); III 47:6 (against historians who describe Hannibal's Alpine crossing); VIII 8:5–9 (against historians whose works resemble panegyrics); XII 7:1 (against Timaeus); XVI 17:9 (against Zeno).

<sup>177</sup> Cf., e.g., II 56:10 (against Phylarchus); III 20:1 (against Chaereas and Sosylus); XII 25<sup>b</sup>:4 (against Timaeus).

<sup>178</sup> II 56:10; XII 25<sup>b</sup>:1; XII 25<sup>i</sup>:8; XXXVI 1:7. See further Wooten, "The speeches in Polybius", pp. 235–251; Walbank, *Selected Papers*, pp. 247–253.

<sup>179</sup> I 14:2; III 58:2–4; XII 7:6; XII 12:4–6; XII 25<sup>a</sup>:2; XII 25<sup>a</sup>:4; XII 25<sup>k</sup>:1; XVI 14:7–8; XVI 17:8; XVI 20:8–9; XXIX 12:9–12. See further Verduyn, *Het thema van de waarheidsverdraaiing*, pp. 27–28.

<sup>180</sup> ἐπειδὴν γὰρ ἐν ἡ δεύτερον εὑρεθῆ ψεῦδος ἐν τοῖς συγγράμμασι, καὶ τοῦτο γηγονὸς ἢ κατὰ προαίρεσιν, δῆλον ὡς οὐδὲν ἂν ἔτι βέβαιον οὐδ' ἀσφαλὲς γένοιτο τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ τοιοῦτου συγγραφῆως λεγομένων.

<sup>181</sup> συγγραφέα δὲ κοινῶν πράξεων οὐδ' ὅλως ἀποδεκτέον τὸν ἄλλο τι περὶ πλείονος ποιούμενον τῆς ἀληθείας.

<sup>182</sup> Gabba, "True History and False History", p. 53.



neralization. The texts referred to here point in a different direction; and in the next chapter we shall see that truth and credibility were very much at the heart of the matter as the ancient historians attempted to communicate their findings persuasively.<sup>183</sup> “Our patronizing stance of cultural superiority”, Colin J. Hemer rightly remarked, “is not warranted”.<sup>184</sup>

### 3. Factual Truth and Interpreted Truth

Since it is evident that the historians were interpreters of history, there have indeed been sustained attempts to see things differently. A. J. Woodman, in his book *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, has suggested that truth was conceived largely as a matter of the absence of prejudice. It resided only in a factual core which the historian was to build up in a rhetorically persuasive manner. “Historiography”, he says, “was regarded by the ancients as not essentially different from poetry”.<sup>185</sup>

Woodman has a point, but there are factors, as we have seen, which show that factual truth was part of the historians’ conception. And Lucian, for instance, insists precisely on the difference between history writing and poetry (*Hist. Conscr.* 8), though he could see certain overlappings (*Hist. Conscr.* 45). Furthermore, although Tacitus, with his rhetorical training, indeed insists that those who profess fidelity to incorruption must avoid to write with either affection or disgust (*Hist.* 1:1), that he works himself *sine ira et studio* (*Ann.* 1:1), that he is impartial, he also eagerly seeks out reliable information and compares the different versions of his sources.<sup>186</sup> Moles thus brings out a cautious remark against any attempt to generalize Woodman’s view. He points, in particular, to those cases where ancient historians tell the truth of things they know to be untrue and where truth is seen in terms of solid historical criteria such as eyewitness testimony, paucity or excess of evidence, conflict of sources, etc.<sup>187</sup>

Turning for a moment to Aristotle, one detects a view which forms an extreme contrast to the theory advocated by Woodman. In the well-known passage in *Poetica* 9, he draws a vital distinction between the truth

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<sup>183</sup> See below Chap. 5, A:2c.

<sup>184</sup> Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, p. 85.

<sup>185</sup> Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, p. x.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. above Chap. 2, A:6 and Chap. 3, B:3d.

<sup>187</sup> Moles, “Truth and Untruth”, p. 118.

of poetry (tragedy) and that of history writing.<sup>188</sup> The latter is much more truthful, but it is also, in his opinion, a very trivial kind of truth: “but in this it differs, in that the one relates what happened, the other things that might happen” (*Poet.* 9:4);<sup>189</sup> history, he later continues, is “what Alcibades did or experienced” (*Poet.* 9:10);<sup>190</sup> it is a very specific, factual matter of the past. The tragic poet, by contrast, is more intriguing, “more elevated” (σπουδαιότερον), Aristotle insists, because he manipulates the material in order to explore “universal” truths about human behaviour.

Aristotle reacts not against using the past as a source of paradigms, but against history as a systematic study;<sup>191</sup> and he exaggerates indeed. What was new with Herodotus and Thucydides was not an outright denial of the historical kernel in the epic, but rather, as M. I. Finley has pointed out, the extent to which the explanations are human and secular, and, in particular, political.<sup>192</sup> Despite several historians’ concern for factual truth, as we have seen, Aristotle’s negative view of history writing is misguided, implying incorrectly that the ancient historians did nothing but to seek out bare historical facts; they did not, in his view, employ any interpretative structures and useful generalizations. At the other extreme from Woodman stands thus Armin Daniel Baum’s explicitly Rankean view of the ancient historians: “Wer in der Antike als Historiker ernst genommen werden wollte, mußte sorgsam darauf bedacht sein, poetisch-fiktive Elemente aus seinem Werk fernzuhalten”.<sup>193</sup> But that view is as one-sided as the suggestion that they never cared for the factual truth. There might be a middle way.<sup>194</sup>

Long ago, Hans Diller, in discussing the ancient use of “signs” as a means to gain information concerning the past, formulated the matter concisely: “Sieht nicht der Historiker im Zustand der Gegenwart das ‘Abbild’ der Vergangenheit, d. h. sind die historischen Schlüsse in Wahrheit

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Louis, “Le mot ἱστορία chez Aristote”, pp. 40–41, 43–44.

<sup>189</sup> ἀλλὰ τούτῳ διαφέρει, τῷ τὸν μὲν τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οἷα ἄν γένοιτο.

<sup>190</sup> τί Ἀλκιβιάδης ἔπραξεν ἢ τί ἔπαθεν. Cf. also *Poet.* 23.

<sup>191</sup> So Finley, “Myth, Memory, and History”, pp. 281–282.

<sup>192</sup> Finley, “Myth, Memory, and History”, pp. 281–302.

<sup>193</sup> Baum, *Lukas als Historiker*, p. 55.

<sup>194</sup> Mosley, in my reading of his article, is aware of the complex relationship of facts and their interpretation, but he bends the material somewhat too much in order to stress the (correct) observation that ancient people were aware of the difference between fact and fiction (“Historical Reporting”, pp. 10–26). Cf. also the critique of Gempf, “Public Speaking”, pp. 294–295.

nicht auch Analogieschlüsse? Ich glaube so ist es in der Tat".<sup>195</sup> And *the truth about the past is indeed relational*, in at least two ways.<sup>196</sup> Firstly, it is a function of the relationship between a story – oral or written – and the external world it intends to describe;<sup>197</sup> and secondly, as part of that function, it emerges in the interaction between the facts established by autopsy, interrogation and the study of written sources, on the one hand, and the historian's own interpretative framework and purposes, on the other.

One detects a significant move towards what we might call "interpreted truth" among the historians, to the extent that *during the actual inquiry the investigative procedures become inseparable from the interpretative procedures and generalizations*. Virginia Hunter has rightly brought attention to the subtle interplay of these two aspects in the writings of Herodotus and Thucydides;<sup>198</sup> Gordon S. Shrimpton, in his recent book, tries something of the same for several early Greek historians.<sup>199</sup> And the interplay is, to some extent, a dynamic feature of all attempts to search out the past, because despite the pastness of the past, that past usually has some kind of social function in the present. Hunter and Shrimpton are familiar with the writings of the famous French historian Jacques Le Goff, who has stressed precisely this interaction. "All history", he asserts, "is contemporary insofar as the past is grasped in the present, and thus responds to the latter's interests".<sup>200</sup> The challenge, which I have tried to take seriously throughout this study, is to find the proper balance between the past in the present and the present in the past as we study the ancient dynamic domain of story as history and history as story.

#### 4. Investigative Procedures as Interpretative Procedures

It is essential to notice, therefore, that the modern ideal of distinguishing between the investigative work and the interpretative work never existed

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<sup>195</sup> Diller, "ὅπως ἀδήλων τὰ φαινόμενα", p. 23.

<sup>196</sup> Wiedemann states the following in regard to Polybius' work: "'truth' is a relation" ("Rhetoric in Polybius", p. 296). I agree, but one needs to be more precise: a relation to what?

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Alexander, "Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts", p. 380.

<sup>198</sup> Hunter, *Past and Process*. Cf. Hunter's characteristic statement on p. 6: "From beginning to end, however, it has been emphasized that these purely investigative procedures cannot be separated from the historians' interpretative procedures".

<sup>199</sup> Shrimpton, *History and Memory*.

<sup>200</sup> Le Goff, *History and Memory*, p. 130.

in antiquity. First one assembles the data, then one interprets them, we usually think; but there was no such strict distinction. A certain implicit interpretative procedure was at work from the very beginning of the inquiry, already as the historian started to seek out and gather information, before he put his work into writing.

The interview situation itself contains significant interpretative elements. While the modern oral historians continue to discuss their role during the interview,<sup>201</sup> the ancient historians evidently reckoned with the active influence of the inquirer. The entirely passive interviewer did not exist.

Polybius is most explicit on the interrogation of living witnesses, on what he calls ἀνάκρισις or πολυπραγμοσύνη. Despite his critical stance towards oral accounts, in his critique of Timaeus' reliance on written material he knows to evaluate the laboursome and expensive personal inquiry as exceedingly valuable; "it is the most important part of history", he even asserts (XII 27:6).<sup>202</sup> As he closes book twelve, he describes how that interrogation is to proceed, focusing, significantly enough, more on the historian's than the informant's active role in the process.<sup>203</sup> "For the inquirer", he realizes, "contributes to the narrative no less than the informants" (XII 28<sup>a</sup>:9).<sup>204</sup> What he means is that the inquirer must guide the memory of the narrator; and this can be done only by persons who have a real first hand experience of the events of history, persons with their own articulated viewpoints. Without the leading questions of someone who realizes what the particular events of history are all about, the informant will merely drift along at the mercy of a train of associations.<sup>205</sup> Only persons who themselves have clear ideas about a battle, a siege, or a sea-fight are able to examine an informant properly about those things. A person without such experience, Polybius implies, is not able to pose the right questions, nor to guide the memory of the informant along the right lines, nor even to understand properly the information given. The research-

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<sup>201</sup> At one extreme is the "objective/comparative" approach, usually based on a questionnaire, and at the other extreme is the free flowing dialogue between interviewer and respondent. For discussion, with references to further literature, see Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp. 196–216. The most important contributions have been collected by Perks and Thomson in *The oral history reader*, pp. 101–182.

<sup>202</sup> μέγιστόν ἐστι μέρος τῆς ἱστορίας.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Schepens, "Some Aspects of Source Theory", pp. 262–265.

<sup>204</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἔλαττον ὁ πυνθανόμενος τῶν ἀπαγγελλόντων συμβάλλεται πρὸς τὴν ἐξήγησιν.

<sup>205</sup> For this sense of the passage, see Walbank, *Commentary*, II, p. 412; Walbank, *Polybius*, p. 74 n. 30.

cher's own active participation and experience is a basic quality conditioning the success of his entire inquiry.<sup>206</sup> An adequate interpretative frame of mind on the part of the historian is, as it appears, a significant factor already at the out-set of searching information about the past.

Since the rhetoricians considered history a subset of rhetoric,<sup>207</sup> it is not unlikely that when certain historians at the turn of the eras and later on were to interrogate witnesses, they followed the advice which they had learned during their rhetorical training. Polybius would of course never concede to any such influence, and his statements about the interview are of a totally different kind. Yet, the proper investigation of a witness was naturally of uttermost importance in the *inventio* of persuasive speeches in front of the judge. In *Institutio Oratoria* V 7:9–32 Quintilian discusses at length the proper techniques for interrogating witnesses.<sup>208</sup> The character and the motive of the witness as well as the discovery of alleged contradictions of her or his testimony are the primary tools of evaluation. The latter tool is essential, because a credible witness betraying a good character and an acceptable motive is expected to speak consistently. The advocate will thus see as his task to prepare and guide the inquiry to the extent that the witness will not produce inconsistencies that invalidate the testimony (V 7:11), or, when the witness is reluctant to tell what is believed to be the truth, to place her or him in the position of having to speak what s/he wishes to deny (V 7:17–19, 27). “This fortune sometimes provides, that something which harmonizes internally is said by a witness, sometimes, which occurs more frequently, that a testimony says something different from another testimony” (V 7:29).<sup>209</sup> And Quintilian probably reflects a more widespread pattern of examination.<sup>210</sup> The orator had to put the right kind of questions to reach this goal. The interrogation was not entirely detached. The advocate had a purpose, a case to argue. Without preconceived ideas of the issue at stake and the course of argumentation, this investigative procedure would of course be completely meaningless to the advocate.

Polybius was not the first one among the historians to reflect on the interplay between investigative and interpretative procedures. That in-

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<sup>206</sup> Cf. Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe*, p. 358.

<sup>207</sup> See below Chap. 5, A:2a.

<sup>208</sup> Hall, “Ancient Historical Method”, pp. 112–113.

<sup>209</sup> *Illud fortuna interim praestat, ut aliquid, quod inter se parum consentiat, a teste dicatur; interim, quod saepius evenit, ut testis testi diversa dicat.*

<sup>210</sup> Cf. already *Her.* II 6:9, which sums up much of the discussion concerning how to deal with witnesses.

terplay was part of the historian's entire enterprise already from the beginning of history writing. Herodotus did not only discover, as Loveday C. A. Alexander puts it, "that beliefs and traditions are 'facts' in their own right",<sup>211</sup> but he also had convictions that were not entirely suppressed by his programmatic ambitions of strict objectivity. Despite his emphatic claim of detachment and impartiality in 7:152 and elsewhere, he betrays, in a totally different manner than Polybius, an interpretative element during the actual inquiry. As we saw previously,<sup>212</sup> in 2:99 he states three of his primary sources: sight (ὄψις), judgement (γνώμη) and inquiry (ἱστορίη).<sup>213</sup> Syntactically the three sources function as the subject of the periphrastic and emphatic λέγουσα ἐστί, implying, with the words of Guido Schepens, "that they are to be understood as *active* faculties deployed by the historian in his inquiry".<sup>214</sup> It is significant that the highly subjective element of Herodotus' own judgement is mentioned closely together with the more objective means of gathering material. While it probably was formed on the basis of the data obtained through ὄψις and ἱστορίη, it is not presented merely as a secondary interpretative model imposed on the data, but as one source of information among others. And we can see it at work on individual occasions. Take, for instance, his inquiry in 2:53–58 concerning the descent of the Greek gods. He refers to two informants, both being regarded as highly reliable sources: the Egyptian priests of Thebes and the three priestesses – or prophetesses – Promeneia, Timarete and Nicandra at Dodona. Yet, he is not entirely satisfied with any of the accounts they give. After faithfully reporting each of them, he brings out his own perspective: "And I have the following opinion about these things" (2:56).<sup>215</sup> He did not, after all, only record passively what was said to him. The assimilation of the data was conditioned by the judgement of the person trying to comprehend them within his own frame of reference, fitting them into his own set of concepts during the course of research. The investigative and the interpretative procedures had entered into a close relationship from the very birth of Greek history writing.

Nor was Polybius the last one to reflect on that interplay. Among the Roman historians Tacitus exhibits not only a most subtle use of various

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<sup>211</sup> Alexander, "Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts", p. 387.

<sup>212</sup> Chap. 2, A:2.

<sup>213</sup> Hearing, as a fourth source, is referred to subsequently with the phrase κατὰ τὰ ἤκουον.

<sup>214</sup> Schepens, "Some Aspects of Source Theory", p. 261.

<sup>215</sup> ἐγὼ δ' ἔχω περὶ αὐτῶν γνώμην τήνδε.

kinds of information, but also a capability of integrating them into his own interpretative framework of what seemed most likely to him. His programmatic confession of impartiality at the beginning of the *Historiae* and the *Annales* means neither that he neglected to seek out information, as we had occasion to stress above, nor that he avoided the qualitative assessment and judgement of historical matters.<sup>216</sup> A striking example is his account of Tiberius' retirement to Capri in *Annales* 4:57. In referring it to the intrigues of Sejanus, he first gives the version held by "the majority of writers", but then he expresses his own doubts: why, in that case, did Tiberius continue to live in isolation at Capri for six years after Sejanus' execution? A more likely explanation, Tacitus infers, is that Tiberius found the privacy of life on the island the ideal way of concealing his cruelty and lusts. Tacitus, it seems, had indeed investigated the sources at his disposal and imposed, despite their unanimous view, his own interpretative framework on the event. Investigation and interpretation were two sides of a single coin.

### 5. Interpretative Legitimation in Early Christianity

We do not know how many local rumours that were excluded from the gospel tradition; we do not know how many pieces of tradition or how many prophetic oracles that never made it, for whatever reason. As far as the evidence goes, the early process of collecting reliable information seems to have been quite exhaustive. The New Testament apocrypha suggest that not many words of Jesus were left out.<sup>217</sup> Yet, things might have disappeared, never to be included in any writing. The persons in charge of the gospel tradition must of course have accorded high value to the eyewitness accounts, but not without testing them from their own interpretative perspective. There were occasions when the early Christians were reluctant to trust even an eyewitness. Why? What was the determinative factor? And what happened in such cases with the eyewitness account?

#### *a. Diluting the Women as Eyewitnesses*

We can observe this dynamic interplay between present, interpretative concerns and eyewitness accounts concerning the past most clearly,

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<sup>216</sup> Lateiner states rightly: "Tacitus' claims to objectivity ... are puzzling" ("Greco-Roman Historiography", p. 216).

<sup>217</sup> Hofius counts nine, only four of which are truly independent of the New Testament ("Agrapha", p. 108; "Unbekannte Jesusworte", pp. 371–379).

though still somewhat vaguely, by studying the way in which the women and their testimony of Jesus' death and the empty tomb were treated in the course of transmission. As we saw in a previous chapter,<sup>218</sup> the women were surely present in Jerusalem as important eyewitnesses; they were in all likelihood interrogated. But there was a need not merely to investigate, to interrogate them, but also to question and supplement.

This questioning drive towards elaboration is to be seen already in the way the women are treated in the gospel narratives. The prolific, Markan characterization of the women as habitual followers of Jesus, which I outlined earlier,<sup>219</sup> is significantly altered in Matthew and Luke. The former changes the verbs into an indicative aorist followed by a participle aorist and prefers the preposition ἀπό instead of ἐν (Matt 27:55). The Matthean author thus describes the simple physical act of following<sup>220</sup> Jesus in order to provide for him at a certain point of time.<sup>221</sup> The Lukan author, who was hardly a woman,<sup>222</sup> omits the label of serving altogether – in this context – and substitutes the imperfect indicative of ἀκολουθεῖν with a present participle of the more ambiguous συνακολουθεῖν (23:49). Previously in the story he described indeed the serving activity of the women with the verb διακονεῖν, but in a context which clearly distinguishes them from the Twelve (8:1–3).<sup>223</sup> As it therefore appears, the notion of the women as Jesus' close followers is weakened in the course of transmission and redaction, diluting their role as reliable eyewitnesses and informants.

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<sup>218</sup> Chap. 2, B:5.

<sup>219</sup> Chap. 2, B:5b.

<sup>220</sup> The sense of ἀκολουθεῖν here is debated. But see Kingsbury, "The Verb ἀκολουθεῖν", p. 61; Anderson, "Matthew: Gender and Reading", pp. 18–21. Kingsbury fails, however, to notice the significant difference between Mark and Matthew at this point.

<sup>221</sup> Wainwright does not comment on the change of the verbs into aorist, therefore missing the more limited scope of the Matthean characterization (*Towards a Feminist Critical Reading*, pp. 140–143, 296–297). Similarly Corley, *Private Women*, pp. 172–173; Ricci, *Mary Magdalene*, p. 169.

<sup>222</sup> Via advocates this view by reference to Leonard Swidler. "Intellectual honesty demands consideration of this hypothesis", she insists ("Women in the Gospel of Luke", p. 59). But Luke 1:3 refers, after all, to the author with the perfect masculine participle παρηκολουθηκότι.

<sup>223</sup> Collins rightly warns us against understanding the "diakon-words" as technical terms for ecclesial leadership that the Lukan author twisted to domestic roles of hospitality ("Did Luke Intend a Disservice to Women in the Martha and Mary Story?", pp. 104–111). I cannot verify that the author uses this linguistic means to present women in a negative light.



*b. The Historicity of the Female Testimony*

Whether this feature was a consistent pattern with a deliberate purpose throughout the transmission process is uncertain, because the role of the women is, after all, not entirely hidden behind the veil of androcentric perspectives. But one becomes suspicious as their testimony seems to go through various forms of elaboration and supplementing features.

One, rather extreme, position is of course to say that there was no female testimony at all from the beginning; it has been added at a later stage. While recognizing the pre-Markan character of certain elements in Mark 16:1–8, some scholars – we may take Willi Marxsen and Gerd Lüdemann as prominent representatives – have argued that 1 Corinthians 15:5–7 states the earliest “facts” of Jesus’ appearances and that the events associated with the empty tomb were intended as apologetic interpretations of the appearances of the risen Lord.<sup>224</sup>

This view is, however, problematic for several reasons. Edward Lynn Bode has effectively listed various arguments to maintain the basic trustworthiness of the tomb tradition.<sup>225</sup> Some of them cannot be easily pushed aside. Although Marxsen and Lüdemann disagree on many points indeed, they are both concerned to problemize the simplistic notions of faith versus historical facts, but the idea of the empty tomb hardly qualifies as an adequate retrospective apologetic of Jesus’ appearances.<sup>226</sup> Why was it ever introduced, according to this view? It proves nothing; it causes only bewilderment and confusion at the beginning. The historians teach us that

<sup>224</sup> Marxsen, *Die Auferstehung Jesu*; Lüdemann, *Die Auferstehung Jesu*. Other scholars of older date who held similar positions are mentioned by Bode, *The First Easter Morning*, pp. 152–155.

<sup>225</sup> There are six basic arguments in Bode’s defence: (1) the nature of the gospel narrative; (2) the remembrance of Joseph of Arimathea; (3) the women as witnesses; (4) the rough fit of the empty tomb tradition with the ancient creed of the resurrection on the third day; (5) the preaching of the resurrection in Jerusalem; (6) the Jewish polemic (*The First Easter Morning*, pp. 159–165, 173–174). Only some of them, most notably the second one, are countered by Lüdemann (*Die Auferstehung Jesu*, pp. 52–57).

<sup>226</sup> For critique of Marxsen, see, in addition to Bode, Heine, “Eine Person von Rang und Namen”, pp. 179–194. I find no reason, however, to assume, with Heine (*ibid.*, p. 193), that Mary Magdalene became associated with the empty tomb only at a secondary stage. – The critique against Lüdemann has been massive and of varying character. For balanced discussions of his views, see Luz, “Aufregung um die Auferstehung Jesu”, pp. 476–482; Pannenberg, “Die Auferstehung Jesu”, pp. 318–328; and the various contributions, besides Lüdemann’s own, in the conference volume edited by Verweyen, *Osterglaube ohne Auferstehung?* Lüdemann has now moved on, with similar historical ambitions, to the virgin birth. See Lüdemann, *Virgin Birth?*

a person concerned with the past certainly always carries the present interests with her or him and brings it into her or his investigation, but not in such a way as to say that one first established the facts and then introduced other interpretative elements. The congruence of investigative and interpretative procedures implies, as it were, that factual truth and interpreted truth were inseparable! Moreover, any person referring to the empty tomb as a defence for her or his belief could certainly have been asked to point out its location. In a surprising neglect of extra-Biblical pieces of information,<sup>227</sup> Lüdemann is quite emphatic that one knew of no such tomb in early Christianity.<sup>228</sup> Yet, without any real location to refer to, the apologetic attempt would soon have been regarded as void and counter-productive.<sup>229</sup> The ancient people were not, as we have seen, totally ignorant concerning facts of history. The opponents would surely have noticed such a fatal weakness in the early Christian proclamation of the resurrection, but none of the sources accuse the Christians for having pointed to a false place or for failing to locate any tomb whatsoever. The accusations are of an entirely different kind, trying to explain precisely its emptiness through other considerations. These historical facts need to be seriously explained by anyone arguing for the late development of the episodes concerning the empty tomb.<sup>230</sup> In addition, the low regard for women as reliable witnesses in antiquity cannot be neglected.<sup>231</sup> As has been asserted so often,<sup>232</sup> this makes it unlikely that members of the early community in Jerusalem would have inserted references to female obser-

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<sup>227</sup> See Riesner, "Auferstehung", pp. 320–324.

<sup>228</sup> He maintains his position (cf. *Die Auferstehung Jesu*, pp. 57–58), in spite of critique, in, e.g., "Zwischen Karfreitag und Ostern", p. 23 n. 33.

<sup>229</sup> Lüdemann states: "Ja, auf gegnerische Einwände von jüdischer Seite und Fragen nach dem Verbleib des Leichnams Jesu hin wußte man alsbald zu berichten, daß die Frauen das Grab leer gefunden haben, und später, daß Jesus den Frauen am Grab sogar erschienen sei" (*Die Auferstehung Jesu*, p. 193). Precisely as historian one must question the effectiveness of such a response to the opponents had there been no empty tomb at all.

<sup>230</sup> At the other extreme one finds scholars arguing that the Jerusalem community venerated the tomb and gathered there for annual liturgy. Bode points out the lack of evidence also for this view (*The First Easter Morning*, pp. 130–132, 145).

<sup>231</sup> Witherington suggests that the women's lot in Judaism was even less favourable before the destruction of the temple than after (*Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, p. 10). But the textual evidence is far from clear on this point.

<sup>232</sup> Surprisingly Lüdemann pays almost no attention to this discussion. His brief comments are, moreover, misleading, giving the impression that the "Zeugunfähigkeit der Frau" was only a limited phenomenon in antiquity (*Die Auferstehung Jesu*, p. 176). Cf. above Chap. 2, B:5a.

vers at such vital key-points in the passion narrative.<sup>233</sup> That would have been even more counter-productive.

### *c. Legitimizing the Female Testimony*

The women were there, to be sure, but their testimony caused problems; it was somewhat of an embarrassment to the early Christians. That embarrassment must have been all the more intense as most male disciples were strikingly absent during the important events of Jesus' death. "All of them deserted him and fled", Mark reports in a concluding statement at the arrest of Jesus (14:50). Matthew agrees (26:56).<sup>234</sup> Peter followed for some time at a distance (Mark 14:53–72), but after the denial he breaks down and disappears as an active character in the story. The Matthean author does not even mention his name after the fatal denial (Matt 26:57–75).<sup>235</sup> To be sure, also the women fled eventually. The ἔφυγον in Mark 14:50 corresponds to the ἔφυγον in Mark 16:8. Although the silence of the women, which is intimately linked with their flight, is a concern of the Markan author, as it appears,<sup>236</sup> the view that the male disciples, and they alone,<sup>237</sup> deserted Jesus at his arrest while the women endured until after Easter, seems to be firmly rooted in the tradition. Among Jesus fol-

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<sup>233</sup> Vahrenhorst finds this argument useless, because women were disregarded as witnesses only in strictly legal contexts ("Se non è vero, è ben trovato", pp. 282–288). I agree that many texts speaking of women as unreliable witnesses have a legal setting. However, since the issue of testimony was especially relevant to legal proceedings, the predominance of this setting is quite natural. Vahrenhorst neglects to discuss why the women were excluded in such settings in the first place; and he mentions no text from other settings where the testimony of women is treated positively.

<sup>234</sup> Luke – and also John – found it perhaps too embarrassing even to mention. Does the expression "all of Jesus' acquaintances" (πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτοῦ), referring to those who were present together with the women at the cross (Luke 23:49), actually include the male disciples, in Luke's view? So Karris, "Women and Discipleship", p. 13. For discussion of various proposals, see Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, II, pp. 1171–1173. John places the beloved disciple below the cross together with the women (19:26).

<sup>235</sup> In Luke he is the one to ascertain that the tomb was empty (24:12) and singled out as the one to whom the risen Lord had appeared (24:34). Cf. 1 Cor 15:5.

<sup>236</sup> For a survey of the discussion of tradition and redaction in Mark 16:1–8, see Neiryneck, "Marc 16,1–8", pp. 56–88. Most scholars tend to think that 16:8b is redactional – perhaps one of the few elaborations of the pre-Markan passion narrative.

<sup>237</sup> Schottroff claims that the women are part of the "all" who fled at the arrest of Jesus, later to return to the cross ("Maria Magdalena", p. 5). But the whole context of 14:50 suggests that only the Twelve are in view. So correctly Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, II, p. 1156.

lowers, who were the most likely to communicate and transmit the Jesus tradition, we find only women there as observers. As one soon must have recognized in Jerusalem, these women – Mary Magdalene in particular – were the primary eyewitnesses of the death of Jesus and the empty tomb.

The women were there, and they were involved, to be sure, but this was not the basic dilemma; it could have been an asset rather. It was instead their social identity that caused problems, their position as women. Precisely the embarrassment over this state of affairs was also a motive for a legitimizing work with the tradition. Focusing on the women's role as eyewitnesses, one suspects an early attempt to come to grips with their claims to have seen an empty tomb. The two separate lines of tradition dealing with the empty tomb, on the one hand, and the Easter appearances, on the other, are linked by an account of the women's authorization as informants. They are not only eyewitnesses; the texts also claim that they are – or should be – informers, that is, that they are commissioned to carry a message. Here we might come across an endeavour to explain and legitimize the annoying fact that the confusing news of the empty tomb were first told by a couple of female eyewitnesses.

The tradition is strikingly unstable regarding the women's commission. The three synoptics differ indeed in their accounts. Mark is the briefest and the most obscure: "Go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He goes ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you'" (16:7).<sup>238</sup> The young man does not expressly commission the women with the news that Jesus is risen from the dead. Instead they are to remind the disciples of what they themselves already had been told by Jesus (cf. 14:28). The men, especially Peter it seems, are the ones to see and verify that the Lord is risen from the dead. The women's role as informers of the resurrection is indirect and implicit. Matthew is more explicit: "Go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he goes ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him'" (28:7).<sup>239</sup> The angel's commission is reinforced by the risen Lord himself (28:10), who as the object of the women's worship does not again need to tell them of the resurrection explicitly. They become informers of the resurrection in a double sense, first through the commission of an angel, then through the words from the Resurrected one himself. The Lukan author is silent about any such command to the women. But he reports that "they told all

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<sup>238</sup> ὑπάγετε εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν.

<sup>239</sup> ταχὺ πορευθεῖσαι εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἠγγέρθη ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἰδοὺ προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν, ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε.

this to the eleven and to all the rest” (24:9),<sup>240</sup> and specifies that “there were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them; they told this to the apostles” (24:10).<sup>241</sup>

We are also somewhat in the dark as to how the women carried out their mission. Mark ends with the note that “they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (16:8), and it remains uncertain whether he ever supplemented that final remark.<sup>242</sup> The authors of Matthew and Luke – and of John, in his own way (20:2) – realized that at some point the women did, after all, tell the male disciples of the empty tomb, but their accounts are obscure. Matthew gives only a brief remark that the women “ran to tell his disciples” (28:8), but we hear nothing of the actual encounter, and when the disciples meet the risen Lord in Galilee some still doubted (28:17). In Luke, though he does report about the encounter, the doubting is linked to the fact that the informers were women.<sup>243</sup> Their words “seemed to them like idle talk, and they did not believe them” (24:11); they were astounded by their story (24:22). Instead Peter and some other disciples had to verify their account (24:12, 24);<sup>244</sup> and in the end Peter – now called Simon – is the one to be credited with having experienced an appearance of the risen Lord (24:34).

The authors of the three synoptic gospel narratives indicate in this way the need for a legitimizing elaboration of the tradition at this point. And they were probably not the first ones to do that. From the outset one must have found it extremely problematic that a couple of women were the primary eyewitnesses and informants of the empty tomb. The way Acts 1:14 refers to them as an unspecified group as well as Paul’s silence in 1 Corinthians 15:5–7 are signs of this embarrassing situation.<sup>245</sup> Even Mary Magdalene disappears from the scene.<sup>246</sup> Could they be trusted?

<sup>240</sup> ἀπήγγειλαν ταῦτα πάντα τοῖς ἑνδεκα καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς λοιποῖς.

<sup>241</sup> ἦσαν δὲ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία καὶ Ἰωάννα καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ σὺν αὐταῖς. ἔλεγον πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ταῦτα.

<sup>242</sup> Hengel brings out the hypothesis that the Markan narrative ended with an account of the risen Lord’s appearance to Mary Magdalene (“Maria Magdalena”, p. 252).

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Seim, *The Double Message*, p. 156. Since I cannot detect the ironic connotation in the description of Peter’s visit to the tomb in 24:12 (Seim, *ibid.*, p. 157), especially in view of Luke’s generally positive picture of Peter (cf. Dietrich, *Das Petrusbild*), I also fail to see, with Seim, how 24:1–12 actually confirms the credibility of the women.

<sup>244</sup> 24:12 is not an interpolation. See Bode, *The First Easter Morning*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>245</sup> Codex D turns the women of Acts 1:14 into “wives and children” – presumably of the apostles. This expresses perhaps a further hesitance to allow any independent activity of the women. So Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 154 n. 3.

<sup>246</sup> Ricci states nonetheless that Mary played a major part in the first community. This

We may assume, on the basis of the elaborative character of the synoptic gospel narratives noted above, that some devoted defenders of Jesus' resurrection soon made keen attempts to explain and legitimize this embarrassing state of affairs. One way of doing it was to integrate the tradition of their visit to the tomb into an account of their experience of a specific transcendental form of commission, which brings in the decisive influence of male witnesses. The gospel authors developed, as we saw, this tendency each in his own way. The Markan author, as the earliest one, was most cautious, forming the material to make the male disciples implicitly be the first to see the risen Christ. The female informers are both enhanced and disqualified. They receive an important commission, but end in failure. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's attempt to excuse the women's fear and silence as a quite natural reaction in view of the risk of being identified as Jesus' follower is misguided,<sup>247</sup> because it strangely assumes that this kind of fear is perfectly legitimate while the kind of fear that caused the men to flee at the arrest is deplorable. We have seen above that both events are redactionally connected, as indicated by the term ἔφωγον; both are expressions of failure,<sup>248</sup> the difference being that the male disciples are at the end to be restored from their failure. The Matt-  
 hean author realized the legitimizing force of the commission and reinforced it with a christophany, but doubts remain among the disciples; and the final climax is a commission to the men. The Lukan author legitimized the women's talk with the authoritative witness of men.

## 6. Conclusion: Interpretation as Legitimation of Eyewitnesses

Back to the basic issue – the present in the past, autopsy interpreted. The women at the cross and the empty tomb are the primary example from early Christianity of eyewitnesses who were not merely felt to be biased, but mistrusted.

The scepticism of the persons in charge of the emerging gospel tradition did not have to do with the women's involvement as such. *It is one*

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is probably correct, but Ricci neglects to explain why the texts are silent at this point (*Mary Magdalene*, pp. 145–146).

<sup>247</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 322.

<sup>248</sup> Malbon understands the women's fear and silence as signs of the limits of humanity in the presence of divinity (Malbon, "Fallible Followers", pp. 44–45). But she does not comment on their flight and the curious parallel between Mark 14:50 and Mark 16:8. But see Lincoln, "The Promise and the Failure", pp. 283–300, especially pp. 286–287.

*thing to be involved, another to be biased and mistrusted.* Their involvement might even have been an advantage, their keen interest surely strengthened the visual imprint on their memories. *The reason why the women were mistrusted as eyewitnesses had to do with their social identity and position.* The reliable eyewitness can and should indeed be involved, participating, engaged, concerned, as we have seen, but s/he also needed the accurate and accepted social standing as informant. James had such a standing, but not the women. Their present position – or better, lack of position – as women furthered the conviction that they were unable to recall the past accurately; their observation had been unduly interpreted from their standpoint as women. Now the men investigating the truth of their accounts moulded the information into their own interpretative structures.

The subtle move from historical truth to the accepted, interpreted truth in early Christianity was thus, in this case, not so much a matter of the incredibility of the women's testimony as such; it was not the "what" of their account that caused scepticism and interpretation, but the "who". The testimony was unreliable not because it was entirely incredible in itself, but because the informants were thought to be unreliable. If the Christian inquirer in any sense adhered to the rhetoricians' advice to investigate the character of the witness, he would immediately have questioned the reliability of the testimony on the basis of the gender of the witness. Had it not been for the vital importance of what they had observed, these women might have vanished entirely from the ancient records.

Now the nucleus of their testimony was essential after all. One realized that their memory carried the imprint of something exceedingly important; and one took measures to ensure and accentuate the reliability of their accounts through a subtle combination of investigative and interpretative procedures. The present time of the inquirer fostered the need to legitimize the past. *Autopsy was interpreted through a process of legitimation of the unreliable eyewitnesses,* and in that sense the present concerns affected indeed the perception of the past.

## Chapter 5

# History Entering into Story: Autopsy Narrativized

Historical research, as we all know, eventually becomes known to others by being presented in various forms of oral or written discourse. Any serious scholar who wishes to interact with a broader audience recognizes that the mode of inquiry and the mode of presentation are two different, but related, things. Although the former constitutes the basic informative nucleus of the latter, the smooth outline of a lecture, an article or a book rarely reflects all the complexities and irregularities of historical inquiry.

The ancient historians and the evangelists were indeed not content to leave history in its state of various subjective, oral eyewitness reports. We have seen in the previous chapter how autopsy, as a kind of orality, regularly related to a complex of subjective constructions informed by conscious and unconscious ideological factors on different levels of ancient historical research. Now it is no longer a question of how the present concerns affect the eyewitness or the inquirer in the course of her or his actual research, but how the grand communicative and ideological preferences of a historically interested person build up and guide *the communication of past history*. Just as we previously discussed the subtle interplay between investigative and interpretative procedures among the ancient historians and the early Christians,<sup>1</sup> we can now speak of *the interplay between interpretative and narrativizing procedures*.

One major part of that interplay has to do with the mere fact that the historian or the evangelist acted as the author of a coherent narrative, or of a different kind of writing but with a narrative substructure. The references to autopsy are here not merely reflections of an actual methodological practice, but have entered into the world of a story to be communicated. What happened to autopsy when it became part of this narrativi-

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<sup>1</sup> Chap. 4, B:4 and B:5.



zing process? In the next chapter we shall focus on the large ideological features that inevitably interact with the narrativizing process. Before doing that, however, it is important to single out how the notion of autopsy, which so many times served as a channel back to the past event, becomes a signal as to how the history of the past enters into the narrative world of the story.

## A. Autopsy in Historical Narratives

The narrativizing process was indeed not a straightforward one, moving smoothly from the observed and established fact to the ensuing explanatory narrative. “For all the body of the history is simply a long narrative”,<sup>2</sup> Lucian stated (*Hist. Conscr.* 55), recommending it be adorned with the virtues proper to a διήγησις. For him these virtues had to do with clarity, briefness and vividness.<sup>3</sup> It is significant to notice that a number of various other factors besides the mere reproduction of what had been seen and heard evidently were to play a significant role throughout the process of composing the narratives.

### 1. “Lying Historians”

While the character of such factors and the extent to which they affected the factual veracity of the narrative varied, their presence was sometimes felt to be problematic. Lucian indicates that the normal way to success among the historians had been to provide eulogy, exaggeration and fiction (*Hist. Conscr.* 10). Not surprisingly, the historians came in disrepute. Tacitus’ aspersions on Christians and Jews, for instance, caused Tertullian to write of him as “that most articulate of liars” (*Apol.* 16:3).<sup>4</sup> But the critique was not merely a reaction against certain individual statements or reports. As is well-known, Herodotus had from early on an ambivalent reputation in regard to factual accuracy, for some ancient authors being the father of lies rather than the father of history.<sup>5</sup> Plutarch’s devastating critique of his biased account of the Boeotians and the Corinthians, his “fictions and fabrications” (ψεύσματα καὶ πλάσματα), has come down

<sup>2</sup> ἅπαν γὰρ ἀτεχνῶς τὸ λοιπὸν σῶμα τῆς ἱστορίας διήγησις μακρὰ ἐστίν.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 118–140.

<sup>4</sup> *ille mendaciorum loquacissimus*.

<sup>5</sup> Evans, “Father of History or Father of Lies”, pp. 11–17.

to us in *De malignitate Herodoti*.<sup>6</sup> And this work, while being somewhat of an oddity among Plutarch's writings, epitomizes a broader anti-Herodotean attitude.

Seneca, the Stoic philosopher of the first century CE, is quite outspoken about historians generally. Discussing Ephorus' theory concerning comets, he bluntly expresses a harsh judgement: "It is no great effort to destroy the authority of Ephorus; he is a historian" (*QN VII 16:1*).<sup>7</sup> A historian was by definition, it seems, suspect. While Aristotle reacted harshly against their boring stating of mere facts in distinction to the poets' intriguing manipulation of the material (*Poet.* 9),<sup>8</sup> Seneca's damning remark focuses on the opposite, confronting the practice of history as mere entertainment. Many historians, it seems, had quickly abandoned the austerity of Thucydides for the emotional appeals of the poets. Seneca justifies his opinion with a digression on their deplorable practice, going as far as to accuse them of actual lying (*QN VII 16:1-2*):

"Some [historians] win approval by relating the incredible, and a reader, who would go and do something else if he were led through ordinary things, they excite by means of the marvellous. Some are credulous, some are negligent. On some falsehood creeps unawares, some it pleases; the former do not avoid it, the latter desire it. What the whole tribe has in common is this: it does not think its own work can achieve approval and popularity unless it sprinkles that work with falsehood".<sup>9</sup>

T. P. Wiseman puts Seneca's remark within the perspective of a wider enquiry, emphasizing the influence of rhetorical and imaginative forms of discourse on ancient history writing. He is able to identify seven types of mendacity among the historians: tendentiousness; the use of myths (*μῦθοι*); the employment of travellers' tales; the effect of rhetoric and drama; the production of the narrative (*ἀφήγησις*); the inclusion of too many details; and the lack of elaboration.<sup>10</sup> Wiseman illustrates well that falsehood takes many forms, and that these forms might concern diametrically op-

<sup>6</sup> The quotation is from 854f. – There may, of course, have been several factors that caused Plutarch's critique (cf. Bowen's introductory remark in his edition of the work, pp. 2–4), but Plutarch's defence of the Boeotians and the Corinthians is clearly stated as the purpose behind the writing (854e–f).

<sup>7</sup> *Nec magna molitione detrahenda est auctoritas Ephoro: historicus est.*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. above Chap. 4, B:3.

<sup>9</sup> *Quidam incredibilium relatu commendationem parant et lectorem, aliud acturum si per cotidiana ducetur, miraculo excitant; quidam creduli, quidam neglegentes sunt; quibusdam mendacium obrepit, quibusdam placet; illi non evitant, hi appetunt. Haec in commune de tota natione, quae approbari opus suum et fieri populare non putat posse, nisi illud mendacio aspersit.*

<sup>10</sup> Wiseman, "Lying Historians", pp. 122–146.

posite things in the works of different writers. Generalizing is therefore extremely difficult. While too many details were felt to be a sign of mendacity to some, others insisted that a truthful narrative should consist of precisely such elaborate detail. One finds no entirely consistent criterion of what was considered a mendacity.

Wiseman's fifth point is however crucial, because the production of the narrative incorporates many of the other types of mendacity. During the research the historian asks the question if something is true, but in the process of narration the question becomes whether or not something is worth telling. Some historians tried to keep the two closely together. Lucian spoke, as we just saw, of history writing as a long narrative. We have already referred to his use of the image of the mirror to describe the historian's ideal manner of reporting history without any distortion.<sup>11</sup> In the very same context he prepares his hearers/readers for the other aspect of history writing. A fact is easy to relate, he continues, "for it has already happened. And it is necessary to arrange and express it. So they [viz., the historians] must look not for what they should say but how they should say" (*Hist. Conscr.* 50).<sup>12</sup> Using the image of a sculptor, he now immediately pictures the ideal way of the historian to compose the narrative on the basis of facts: "The work of the historian is similar [to that of a sculptor]: to give a fine arrangement to events and illuminate them as vividly as possible" (*Hist. Conscr.* 51).<sup>13</sup> The historian is thought to create a truthful work of art from the material that was already provided for him.<sup>14</sup> But it is precisely this smooth correspondence between the investigation and the narration that Seneca mistrusts. All history writing, he implies, is irresponsible narration and entirely fictional, the historian being nothing but a lying story teller.

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<sup>11</sup> Chap. 4, B:1.

<sup>12</sup> πέπρακται γὰρ ἤδη· δεῖ δὲ τάξαι καὶ εἰπεῖν αὐτά. ὥστε οὐ τί εἴπωσι ζητητέον αὐτοῖς ἀλλ' ὅπως εἴπωσιν.

<sup>13</sup> τοιοῦτο τῆ τι καὶ τὸ τοῦ συγγραφέως ἔργον – εἰς καλὸν διαθέσθαι τὰ πεπραγμένα καὶ εἰς δύναμιν ἐναργέστατα ἐπιδείξαι αὐτά.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Arrian's two criteria for what to include in his writing, namely credibility and interest, what is worth believing and what is worth telling (*An.* pref. 1:3). – Wiseman ("Lying Historians", p. 136) refers also to Diod. S. I 2:7, where Diodorus discusses the value of history in a speech. But as the Greek shows (συμφωνούντων ἐν αὐτῇ τῶν λόγων τοῖς ἔργοις), it is here not the harmony between the facts and their literary expression that makes narratives beneficial, but between words and deeds.

## 2. The Influence of Rhetoric

## a. History as Rhetorical Narration

Despite Lucian's careful deliberations, his view of history writing as a form of narration is but a short step from placing it under the influential rhetorical agenda of the time. His insistence on the vividness of an historical account (*Hist. Conscr.* 51) is not far removed from Quintilian's emphatic discussion of ἐνάργεια as *evidentia* (VI 2:32), that is, from what makes the speaker seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene. Although Lucian has no inhibitions about describing encomiastic panegyric in history writing as a lie (*Hist. Conscr.* 7) and emphatically insists that the historian's concern is different from that of the orator (*Hist. Conscr.* 50), it is noteworthy that the rhetoricians offer a definition of the *narratio* in terms which very much resemble that of history writing. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* states it concisely: "The *narratio* is the exposition of events that have occurred or might have occurred" (*Her.* I 3:4);<sup>15</sup> Cicero has an almost identical definition (*De Inv.* I 19:27);<sup>16</sup> and Quintilian, the expert on narrative,<sup>17</sup> defines it as "the persuasive exposition of that which has been done or is supposed to have been done" (IV 2:31).<sup>18</sup> These definitions accord well with the view on history writing expressed somewhat later by Aulus Gellius: "They thus assert history indeed to be either the exposition or the description of events that have occurred" (V 18:6).<sup>19</sup> For the ancient people, a writing of history could very well, therefore, be classified as an extensive narrative.

Hence, part of the development against which Seneca reacted probably had to do with the increasing influence of rhetoric on the historians.<sup>20</sup> It is not by accident that both Caecilius of Calacre and Theodorus of Gadara, two celebrated rhetoricians of the first century BCE, wrote treatises entitled Περὶ ἱστορίας (*FGrHist* 183 F 2; *FGrHist* 850 T 1). Perhaps

<sup>15</sup> *Narratio est rerum gestarum aut proinde ut gestarum expositio.*

<sup>16</sup> *Narratio est rerum gestarum aut ut gestarum expositio.*

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Quint. IV 2:86.

<sup>18</sup> *rei factae aut ut factae utilis ad persuadendum expositio.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ita historias quidem esse aiunt rerum gestarum vel expositionem vel demonstrationem.*

<sup>20</sup> Lateiner betrays a view which focuses on the negative influence of rhetoric on Roman history writing. The following statement is characteristic: "Roman historiography suffered from the start from the eminence of its senatorial authors and from the dominance of oratorical education over most of its practitioners" ("Greco-Roman Historiography" p. 215).

other rhetoricians did the same.<sup>21</sup> Already Polybius, as we have regularly noticed, tried to combat this increasing impact of rhetoric as he perceived it in the work of Timaeus and others. As far as we can tell, Polybius' critique arose as a reaction against the popularity of the writing of the Sicilian historian. His similarly negative remarks on Phylarchus' confusion of tragedy and history in II 56:7–12 brings to attention the stress on imitation – a kind of realism – and pleasure initiated by Duris of Samos (c. 340–260 BCE).<sup>22</sup> Tragedy and history joined, and the latter should aim at producing the same kind of effects as the dramatists in the theatre.<sup>23</sup>

A. J. Woodman treats the issue of history and rhetoric at length.<sup>24</sup> Eschewing any great distinction between Herodotus and his successors, he argues that in the classical world history writing was generally seen as a species of rhetoric. Although Woodman, as we have already noticed,<sup>25</sup> might have generalized the impact of rhetoric too far back, it is quite evident that at the time of Cicero and Quintilian the rhetorical training had become essential to the historians' task as writers of past events.<sup>26</sup> Cicero's opinion that only the orator's voice will bring immortality to history, as Antonius' question implies (*De Orat.* II 9:36), or that all historical matters should be expressed precisely in the manner of Isocrates and Theopompus (*Orator* 61:207), was taken for granted; Quintilian's classification of it as the subdivision of rhetoric (X 1:31) carried the day. And not only were the historians to be rhetorically trained, but good orators could equally compose history writing. Quintilian recommends retired lawyers to spend their time writing, for instance, history (XII 11:4). And Atticus, with several others,<sup>27</sup> tried to persuade Cicero to write some kind of history: "now, you are certainly able to do this, since, as you have at least usually believed, this kind of work is closest to oratory" (*De Leg.* I

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<sup>21</sup> Sacks regards Dionysius' *Letter to Pompeius* as a kind of historiography ("Historiography", pp. 65–87)

<sup>22</sup> For discussion, see Fornara, *The Nature of History*, pp. 124–134.

<sup>23</sup> Wiseman argues even that for most ancient people drama was one of the main sources of information about the past, and that Roman historiography therefore originated from drama-fiction (*Historiography and Imagination*, pp. 1–22). Polybius represents a minority view, according to Wiseman (*ibid.*, p. 19).

<sup>24</sup> Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*.

<sup>25</sup> Chap. 4, B:3.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hall, "Ancient Historical Method", pp. 103–118; Gempf, "Public Speaking", pp. 259–303.

<sup>27</sup> Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, p. 70. The dissertation of A. P. Kelley, "Historiography in Cicero" (Pennsylvania, 1969), was not available to me.

2:5).<sup>28</sup> Atticus is correct to see some basis of his attempt in Cicero's own belief. "What kind of an orator, how great a master of speech, do you think should write history?"<sup>29</sup> Cicero has Antonius ask Catullus (*De Orat.* II 12:51); "Do you see how great a task history is for an orator?"<sup>30</sup> Antonius later continues (*De Orat.* II 15:62), thus representing Cicero's standpoint. It was not by accident that the rhetorical splendour of Livy and not the stylistic terseness of Sallust eventually became the model of the historiographical tradition at Rome.<sup>31</sup>

### b. Rhetorical Persuasion and Falsehood

In the context of Antonius' two questions, Cicero puts on his lips the statement that rhetoric depends upon falsehood (*De Orat.* II 7:30). The activity of an orator has to do with opinion, he implies; it is *actio opinionibus*, not knowledge. In any kind of debate speakers discuss matters of which they are ignorant and maintain different opinions on identical issues. Not all of them can be true at the same time. Rhetoric thus "leans upon mendacity" (*mendacio nixa*).

Did the strong influence of rhetoric actually produce "lying historians"? The issue is a subtle one, escaping any modern desire to see a clear-cut opposition between rhetoric and history writing. Two articles by Robert G. Hall illustrate the complexity of the problem, the first one arguing that "writers of narration ruled sovereignly over the historical data at their disposal" and the latter one concluding that "to dismiss rhetoric as antithetical to history is too hasty".<sup>32</sup> Is history then not entirely swallowed up by the narration of a story? Is the factual pastness of the past still of value in the act of rhetorical composition and performance?

Persuasive patterns of elaboration were exceedingly important in various forms of speaking and writing. When Cicero says that history writing needs the orator's voice, it is crucial to remember that *orator* is the Latin word for advocate. An advocate had a case to argue, a judge to persuade. For Cicero persuasion thus stands at the center of political eloquence based on rhetoric: "Now, the function of this ability seems to be to speak in a manner suited to persuade, the end is to persuade by speech"

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<sup>28</sup> *potes autem tu profecto satis facere in ea, quippe cum sit opus, ut tibi quidem videri solet, unum hoc oratorium maxime.*

<sup>29</sup> *qualis oratoris, et quanti hominis in dicendo, putas esse, historiam scribere?*

<sup>30</sup> *Videtisne, quantum munus sit oratoris historia?*

<sup>31</sup> Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, pp. 140–146.

<sup>32</sup> Hall, "Historical Inference and Rhetorical Effect", p. 313; Hall, "Ancient Historical Method", p. 118.

(*De Inv.* I 5:6).<sup>33</sup> His statement somewhat later in the same work reveals the extent to which the orator could employ the material for his own purposes (*De Inv.* I 21:30):

“Therefore, to avoid this fault [viz., to help the opponent], the speaker must twist everything to the advantage of his case, by passing over those things that contradict it which can be passed over, by touching lightly on what must be mentioned, by telling his own story carefully and clearly”.<sup>34</sup>

What is probable and therefore convincing, he says later, is accordingly that which for the most part happens or which does not strain credibility or which contains within itself an approximation to either of these, “whether it be false or true” (*De Inv.* I 29:46).<sup>35</sup> With the voice of Antonius, he thus elsewhere disparages all those historians who only recorded their subjects without elaborating them (*De Orat.* II 12:53–54). As it seems from the well-known discussion between Atticus and Cicero, historical illustrations in the course of a speech could be added rather freely: “it is granted orators to lie in (hi)stories, so that they can say something clever”, Atticus says (*Brut.* 11:42).<sup>36</sup> Although he might not be speaking of history writing as such here,<sup>37</sup> and although Cicero in response promises to be more cautious (*Brut.* 11:43), it is not by accident that he elsewhere thinks very highly of Timaeus, the great arch-enemy of Polybius, regarding him as one of the “best informed” of the Greek historians, as “most amply endowed in wealth of material and range of thought”, as a man “whose style had some polish” (*De Orat.* II 14:58). It is not surprising therefore to find that Cicero estimates, for instance, Xenophon’s image of Cyrus as beneficial precisely because it was written not according to historical truth, but in the image of a just ruler (*QF* I 1:23).

For Quintilian the goal of narration is not to instruct, but to persuade the judge (IV 2:21). Persuasion might take many forms, but its essential feature is that all that is said should be presented in such a manner that it is likely to win belief. Referring to Cicero, he asserts “that the *narratio* should contain sweetness, admirations, expectations, unexpected endings,

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<sup>33</sup> *Officium autem eius facultatis videtur esse dicere apposite ad persuasionem; finis persuadere dictione.*

<sup>34</sup> *Quare, ut hoc vitium vitetur, omnia torquenda sunt ad commodum suae causae, contraria quae praeteriri poterunt praetereundo, quae dicenda erunt leviter attingendo, sua diligenter et enodate narrando.*

<sup>35</sup> *sive id falsum est sive verum.*

<sup>36</sup> *concessum est rhetoribus ementiri in historiis, ut aliquid dicere possint argutius.*

<sup>37</sup> So Fornara, *The Nature of History*, pp. 136–137 n. 57; Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, p. 116 n. 151. But cf. Wiseman, “Lying Historians”, p. 133.

conversations between persons, all kinds of emotions" (IV 2:107).<sup>38</sup> Persuasion is more important than factuality. One should not narrate "like a witness but like an advocate",<sup>39</sup> he continues (IV 2:109). It might thus be necessary to make a murderer, for instance, appear impetuous or the opposite, depending on one's point of view (IV 2:52; cf. III 7:25); and the order of events, to take another example, is relatively unimportant, the main point being that the arrangement is of advantage to the speaker (IV 2:83–84). Fabrications were not beyond the boundaries of Quintilian's techniques of persuasion. "For it is sometimes permitted also for a philosopher to tell even a lie", he says, "and the orator will necessarily excite the passions, if there will be no other way the judge will be lead to justice" (II 17:27).<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, the orator must try to make narratives appear plausible as strenuously when they are true as when they are fictitious (IV 2:34; cf. *Her.* I 9:16). Quintilian insists that the point of the narration should be self-evident whether it narrates truths or fabrications (IV 2:63–64). Certain points could be denied, added, altered or omitted according to what was considered most persuasive (IV 2:67). One should only take care that the fiction is within the bounds of possibility, that it has some relation to what is "the admitted truth" (IV 2:89).

Livy is perhaps the most striking example of the rhetorical influence on the historians. He employed a style which, as Woodman puts it, "is the historical counterpart of Cicero's oratory".<sup>41</sup> It is not by accident that Quintilian, though on occasion taxing him for prolixity (VIII 3:53), praises Livy for the inexpressible eloquence of the speeches, in which everything was suited not only to the circumstances, but to the speaker, and for his representation of the emotions (X 1:101). Being thoroughly trained in the theory of oratory, he was extreme in not making any independent historical research, as far as we know, and in having no personal experience whatsoever of politics and warfare.<sup>42</sup> History writing, it seems, was for him primarily a literary and rhetorical pursuit. After calling attention to the antiquity of his subject, he thus turns already in the preface to the idea of literary skill. His subject is an old and common one, he says, "while new writers one after another believe either that they will

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<sup>38</sup> *ut habeat narratio suavitatem, admirationes, exspectationes, exitus inopinatos, colloquia personarum, omnes adfectus.*

<sup>39</sup> *tanquam testi sed tanquam patrono.*

<sup>40</sup> *Nam et mendacium dicere etiam sapienti aliquando concessum est, et adfectus, si aliter ad aequitatem perducere iudex non poterit, necessario movebit orator.*

<sup>41</sup> Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, p. 139.

<sup>42</sup> For Livy's personal background, see Walsh, *Livy. His Historical Aims and Methods*, pp. 1–19.



have something more reliable to add in their facts or that by their skill in writing they will surpass the rude attempts of the ancients” (pref. 2).<sup>43</sup> While he indeed employed written information and connected his own story with something that was “admittedly true”, actual research into the primary sources was not, in his view, as essential as the finished literary product. The reiterant treatment of the history of the past at a time when contemporary history had a dominant position forced historians to justify not only the choice of subject, but also to explain the relationship to the extant literature.<sup>44</sup> It was Livy’s conviction that he could make the story of Rome more readable and persuasive than anyone had yet done which gave him the courage to undertake the task.

### c. Rhetorical Persuasion and Factual Truth

This is only one side of the picture. Livy was probably quite aware of the limitations of the available evidence; and as Gary B. Miles correctly shows in his recent book on Livy, he cannot be evaluated by the standards which he dismisses and discredits.<sup>45</sup> Quintilian knows even to criticize him somewhat, recommending the orator to avoid not only the famous brevity of Sallust, but also the “milky fullness” of Livy (X 1:32). The latter, he maintains, is hardly of a kind to instruct a listener “who looks not for beauty of exposition, but for credibility”.<sup>46</sup>

That these comments have to do with factual knowledge becomes clear in the discussion that follows. The orator should build his speech on a knowledge similar to the one of the historians. This group of people, Quintilian says, have the advantage “derived from the knowledge of fact and precedent” (X 1:34).<sup>47</sup> Only with such a kind of learning is the orator able to produce arguments that are above suspicion of prejudice and partiality. In a previous chapter we had occasion to take notice also of Quintilian’s extensive discussion of the proper techniques for interrogating witnesses.<sup>48</sup> The rhetorical invention meant not merely the free fabrication of fictional proofs. Quintilian knows of people who produce false witnesses and silence true ones (V 7:12–13, 32), and he therefore urges

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<sup>43</sup> *dum novi semper scriptores aut in rebus certius aliquid allaturos se aut scribendi arte rudem vetustatem superaturos credunt.*

<sup>44</sup> For a similar discussion of Arrian’s choice to write about Alexander, see Schepens, “Arrian’s View of His Task”, pp. 254–268.

<sup>45</sup> Miles, *Livy*, pp. 8–74.

<sup>46</sup> *qui non speciem expositionis, sed fidem quaerit.*

<sup>47</sup> *ex cognitione rerum exemplorumque.*

<sup>48</sup> Chap. 4, B:4.

orators to evaluate testimony by careful research. In addition to determining the character and motive of the witness as well as discovering the possible contradictions of the testimony, the advocate is to assess the sources for the witness' knowledge. Is s/he in a position to know what s/he claims to know?<sup>49</sup> Written sources are often biased (V 7:2); testimony based on hearsay may report words of unsworn people (V 7:5). As Quintilian thus elsewhere insists, the advocates should remain carefully sceptical of everything, always studying their cases exhaustively (XII 8:11).

d. "The Laws of History"

These two seemingly contradictory perspectives, persuasion by falsehood and persuasion by factual truth, coloured also the rhetoricians' attitude to history writing. Two passages from Cicero's works, both written around 55 BCE, epitomize this double disposition. Advising his friend L. Lucceius how to approach the work of history on which he was engaged, Cicero begs him eagerly to include an account of his own achievements. With intentional lack of decency, he urges Lucceius to write favourably of him (*Fam.* V 12:3):

"So I frankly ask you again and again to eulogize it [*viz.*, my activity] with even more warmth than perhaps you feel, and in that respect to disregard the laws of history; and that prejudice of which you wrote beautifully in a certain preface, ... if it will enhance my merits even to exaggeration in your eyes, I ask you not to suppress, and of the bounty to bestow on our love even a little more than truth permits".<sup>50</sup>

At whatever cost, Cicero implies, Lucceius is to amplify the greatness of his famous friend.

A few months later, Cicero had again occasion to comment on the art of history writing. With the voice of Antonius he now develops how great a task history is for an orator, commenting that in spite of the lack of a separate treatment of the subject in the rules of rhetoric, there is the common knowledge of the law of history:

"For who does not know that the first law of history is not daring to say anything false? Next not daring to refrain from saying anything true? That as you write there should be no suspicion of prejudice? Nor bias?" (*De Orat.* II 15:62).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Her.* II 7:10, discussing testimonies given under torture.

<sup>50</sup> *Itaque te plane etiam atque etiam rogo, ut et ornēs ea vehementius etiam, quam fortasse sentis, et in eo leges historiae negligas, gratiamque illam, de qua suavissime quodam in prooemio scripsisti, ... eam si me tibi vehementius commendabit, ne aspernere, amorique nostro plusculum etiam, quam concedat veritas, largiare.*

<sup>51</sup> *Nam quis nescit, primam esse historiae legem, ne quid falsi dicere audeat? Deinde ne quid veri non audeat? Ne qua suspicio gratiae sit in scribendo? Ne qua simultatis?*

One cannot avoid the impression of a discrepancy between Cicero's statements. Woodman, while generalizing his observations somewhat too far, as we have seen, has given a convincing explanation of the latter passage.<sup>52</sup> The first pair of rhetorical questions, dealing with *falsum* and *verum*, are to be understood by the second pair, which deal with *gratia* and *simultas*. To speak the truth means here not to show prejudice for or bias against anyone. The historian should be impartial. With this understanding, the contrast to the former passage becomes all the more striking as Cicero advises his friend to disregard the laws of history by not suppressing the prejudice (*gratiam*) that nudges Lucceius strongly in favour of Cicero.

It is very difficult to find a plausible way to harmonize the two attitudes. Cicero's advice to Lucceius is somewhat ironic indeed, but to say that the ironic tone of the text takes away all the traces of intended meaning, or that the meaning would be entirely contrary to what is said, goes against the entire thrust of the passage. In addition, as we have seen, both Cicero and Quintilian elsewhere include statements in one and the same work which move in either of the two directions. We do not need to defend the rhetoricians by making them more consistent than they actually were.

#### *e. The Interplay of Fundamenta and Exaedificatio*

If we nevertheless attempt to generalize what the historian learned from his rhetorical training, the ruling term must be persuasion. And *persuasion was of course most effective when it could be shown to relate as closely as possible to the factual truth of the past*. The impartiality to which Woodman brings attention is only one aspect of truth, and occasionally not even a very prominent one; the historians were sometimes indeed openly partial in their research, mingling investigative procedures and interpretative procedures.<sup>53</sup> Interpretation continued of course when history was to be narrativized. One suspects even that there were occasions when the truth was presented as more factual than it really was. In the rhetorical agenda, the borderline between interpretation and fabrication was at times rather fluid.

However, it would indeed be simplistic to say that all historians were liars. After speaking of everyone's knowledge of the laws of history, Antonius leaves these "foundations" (*fundamenta*) and refers to the "super-

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<sup>52</sup> Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, pp. 82–83.

<sup>53</sup> See above Chap. 4, B:4.

structure” (*exaedificatio*) of history writing, being *res* and *verba*, content and style (*De Orat.* II 15:63). Antonius is more interested to explain the superstructure, but as the image of a house here implies, the latter cannot exist without the former.

We know also of cases where the historian elaborated persuasively core elements that were at his disposal. The earliest text which comes to mind is Thucydides’ famous discussion of how to report speeches.<sup>54</sup> At first sight, one would expect his work to provide mainly a factual record of matters associated with the Peloponnesian war. His methodological manifesto claims very high ideals of objectivity. Phrases such as “it seems to me” (δοκεῖ μοι), “probably” (ὥς εἰκός), and the like, are most prominent in the – apparently – incomplete book eight.<sup>55</sup> Already I 22:1 reveals, however, his difficulties in living up to his own standards.<sup>56</sup> The LCL translates:

“Therefore the speeches are given in the language in which, as it seemed to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the situation, though at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said”.<sup>57</sup>

Although many different details of this well-known passage are open to debate, it seems obvious that Thucydides here introduces two apparently competing criteria of reporting speeches: suitability and truth,<sup>58</sup> the freedom to make the speakers best express what seemed to be appropriate, or necessary (τὰ δέοντα), on the one hand, and the promise to adhere as close as possible to the general sense of what was actually, or truly (ἀληθῶς), said, on the other hand. The stress of the whole statement is even on the former. The criterion of truth is added merely as a participial clause (ἐχομένῳ) expressing, it seems, a concessional circumstance under which the main procedure of adopting the speeches to the situation was directed.

<sup>54</sup> For a survey of the discussion, see Hornblower, *Thucydides*, pp. 45–72.

<sup>55</sup> Most scholars regard book eight as incomplete. So already in antiquity Marcellin., *Vit. Thuc.* 44. For a survey of research, see Gomme/Andrewes/Dover, *Commentary*, V, pp. 1–4. For an attempt to see a fundamental unity in book eight, see Erbse, *Thukydides-Interpretationen*, pp. 1–67.

<sup>56</sup> Connor, who is strongly influenced by the reader-oriented approaches of the new literary criticism, goes as far as to claim that objectivity was for Thucydides only “a relationship between reader and author, not one between author and his subject matter” (*Thucydides*, p. 6). This distinction seems to be drawn too rigidly.

<sup>57</sup> ὥς δ’ ἂν ἐδόκουν μοι ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ’ εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Walbank, *Selected Papers*, p. 245.

For the issue at hand, one detects an early and influential distinction between a hard core of truth beneath the superstructure of the elaborated composition. And in doing this Thucydides was probably not alone at the time.<sup>59</sup>

Reminiscences of the same distinction can be found also in situations where the impact of rhetoric on the historians is more explicit. As for speeches, we have the rare opportunity of comparing Tacitus' version of Claudius' oration in favour of the admission of Gallic nobles to the Senate (*Ann.* 11:24) with the rather extensive, though discontinuous, fragments of the same speech preserved on a bronze tablet at Lugdunum (Lyons), which was recovered in 1528.<sup>60</sup> While Tacitus strongly rearranges and condenses the speech in order to sharpen the arguments, it is evident that he had some kind of raw material at his disposal.<sup>61</sup> The same principle applies also to other kinds of material. Cicero himself describes Caesar's *commentarii* as material from which would-be writers of history could select (*Brut.* 75:262). Although he subsequently makes clear that historians might prefer the brevity to the "curling irons", he implies that this kind of information could then be subject to rhetorical elaboration. And Pliny the Younger, always eager to speak of his own experiences, tells in a letter how he sent to Tacitus an account of an incident in which he had been personally involved and which he wishes the historian to include in his work. The end of the letter reveals Pliny's view of the material as well as of Tacitus' task (VII 33:10):

"These things, whatever their merit, you can make more notable, more distinguished and more important, though I am not asking you to go beyond the standard of the fact. For history should not pass beyond the truth, and truth suffices for honest deeds".<sup>62</sup>

The statement reminds us of Cicero's request to Luceius, but Pliny is

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<sup>59</sup> We previously noted that even Xenophon had a concern for historical truth (above Chap. 4, B:2). Gray, who stresses the qualities of Xenophon's storytelling techniques, states the following concerning an episode in the *Historia Graeca*: "It shows that the storytelling style of history was not a substitute for real knowledge of what happened. [...] Greeks would not have objected to this as serious history, for it was an expression of their most basic mythic patterns" (*The Character of Xenophon's Hellenica*, p. 72). – For a broader discussion of the two-pronged concept of literary and historical appropriateness, see the balanced article by Gempf, "Public Speaking", pp. 259–303.

<sup>60</sup> Dessau, no. 212 (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, I, pp. 52–54).

<sup>61</sup> For discussion and bibliography, see Martin, *Tacitus*, pp. 147–150; Gempf, "Public Speaking", p. 284–285.

<sup>62</sup> *Haec, utcumque se habent, notiora clariora maiora tu facies; quamquam non exigo ut excedas actae rei modum. Nam nec historia debet egredi veritatem, et honeste factis veritas sufficit.*

more modest, at least drawing a distinction between the hard core of factual material which he has sent to Tacitus and the truthful elaboration which Tacitus is expected to provide. Pliny knew of course that his learned friend was a gifted rhetorician who had chosen to write history,<sup>63</sup> and he might for that reason have been eager to show his awareness of the distinctions between the two.<sup>64</sup>

We thus see that *even where persuasion was the goal, the pastness of history was not entirely swallowed up by the concern of the present*. Without losing its character of being precisely the hard core of the past, it was instead narrativized and placed within the richly ornamented pattern of a story. To be sure, on occasion it must have been extremely difficult to distinguish the hard core from the elaboration. We are fortunate to know that the sketch (*commentarium*) of his consulship which Cicero sent to Atticus, with the remark that its contents were “not encomiastic but historical” (*Att.* 1:19 [LCL, I, p. 90]), was in fact a book with an elaborate rhetorical style (*Att.* 2:1 [LCL, I, p. 100]). Yet, the historians were not simply liars. It seems likely, generally speaking, that the apparent paradox between the rhetoricians emphasis on truth, on the one hand, and their effort to produce extensive elaborations, on the other hand, had to do with the requirement that the basic material – the *fundamenta* – should be true while its elaboration – its *exaedificatio* – should be plausible. The rules of history would oblige the rhetorically trained historian not to omit even the most awkward hard core if it was true, forcing him to employ all his rhetorical skill to put a good interpretation upon it. If the hard core was evidently false, he should accordingly not use it for elaboration. Even Livy, for instance, dismisses an episode from the capture of Veii as unworthy of belief; it was more suited to a stage show delighting in marvels (V 21:8–9).

So at the end, Lucian’s recommendation for the historian to create a truthful work of art from the material that was already provided for him prevailed (*Hist. Conscr.* 50–51). History should be narrativized precisely as history.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The *Dialogus* presents Tacitus’ inquiry into the reason for the decay of oratory under the empire. Some scholars regard it as his own declaration to give up oratory and turn to history. Cf. Syme, *Tacitus*, I, pp. 112–120.

<sup>64</sup> Similarly, after giving Tacitus an eyewitness account of the death of his uncle, Pliny advises Tacitus to select what best suits his purpose, “for there is a difference between a letter and a history writing (*aliud est enim epistulam aliud historiam*), between writing for a friend and writing for all” (VI 16:22).

<sup>65</sup> This seems to be confirmed as one applies modern theories of narratology on the ancient historians. Hornblower discusses, by reference to Thucydides, the respects in

### 3. Autopsy at the Cross-Section of History and Story

How did this rhetorical agenda affect the notion of autopsy among the historians? If the production of a historical narrative intersected with rhetoric, how are all the references to eyewitness testimony to be understood? In view of the preceding section, it comes as no surprise that towards the turn of the eras one struggled restlessly with the intricate ways in which the historians' attempts to win the favour and confidence of the audience affected the veracity of their narratives. As a matter of course, the notion of autopsy was part of the rhetorical agenda of persuasion. *References to autopsy now belonged to the cross-section of history and story, reality and fiction.*

#### a. Autopsy as Apologetic

Take Josephus, for instance, whose frequent references to autopsy were listed in chapters two and four.<sup>66</sup> The strategic position of these references is evident. As it seems, he uses the notion of autopsy as an apologetic means in the opening paragraphs of the works, or he uses it in retrospect as he looks back on his previous activities. One finds only very rarely references to autopsy that are integrated into his actual account of the events. Most references are clearly apologetic.<sup>67</sup> Hermann Peter, the old expert on plagiarism among the ancient historians, was accordingly sceptical of Josephus' claims to autopsy.<sup>68</sup> Are we to assume that Josephus actually did what he said he did? Or was the notion of autopsy at this time primarily a literary cliché which the historian could use as a rather conventional means to establish his *ethos* and defend the reliability of his account?

I shall not attempt to prove or disprove Josephus' reliability as a historian. Considering all we know about him, it is indeed unlikely that he invented his references to autopsy altogether, though that does not mean that he is entirely trustworthy. However, what is important to notice, for the purposes of the present study, is that such references cannot be taken

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which narrative is differently handled in historical and in fictional texts ("Narratology and Narrative Techniques", pp. 131–166).

<sup>66</sup> Chap. 2, A:5 and Chap. 4, A:3.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Rajak, "The Sense of History in Jewish Intertestamental Writing", p. 129. For a broader treatment of the issue, see Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, pp. 226–310; Krieger, *Geschichtsschreibung als Apologetik*.

<sup>68</sup> Peter, *Wahrheit und Kunst*, p. 426. Cf. Peter, *Die geschichtliche Litteratur*, II, pp. 229–230. Other sceptical voices are quoted by Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, pp. 192–193.

at face value as statements of the historians' actual practice. Autopsy is part of a narrative, which has to be made trustworthy. The cross-section of reality and narrative fiction to which they belong has to do both with historiographic methodology as well as with apologetic and rhetorical persuasion.

### b. *The Critique of Strabo, Plutarch and Lucian*

Strabo, who was active somewhat earlier than Josephus, reveals a sensitivity to the whole issue. Despite his preference for hearsay to autopsy,<sup>69</sup> he knows indeed that autopsy is also of certain value (XV 1:2; XVI 4:15). Yet he notices, to his regret, that historians failed to give truthful accounts of the Persians or Medes or Syrians, because “they supposed that they too would make their writing pleasing if they told in the guise of history what they had never seen nor even heard ... that which afforded the hearers pleasure and amazement” (XI 6:3).<sup>70</sup> His critique is directed against historians such as Ctesias, Herodotus and Hellanicus. If history was to be written, Strabo implies, it should build on solid research and not merely serve to promote the popularity of the author and his writing.

Strabo's own colleagues, the geographers, were not entirely innocent of using autopsy as a way to promote their own work. Plutarch, the late contemporary of Josephus, detects among them a similar blurring of the boundaries between what had really been seen and what was entirely fictional.<sup>71</sup> Setting out to write the *bios* of Theseus, he recalls those geographers who filled the blank spaces of their maps with fanciful stories (*Thes.* 1:1):

“As historians in geographical works, ο Sosius Senecio, are squeezing into the outer edges of their plates things which escape their knowledge – they add explanations: ‘what lies beyond are sandbanks without water and full of wild beasts’ or ‘obscure marsh’ or ‘Scytian ice’ or ‘frozen sea’ – so as for me in regard to the writing of the parallel lives, after passing through the period which is accessible to probable reasoning and which is available for history of events to depend on, of those that are further off I might well say: ‘what lies beyond are prodigious and fictitious things, poets and fabulists dwell there; and there is no trust or clearness any more’”.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> See above Chap. 3, A:2b.

<sup>70</sup> ᾠήθησαν καὶ αὐτοὶ παρέξεσθαι τὴν γραφὴν ἡδέϊαν, ἐὰν ἐν ἱστορίας σχήματι λέγωσιν, ἃ μηδέποτε εἶδον μηδὲ ἤκουσαν ... ὃ τι ἀκρόασιν ἡδέϊαν ἔχει καὶ θαυμαστήν.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Alexander, “Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts”, pp. 388–390.

<sup>72</sup> ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς γεωγραφίαις, ᾧ Σόσσιε Σενεκίων, οἱ ἱστορικοὶ τὰ διαφεύγοντα τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτῶν τοῖς ἐσχάτοις μέρεσι τῶν πινάκων πιεζοῦντες, αἰτίας παρα-



These writers, it seems, employed the notion of autopsy to create a geographical fiction; and people, one must assume, recognized that the marginal notes were not intended for serious belief. References to autopsy had been subverted, as Loveday C. A. Alexander points out, “to encourage the reader to collude in the creation of fiction”.<sup>73</sup> Plutarch himself, as a biographer, is not against employing legendary material. But he is eager to distance it from the serious historical factuality of the past, hoping that the purifying process of reason will reduce this kind of material in his own writing to something like exact history. It is significant, as John Buckler has shown, that for Plutarch the practice of autopsy had often to do with discovering literary sources rather than to see for himself the scenes of the actions he describes or the inscriptions testifying to particular persons or events.<sup>74</sup> Plutarch is known for having read widely in Greek literature; and he quotes abundantly, scholars have counted some seven thousand times,<sup>75</sup> perhaps from memory and notes.<sup>76</sup> Buckler’s article does not, however, diminish Plutarch’s historical sensitiveness.<sup>77</sup> It shows rather that he considered himself to be first and foremost a biographer, not a historian. The respect for the factuality of the past is probably the reason why he, in the famous introduction to *Alexander*, points out that he is not writing histories but *bioi* (*Alex.* 1:2). The historical genre put higher demands on factual comprehensiveness and thoroughness, as Plutarch elsewhere states quite explicitly.<sup>78</sup> He is cautious that his work is not to be measured against those high ideals,<sup>79</sup> indicating the need to protect history writing from exaggerated notions of fiction.

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γράφουσιν ὅτι τὰ δ' ἐπέκεινα θινες ἄνδρῳ καὶ θηριώδεις ἢ πηλὸς αἰδνῆς ἢ Σκυθικὸν κρύος ἢ πέλαγος πεπηγός, οὕτως ἐμοὶ περὶ τὴν τῶν βίων τῶν παραλλήλων γραφὴν, τὸν ἐφικτὸν εἰκότι λόγῳ καὶ βᾶσιμον ἱστορίᾳ πραγμάτων ἐχομένη χρόνον διελθόντι, περὶ τῶν ἀνωτέρω καλῶς εἶχεν εἰπεῖν τὰ δ' ἐπέκεινα τερατώδη καὶ τραγικὰ ποιητὰ καὶ μυθογράφοι νέμονται, καὶ οὐκέτ' ἔχει πίστιν οὐδὲ σαφήνειαν.

<sup>73</sup> Alexander, “Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts”, p. 389.

<sup>74</sup> Buckler, “Plutarch and Autopsy”, pp. 4788–4830.

<sup>75</sup> Russell, *Plutarch*, p. 46.

<sup>76</sup> Cf., e.g., the comments on Plutarch’s historical methods by Hamilton, *Plutarch, Alexander*, pp. xliii–xliv.

<sup>77</sup> Buckler’s discussion can be compared with Theander’s survey of autopsy and oral tradition in the *bioi*, where Plutarch’s sense for historical facts comes clearer to the fore (*Plutarch und die Geschichte*, pp. 2–32).

<sup>78</sup> In *Galb.* 2:3 he observes that the task of ἡ πραγματικὴ ἱστορία is to provide a detailed and accurate record of events, while in his own work he feels obliged only not to omit incidents that are worthy of mention in the deeds and fates of the Caesars.

<sup>79</sup> Similarly Hamilton, *Plutarch, Alexander*, p. xxxviii; Burrige, *What are the Gospels?*, pp. 63–65.

Lucian, writing less than a century after Josephus, complains at some length concerning the misuse of references to autopsy. To be sure, he holds on to the conviction that the historian should primarily use his own observation as the basic source of his account (*Hist. Concr.* 47).<sup>80</sup> Cassius Dio, Lucian's younger contemporary, seems to have been quite serious in distinguishing between what he knew by hearsay and what he knew by personal observation and experience,<sup>81</sup> even including detailed accounts of seemingly unimportant matters simply because he was the only historian to have been present (LXXII 18:3–4).<sup>82</sup> But, as we already have had occasion to notice,<sup>83</sup> Lucian also criticizes a person who employs Heraclitus' old dictum – “eyes are surer witnesses than the ears” – at the beginning of the account without taking it seriously as a method of research, without even having seen, as Lucian comments sarcastically, “a battle painted on a wall” (*Hist. Concr.* 29). His verdict is severe and polemically formulated, as if he is eager to combat a widespread misuse of certain historians' claim to have been eyewitnesses. On another occasion, he confesses bluntly that he is composing a story which is not true, because “I am writing about things which I have neither seen nor experienced nor learned from others” (*VH* 1:4).<sup>84</sup> He is writing literary entertainment, not history, he implies.<sup>85</sup> It is better, Lucian seems to reason, to state it right from the beginning instead of trying to stir wrong expectations among the audience with simplistic and false allegations. The critique is again implicitly directed against, among others, Ctesias. Notwithstanding Ctesias' claim to autopsy,<sup>86</sup> according to Lucian he wrote a great deal about India “that he had never seen himself nor heard from anyone with a reputation for truthfulness” (*VH* 1:3).<sup>87</sup>

### c. Early Apologetic Uses of Autopsy

The use of autopsy as a literary cliché was not an entirely new phenomenon. Strabo and Lucian were probably correct in their estimation of Cte-

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>81</sup> XLIX 36:4; LXXII 4:2; LXXII 7:1; LXXV 4:3. Cf. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio*, pp. 14, 16, 18, 35–36.

<sup>82</sup> Yet, Dio avoids other unnecessary details throughout his work. Cf. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio*, pp. 32, 43–44.

<sup>83</sup> Chap. 2, A:1.

<sup>84</sup> γράφω τοίνυν περὶ ὧν μήτε εἶδον μήτε ἔπαθον μήτε παρ' ἄλλων ἐπιθυμήτην.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, pp. 4–6.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Chap. 2, A:1.

<sup>87</sup> ἃ μήτε αὐτὸς εἶδεν μήτε ἄλλου ἀληθεύοντος ἤκουσεν.

sias, at least insofar as his *Indica* is concerned; Hermann Peter called it “ein Lügengewebe”.<sup>88</sup> By Ctesias’ time, north-west India was outside of the federation of Persian imperial states, so that his access to reliable information must in fact have been quite limited.<sup>89</sup> The India he describes is indeed a land of fable, teeming with the most incredible phenomena. One receives the impression of an author who not only loved the marvellous, but also neglected to sift critically the account that might have been communicated to him.<sup>90</sup> For one of his profession, a physician, he appears to have been very deficient in critical acumen.

Ctesias was not alone, though it may be unfair to put Herodotus and Hellanicus in the same category of historians, as Strabo did. He was extreme, to be sure, and to several ancient writers he appeared indeed to be a “lying historian”. Already Thucydides had seen the danger of writing history merely for the sake of amusing an audience. He wishes himself to be heard/read by persons who are less interested in fabulous matters pleasing the ear and more concerned about having a clear view of past and future events (I 22:4). In this way he takes a stand against the popular versions of writing that, one might assume, were familiar to him.

The two fourth century historians Ephorus of Cyme and Theopompus of Chios, who both, it was believed, stood in the rhetorical tradition of Isocrates,<sup>91</sup> evidently made similar claims as Ctesias did, though their works differ entirely from his. For Isocrates himself, as we have seen,<sup>92</sup> autopsy was not at all important as an investigative procedure, because all men, he believed, have more knowledge gained through hearing than through seeing (*Panathen.* 150). His ideal was that one should not aim at

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<sup>88</sup> Peter, *Wahrheit und Kunst*, p. 55. Cf. Avenarius’ statement: “Grotesk wirkt es dagegen, wenn auch der berühmte Ktesias beteuert, die Wahrheit zu schreiben” (*Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 43).

<sup>89</sup> Dihle, *A History of Greek Literature*, p. 219. Cf. Strabo’s complaint concerning the difficulty of knowing anything about India with certainty since not many of his people had seen it (XV 1:2).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. the introduction of McCrindle in *Ancient India*, p. 4; Will, “Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung des 4. Jahrhunderts”, p. 123.

<sup>91</sup> Their exact relation to Isocrates is difficult to establish. Cic., *De Orat.* II 13:57; II 22:94–23:94; Dion Hal., *Pomp.* 6 (LCL pp. 390, 392); Strabo XIII 3:6; Diod. S. IV 1:3, for instance, claim that Theopompus and/or Ephorus were Isocrates’ students. Cf. also Quint. X 1:74. The idea of Ephorus’ and Theopompus’ close relationship to Isocrates arose perhaps on the basis of stylistic similarities between their writings. So Schwartz, “Ephorus”, cols. 1–2; Gärtner, “Ephoros”, col. 299; Breitenbach, “Theopompos von Chios”, col. 727; Flower, *Theopompus*, pp. 42–62. Differently Barber, *The Historian Ephorus*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>92</sup> Chap. 3, A:2b.

discovering new facts and shun what other authors already said before, “but one must attempt to speak better than them” (*Paneg.* 8).<sup>93</sup> Indeed, to Ephorus is attributed a saying, which perhaps was part of one of his *προοίμια*,<sup>94</sup> where it is stated that “if we could be personally present at all events, this would lead to a much better kind of knowledge” (*FrGrHist* 70 F 110).<sup>95</sup> Yet, although Ephorus might here be reacting against an exaggerated rhetorical emphasis on literary expression,<sup>96</sup> it is evident that he could not live up to this ideal in making the research for his universal history of twenty-nine or thirty volumes. Polybius criticizes him precisely for not having seen or experienced what he claims to describe in detail (XII 25<sup>f</sup>:1–5), in spite of being aware of his insistence on autopsy (XII 27:7). Diodorus Siculus similarly accuses him of never having personally observed the nature of the country in Egypt (I 39:8).

In XII 27:8 Polybius links Ephorus’ saying with the one of Theopompus: “The man with the best knowledge of wars is he who has been present at the most battles, the most capable speaker is he who has taken part in the greatest number of debates”,<sup>97</sup> Theopompus said (*FrGrHist* 115 F 342). Dionysius of Halicarnassus reports similarly that even if Theopompus had said nothing about his way of working, it is obvious that he not only made elaborate preparations for his task and went to great expense to collect material, but also that “he was an eyewitness of many things, conversed with many eminent men and generals of his day, demagogues and even philosophers, for the sake of history”.<sup>98</sup> He did not consider the writing of history a part-time occupation, Dionysius goes on (*Pomp.* 6 [LCL p. 392]).<sup>99</sup> Granted the attributions to Theopompus are correct,<sup>100</sup>

<sup>93</sup> ἄλλ’ ἄμεινον ἐκείνων εἰπεῖν πειρατέον. Cf. also *Antid.* 82–83.

<sup>94</sup> So Jacoby in *FrGrHist* (Kommentar zu Nr. 64–105), p. 64; Barber, *The Historian Ephorus*, p. 72.

<sup>95</sup> εἰ δυνατόν ἦν αὐτοὺς παρῆναι πᾶσι τοῖς πράγμασι, ταύτην ἂν διαφέρειν πολὺ τῶν ἐμπειριῶν. The quotation is known from Polyb. XII 27:7.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *FrGrHist* 70 F 109 (=Polyb. XII 28:11); F 111, and the discussion by Schepens, “Éphore sur la valeur de l’autopsie”, pp. 163–182.

<sup>97</sup> τοῦτον μὲν ἄριστον ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς τὸν πλείστοις κινδύνοις παρατετευχότα, τοῦτον δὲ δυνατώτατον ἐν λόγῳ τὸν πλείστων μετεσχηκότα πολιτικῶν ἀγῶνων.

<sup>98</sup> πολλῶν μὲν αὐτόπτης γεγενημένος, πολλοῖς δ’ εἰς ὀμιλίαν ἔλθων ἀνδράσι τοῖς τότε πρωτεύουσι καὶ στρατηγοῖς δημαγωγοῖς τε καὶ φιλοσόφοις διὰ τὴν συγγραφὴν (= *FrGrHist* 115 F 26 [also in *FrGrHist* 115 T 20a]).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. also *FrGrHist* 115 F 25, where Theopompus claims to have visited every major city in Greece, and *FrGrHist* 115 T 28, where Athenaeus refers to him as a man who spent a great deal of money on the accurate investigation of history.

<sup>100</sup> Connor discusses what criteria to use in assigning utterances and views to Theo-

it is still difficult to estimate to what extent he actually adhered to these ideals as he researched his *Hellenica* and *Philippica*.<sup>101</sup> Quintilian clearly ranks him higher as a rhetorician than as a historian (X 1:74). There is no reason to mistrust a historian simply because he was also a gifted rhetorician,<sup>102</sup> though Theopompus' fondness of the fabulous is indeed noteworthy.<sup>103</sup> Yet, even if he did make all the effort referred to by Polybius and Dionysius, it is significant that the concept of autopsy early entered into a domain where rhetorical effect was the primary goal.

#### d. Late Apologetic Uses of Autopsy

At the time of the first century CE, references to autopsy could therefore not always be seen as factual statements concerning historical inquiry. Autopsy was no longer merely a methodological issue, but had to do also with the author's need to establish his *ethos* and defend the validity of his written account. One finds indeed references to autopsy among the historians of this period, we have already brought attention to Josephus, but several of these references smack of literary convention and exaggerated attempts to impress the implied audience.<sup>104</sup>

Diodorus Siculus, a contemporary of Cicero,<sup>105</sup> criticizes Ephorus, as we saw, for his lack of autopsy (I 39:8) and refers, in addition, to his own (I 83:9; III 11:3)<sup>106</sup> and others' (III 38:1) personal knowledge as eyewitness

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pompus on the basis of the surviving fragments (*Theopompus*, pp. 7–18). For arguments in regard to *FrGrHist* 115 F 26, see Flower, *Theopompus*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>101</sup> It is impossible to prove that Theopompus was the author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* (*P. Oxy.* 842), as Grenfell and Hunt, the first editors, tried to do ("Theopompus [or Cratippus], *Hellenica*", pp. 125–142). See Bruce, *Commentary*, pp. 22–23; McKechnie/Kern (eds.), *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, pp. 9–11. A good survey of Theopompus' works is given by Flower, *Theopompus*, pp. 26–41.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. the careful discussion of Theopompus' historical accuracy by Flower, *Theopompus*, pp. 184–210.

<sup>103</sup> Peter states: "Theopomp ist ... in ihrer [viz., der Wahrheit] Mißachtung in den Episoden grundsätzlich noch über Ephoros hinausgegangen, indem er die mythischen bevorzugte und auch sonst die Unglaublichkeit der Wundergeschichten übertrieb" (*Wahrheit und Kunst*, p. 175). Connor, despite his keen awareness of the problematic nature of the sources about Theopompus, asserts similarly: "He was first of all a lover of the good story" (*Theopompus*, p. 12).

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Peter, *Die geschichtliche Litteratur*, II, pp. 237–238. But for some critique of Peter, see Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 79 n. 24.

<sup>105</sup> Sacks relates Diodorus' view on rhetoric and history to that of Cicero (*Diodorus Siculus*, pp. 97–98). Cf. also Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, pp. 115–116 n. 149.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. also XIII 90:4–7.

nesses. Already at the beginning of his voluminous βιβλιοθήκη ιστορική, he claims emphatically to have visited, with much hardship and many dangers, a large portion of Asia and Europe, “in order that we might become eyewitnesses of the most important regions, as many as possible” (I 4:1).<sup>107</sup> He wishes to avoid the errors made by other historians through ignorance of the sites, he continues. Thus he abstains from revealing the sources of the Nile because no man has yet observed them or talked with another who has (I 37:6). But one finds no confirmation whatsoever that he actually saw large portions of Asia and Europe. Although he is certainly not to be estimated as a mere compiler of sources, he may have seen only Egypt and Rome.<sup>108</sup> His references to autopsy appear thus as apologetic attempts to establish the validity of his own written account of historical matters.

Similarly, Dionysius, another well-known contemporary of Cicero, praises as we saw Theopompus’ research method (*Pomp.* 6 [LCL p. 392]) and utters criticism or approval of the autopsy of other historians as well (*Ant. Roma.* I 6:1–2; VII 71:1; *Th.* 6), occasionally indicating that he himself tested the information concerning ancient matters by visiting the places of the various events (*Ant. Roma.* I 32:2; I 55:1; I 67:4–68:1). His *Roman Antiquities* did not treat contemporary matters, but he claimed to have spent twenty-two years in familiarizing himself with the language and literature of the Romans and to have received information from men of greatest learning, παρὰ τῶν λογιωτάτων ἀνδρῶν (*Ant. Roma.* I 7:2–3), and from histories by approved Roman authors. This was evidently a way of making up for the impossibility of real autopsy. But no doubt, Dionysius was first and foremost a rhetorician. The persons and the events of history seem to have been considered as of less importance than the manner in which they were presented. Literary artistry was essential to him.<sup>109</sup> He openly used the ancient myths (*Ant. Roma.* I 8:1), and it has generally been suspected that a good number of the many speeches included in his *Antiquities* are the result of his rhetorical skill and creativity rather than a reflection of the faithful adherence to his theoretical, though perhaps variegating,<sup>110</sup> ideals concerning a historian’s proper use of sour-

<sup>107</sup> ἵνα τῶν ἀναγκαιοτάτων καὶ πλείστων μερῶν ἀυτόπται γενηθῶμεν.

<sup>108</sup> So, e.g., Oldfather in *Diodorus of Sicily*, I, p. xiii; Burton, *Diodorus Siculus Book I*, pp. 38–39; Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus*, p. 161.

<sup>109</sup> So, e.g., Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, pp. 83, 93; Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, p. 77; Gempf, “Public Speaking,” pp. 275–276, 282.

<sup>110</sup> Sacks argues that the *Letter to Pompeius* reflects Dionysius’ latest and most considered thoughts on historiography (“Historiography”, pp. 65–87).

ces.<sup>111</sup> As Kenneth S. Sacks illustrates, he seems to have twisted Thucydides' strong insistence on reporting what was "truly said" to fit his own rhetorical view of what constituted a "real speech".<sup>112</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion: Autopsy as History and Story

These are some of the most significant factors affecting the production of a historical narrative. The various references to autopsy were part of the rhetorical repertoire of many historians. Towards the turn of the eras, rhetorical training was employed in several settings of interaction between speaker and hearer, author and reader. It provided the essential means to communicate persuasively; and *since the historians had ambitions which went beyond the mere reproduction of facts, being involved in a narrativizing process, their deliberate use of rhetorical techniques in preparing as well as composing their writings is not to be underestimated.*

The extent to which this narrativization and rhetorization of history manifested itself varied, but no historian seems to have escaped it entirely. Seneca, who accused the historians of lying, was the son of a rhetorician and exploited the art of persuasion as a voluminous writer of prose and poetry. Historians who criticized other historians for misusing the notion of autopsy were themselves often caught in a rhetorical paradigm of winning the favour and confidence of the audience. Even Polybius, who in his sharp cry for historical truth strongly condemns the practice of placing rhetorical composition in the mouths of others, does not neglect to furnish speeches stylistically.<sup>113</sup> Some historians went to the extreme, and were thought to produce nothing but fiction and falsehood; others felt earnestly bound to the factual core of history and employed the rhetorical training to elaborate rather than to fabricate. Yet, if it were not for Polybius, we might be tempted to think that after Thucydides history writing in Greece became less and less attentive to exactness. However, the writings of this well-educated and widely-travelled statesman point to a person who not only rebelled against such an attitude, but neither knows it to be acceptable for historians nor expects his audience to know.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Wiseman describes him as "an honest man with a serious view of the value of history, but who had little or no conception of *historia* as enquiry" ("Lying Historians", p. 144; cf. Alexander, "Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts", pp. 387–388).

<sup>112</sup> Sacks, "Rhetoric and Speeches", pp. 386–395.

<sup>113</sup> See further above Chap. 4, B:2 and below Chap. 6, A:3.

<sup>114</sup> So Gempf, "Public Speaking", p. 272.

The critique against the “lying historians” was thus, at the end, not directed so much against rhetoric in itself as against certain historians’ fervent use of it to persuade an audience through forgery. A one-sided and partial appropriation of rhetorical techniques of argumentation could easily equate persuasion and falsehood. The means of falsehood are justified by the noble cause of persuasion, one was perhaps tempted to think. Those that were well-trained and experienced in the art of persuasion reacted against this half-hearted and misguided use of rhetoric, because the best means to persuade an audience was not to lie, but to present what was credible; and while both true things and false things can be made credible, the most persuasive arguments will always be the ones that build solidly on knowledge derived from facts. *Persuasion and factual credibility were supplementary rhetorical virtues, not contradictory.* The rhetoricians knew that in this regard the historians had a significant advantage. To be sure, it was up to the historians to develop and employ that asset properly. But in the ideal case, they had a core of factual truth to use in their narration, enabling them to adhere to “the laws of history” in the midst of a more or less extensive narrativizing process of communicating history by means of a story.

## B. Autopsy in Early Christian Texts

The early Christian writers did not produce historical narratives of the same kind as the ones of the ancient historians. The texts they composed speak therefore very rarely of how they actually proceeded as they went about collecting material and as they wrote down their findings. They were keenly interested in past events, writing about matters that had occurred some years back in time, but they neglected to tell the audience of how they actually knew anything about those events. The generic and the rhetorical situation of each writing was evidently of a kind that made such comments inappropriate and superfluous.

Although the gospel narratives and the letters were not the proper media to present elaborate theoretical discussions of how to relate to the past, the comparative material of the ancient historians shows that historically interested people were not ignorant of the complexities of such matters. As should be clear to us by now, autopsy could also be a significant part of the historian’s rhetorical means to persuade the audience of his own *ethos* and the veracity of his account. There are, accordingly, a few early Christian texts referring to autopsy as part of one or several authors



attempt to speak about the pastness of what they were to transmit to their audiences.<sup>115</sup> We shall analyze these passages in order to see the different ways in which autopsy entered into the world of the early Christian stories, how it became narrativized, how it functioned as a bridge between history and story. The various perspectives thus analyzed will then be related to a general discussion concerning the extratextual dimension implied in the references to autopsy.

### 1. The Pauline Perspective: History as Apostolic Legitimation

Paul never denies the importance of the earthly Jesus. To be sure, Rudolf Bultmann and Hans-Joachim Schoeps,<sup>116</sup> for instance, understood 2 Corinthians 5:16b as an indication that Paul rejected to know “Christ according to the flesh”. “Wir dürfen ihn so gar nicht mehr kennen, der Jesus nach dem Fleisch gehört der Vergangenheit an; Christus ist keine irdische Gestalt mehr”, Schoeps paraphrases Paul.<sup>117</sup> However, if *κατὰ σάρκα* goes with the verb rather than the noun,<sup>118</sup> as is most natural,<sup>119</sup> the text speaks of Paul’s, and perhaps also others’,<sup>120</sup> previous failure to recognize the crucified Jesus as the Messiah. At present he has a new perspective, a new set of values, new criteria to assess Jesus. This interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:16b is now being generally accepted.<sup>121</sup>

“It is time”, says C. F. D. Moule, “that scholars give up deducing from the paucity of references to the historical Jesus in the Pauline epistles that

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<sup>115</sup> I have excluded 1 Pet 5:1 from consideration. The context of the letter (cf., e.g., 4:13) suggests that the elder is not claiming to have actually seen Christ’s sufferings, but speaks of suffering for his testimony just as Christ did.

<sup>116</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, p. 234; Schoeps, *Paulus*, p. 107; Bultmann, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, pp 156–158. For a survey of earlier studies, see Fraser, “Paul’s Knowledge of Jesus”, pp. 293–297.

<sup>117</sup> Schoeps, *Paulus*, p. 107.

<sup>118</sup> This is actually admitted by Bultmann, *Theologie*, p. 234.

<sup>119</sup> When Paul elsewhere connects *κατὰ σάρκα* with a noun, the phrase is always put after the noun (Rom 1:3; 4:1; 9:3, 5; 1 Cor 1:26; 10:18). By contrast, in 2 Cor 5:16b it appears before the noun. Similarly, but without reference to Rom 1:3, Fraser, “Paul’s Knowledge of Jesus”, p. 298; Wolff, “True Apostolic Knowledge of Christ”, p. 89. Cf. also Souček, “Wir kennen Christus nicht mehr nach dem Fleisch”, p. 304.

<sup>120</sup> So Fraser, “Paul’s Knowledge of Jesus”, p. 300. Differently Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, I, p. 413.

<sup>121</sup> Cf., e.g., Fraser, “Paul’s Knowledge of Jesus”, pp. 297–313; Wolff, “True Apostolic Knowledge of Christ”, pp. 87–91; Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, I, pp. 412–420.

Paul was not interested in him".<sup>122</sup> Moule is entirely correct, but yet, it must be fully acknowledged that one finds no direct reference in the Pauline letters to the importance of being with and observing the earthly Jesus. Notwithstanding his interest in the Jesus of history, the resurrected Christ constituted for Paul the center of the apostolic legitimacy. The most important texts for our purposes are 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:5–8 and Galatians 1:16.

#### a. 1 Corinthians 9:1

Before putting forth his apology in the first person plural, thus defending his own position and perhaps presenting himself as an example of imitation by reference to his own and Barnabas' previous work,<sup>123</sup> Paul focuses in 1 Corinthians 9:1 on the credentials that he can claim for his apostolic status: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?"<sup>124</sup> The questions are rhetorically effective and seek to establish Paul's freedom and apostleship as fundamental premises of the argumentation that follows.<sup>125</sup> The freedom, it seems, depends on his claim to be an apostle, which in turn depends on two qualifications: to have seen the Lord and to have worked successfully among the Corinthians.

The autopsy that Paul refers to here is not defined further. He does not find it necessary, at this point, to clarify when, where and how he saw the Lord or what the Lord looked like; he draws no explicit distinction between the earthly Jesus and the risen Christ.<sup>126</sup> The all important matter here is that he, like other apostles, can claim autopsy.

<sup>122</sup> Moule, "The Function of the Synoptic Gospels", p. 203.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Byrskog, "Co-Senders, Co-Authors and Paul's Use of the First Person Plural", p. 243.

<sup>124</sup> οὐκ εἰμι ἐλεύθερος; οὐκ εἰμι ἀπόστολος; οὐχὶ Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἑώρακα; οὐ τὸ ἔργον μου ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν κυρίῳ;

<sup>125</sup> Mitchell takes the following ἀπολογία (cf. 9:3) as a rhetorical means to present Paul as the example of imitation (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, p. 247).

<sup>126</sup> Dietzfelbinger argues on the basis of John 20:18, 25 and Acts 9:27 that Paul uses an early formula to express the Easter experience (*Die Berufung des Paulus*, pp. 54–56). That is possible, but difficult to prove. Joh 20:18 and – possibly – 20:25, while reflecting a characteristic Johannine perspective, might derive from early Christian tradition (cf. above Chap. 2, B:5c), but the similarities with the Pauline expression in 1 Cor 9:1 are not all that striking. How else could one express the experience of seeing the Lord but by a verb of seeing with an object?

b. 1 Corinthians 15:5–8

Later on in the same letter it becomes clear what Paul is actually claiming. Although 1 Corinthians 15:5–8 is not a discussion of apostolic credentials, it contains a row of references to Christ's appearances that clarifies further the Pauline perspective on his autopsy:

"... and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom remain until today, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me".<sup>127</sup>

The focus of autopsy is the risen Christ. To have seen the Lord is to have seen the risen Christ. But even that is not quite to the point. It becomes evident that when Paul previously was claiming to have seen the Lord, he actually meant that the risen Christ had appeared to him. Paul is not the active one, observing as the subject of an action a certain object, as the Twelve could observe Jesus during his earthly ministry. He is himself the object to whom the risen Christ appears.<sup>128</sup> To see the Lord is to have him revealed before one's eyes as the resurrected one. Autopsy belongs for Paul in the sphere of revelation.

One should not conclude therefore, with for instance Wilhelm Michaelis and Willi Marxsen,<sup>129</sup> that there is no indication of sensual or mental perception. The term ὄφθη suggests a different understanding. According to Johannes Lindblom, who criticizes Michaelis at this point, it implies always a seeing, whether in a dream, in a vision or with the physical eyes.<sup>130</sup> It is quite evident that the argument of the text goes in a direction that attempts to ascertain the historical character of the resurrection by reference to the historical character of the appearances.<sup>131</sup> The outline of early Christian tradition which Paul evidently regards as normative consists of factual statements about the end of Jesus' life: he died, he was bu-

<sup>127</sup> καὶ ὅτι ὄφθη Κηφᾶ εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα· ἔπειτα ὄφθη ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς ἐφάπαξ, ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείονες μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι, τινὲς δὲ ἐκομήθησαν· ἔπειτα ὄφθη Ἰακώβῳ εἶτα τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν· ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡσπερὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι ὄφθη καμοί.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Roloff, *Apostolat – Verkündigung – Kirche*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>129</sup> Michaelis, "ὄραω", pp. 358–359; Marxsen, *Die Auferstehung Jesu*, pp. 101–113. Cf. also Roloff, *Apostolat – Verkündigung – Kirche*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>130</sup> Lindblom, *Geschichte und Offenbarungen*, pp. 88–89. Cf. also, e.g., Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, p. 55 n. 1; Kremer, "ὄραω", p. 528.

<sup>131</sup> Against Walker, "Postcrucifixion Appearances", p. 162. Walker strangely claims that it is not the historicity of the appearances that is crucial but the identity of those who saw the risen Christ.

ried, he was raised. Likewise the appearances are not presented as dreams or repeated ὄπτασίαι, but as events that happened to certain people once and for all at certain points in time. They are not to be equated with the visions and revelations mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:1. Even the appearance to five hundred people took place “at one time”. The chronological connectives εἶτα ... ἔπειτα ... ἔπειτα ... ἔσχατον further ground the appearances in history. They are datable and can be checked, the chronology implies. Paul probably had what he regarded as reliable information from tradition (and hearsay) of these past appearances.<sup>132</sup>

While the autopsy of Paul thus has an intrinsic revelatory character, it is a revelation, Paul would insist, that is as real and historical as the ordinary observation of other concrete persons and events. It is part of his own oral history, and it is a history that now enters in to the story of apostolic preaching – history as kerygma.

### c. Galatians 1:16

As an essential historical event, in Paul’s eyes, autopsy of the risen Christ thus serves the function of validating the apostleship and the preaching of the resurrection. As an apostle, Paul was a preacher of the resurrected Christ, so that autopsy of the risen One actually becomes the focal point of his entire self-understanding and ministry. Galatians 1:16 expresses concisely his perspective as it postulates in a temporal clause that God was pleased “to reveal his Son in me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles”.<sup>133</sup> The prepositional phrase ἐν ἐμοί could be a substitute for the simple dative, but perhaps it was deliberately chosen to point to the inwardness of the experience.<sup>134</sup> The outward observation coincided, in that case, with the inward illumination (cf. 2 Cor 4:4, 6). It affected Paul’s self-understanding. He comprehends, at least retrospectively,<sup>135</sup> that the new self-understanding is immediately connected with his ministry to preach the gospel.

<sup>132</sup> It is difficult to ascertain that 15:6a belongs to tradition. The ὅτι-clauses end after 15:5; and 15:6a has no parallel in the gospels. The event could be identical with the one described in Acts 2, but this idea is beyond proof. Perhaps 15:6b implies that Paul merely heard of it from those that were still alive.

<sup>133</sup> ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν.

<sup>134</sup> So Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 93.

<sup>135</sup> As is well-known, several scholars hold the view that Paul’s joining of the Christophany on the Damascus road and the apostolic commission is the result of telescoping the historical development. This debate does not concern us here. For discussion, cf. Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, pp. 58–66.

Autopsy as a historical event of the risen Christ is at the very heart of all that Paul considers himself to be and to do as an apostle. *History and kerygma cannot be separated*. Paul is a child of his own past, living and acting in the cross-section of history and kerygmatic story.

## 2. The Lukan Perspective: History as Apostolic Testimony

The two-volume composition Luke-Acts contains references which have to do with eyewitnesses.<sup>136</sup> Most important are the texts in Luke 1:1–4 and Acts 1:21–22; 10:39a, 41.

### a. Luke 1:1–4

The Lukan prologue is quite broad in range:

“Inasmuch as many have attempted to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as the ones who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word transmitted to us, it seemed good to me also, having carefully informed myself about everything from the beginning, to write orderly to you, most excellent Theophilus, in order that you may know the reliability concerning the things in which you have been instructed”.<sup>137</sup>

Regardless of whether the prologue was authored before or after the composition of the gospel story,<sup>138</sup> its present programmatic character probably covers both Luke and Acts.<sup>139</sup> Josephus also divided his *Contra*

<sup>136</sup> Although no canon list mentions Luke and Acts together, Acts 1:1 states that the author compiled the first book regarding what “Jesus began to do (ἤρξατο ... ποιεῖν) and teach”, implying that in Acts the author records what Jesus continued to do and teach after his ascension – through his spirit. This implication is usually neglected, because ἤρξατο ... ποιεῖν is often taken as equivalent to ἐποίησε, which is indeed grammatically possible. But see Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, p. 32; Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 98; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>137</sup> ἐπειδήπερ πολλοὶ ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων, καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν οἱ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπἠρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου, ἔδοξε καί μοι παρηκολουθηκῶτι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς σοι γράψαι, κράτιστε Θεόφιλε, ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Barrett, “The Third Gospel”, pp. 1453–1454, 1463.

<sup>139</sup> But cf., e.g., Wikenhauser, *Die Apostelgeschichte und ihr Geschichtswert*, p. 57; Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 20; Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, I, p. 4; Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 136 n. 3; Alexander, *The preface to Luke’s Gospel*, pp. 2 n. 1, 146; Parsons/Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*, pp. 60–65; Alexander, “The Preface to Acts”, pp. 76–82. For a full discussion of the relationship

*Apionem* into two volumes with two dedicated prefaces,<sup>140</sup> the first one at the beginning of book one (*Ap.* 1:1–5) introducing the whole work, and the second one at the beginning of book two (*Ap.* 2:1–2) recapitulating briefly the previous book. Similarly, the second dedication to Theophilus in Acts 1:1 is not followed by another dedication of the same kind as the one in Luke 1:1–4, but by a short rehearsal of the first book. In Acts 1:4–5 the text immediately narrows the focus by referring to a specific statement of Jesus, moving rapidly from an external authorial perspective to a character internal to the narrative.<sup>141</sup> No further statement concerning other authors and sources; no further statement of purpose for the second volume. Luke 1:1–4, on the other hand, is sufficiently general to include also Acts. The use of the plural *πράγματα* would be an odd way of referring simply to the life-story of one person. Already in 1:1 the author places himself in the midst of the events, they have been fulfilled “among us”, evidently regarding his own present time as part of what other authors had dealt with. Not only the past history of Jesus is his concern in the prologue of the gospel, but also the present time of the spirit’s continuous manifestation of Jesus’ ministry in deed and word.<sup>142</sup>

As part of the prologue, the reference to the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word in 1:2 thus concerns both volumes. But it is even broader than that. The author’s own activity does not come directly into focus until 1:3. The protasis in 1:1–2 is formulated in the first person plural. This means that the author is one among many not only in trying to compile an account of the events that have been fulfilled, but also in receiving tradition from the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. These other accounts are not described as specific products of a certain charac-

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between Luke and Acts, cf. now the various contributions in the conference volume edited by Verheyden, *The Unity of Luke-Acts*.

<sup>140</sup> Alexander minimizes too much, in my opinion, the relevance of these prefaces for understanding the preface of Luke (*The preface to Luke’s Gospel*, p. 165). Precisely their common function as dedicated prefaces in a two-volume composition is noteworthy, despite the difference in language. Callan’s cautious use of parallels also leads him to focus on the historians (“The Preface of Luke-Acts”, pp. 576–581). Cf., in addition, Philo’s reference to “the former treatise” (ὁ μὲν πρότερος λόγος) in the dedicated preface in *Omn. Prob. Lib.* 1:1. Various kinds of prologues for sequential books used by Hellenistic Greek writers are mentioned by Palmer, “The literary background of Acts 1.1–14”, pp. 427–428. Cf. also Palmer’s critique of Alexander in “Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph”, pp. 22–26.

<sup>141</sup> Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, II, p. 9.

<sup>142</sup> So already Zahn, *Einleitung*, II, pp. 368–370; Cadbury, “Commentary on the Preface of Luke”, pp. 491–492. For a re-statement and development of this view, see Marshall, “Acts and the ‘Former Treatise’”, pp. 163–182.

ter. The term used for them is διήγησις, a term describing an account composed of a number of events, without narrow generic implications. The text speaks broadly, viewing the early Christian tradition from a one-dimensional angle. The author's view is that these other narratives also build on material going back to the early eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. The perspective thus pertains to broad aspects of early Christian transmission. That transmission, in the author's opinion, was characterized by the activity of the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. Whatever we may think of the gospel tradition at large, this is clearly the perspective conveyed by the Lukan text.

Within a comparative perspective, it is surprising that the prologue contains no disqualification of other writers and their sources.<sup>143</sup> There is no polemic against other authors, like, for instance, in Josephus' references to autopsy.<sup>144</sup> To describe their work as an "attempt" is not derogatory in itself. The term ἐπιχειρεῖν does not indicate success or failure in the Lukan semantic context.<sup>145</sup> The author is amazingly open to other narratives, not at all arguing that he alone among the authors has access to reliable material. He abstains, in this case, from the convention of disqualifying other authors,<sup>146</sup> evidently not being able to find entirely distorted accounts of the events that have been fulfilled among them.

The prologue does not only reveal the Lukan perspective on early Christian transmission, but with the phrase ἔδοξε κάμοι ... γράψαι (1:3)

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<sup>143</sup> According to Dion. Hal., *Ant. Roma.* I 1:1, polemic was a familiar feature of the prefaces of historical works; the *proemia* of Anaximenes and Theopompus are mentioned as examples, but the practice was wide-spread and became more and more intense. Timaeus' arrogance in finding fault with his predecessors even earned him the nickname ἐπιτίμιος, "fault-finder" (*FrGrHist* 566 T 11 and T 16; cf. LSJ, p. 666). I am aware, of course, that there were historians who were less polemical, as, for instance, Tacitus (cf., e.g., Mellor, *Tacitus*, p. 34). Yet, even Tacitus starts his *Historiae* with a comparison between himself and earlier historians.

<sup>144</sup> See above Chap. 2, A:5 and Chap. 4, A:3.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Acts 9:29; 19:13. I fail to understand why it would be "impossible to escape the derogatory implication when the phrase is used in the third person" (Alexander, *The preface to Luke's Gospel*, p. 110). How else but in the third person could one speak of others' attempt to compose a narrative? Dillon summarizes the research: "Indeed, most scholars are now inclined to rule against Origen and followers in their reading a pejorative connotation about the predecessors' efforts into the verb ἐπεχείρησαν" ("Previewing Luke's Project", pp. 207–208).

<sup>146</sup> Du Plessis urges correctly a view of the prologue somewhere in between a purely conventional exercise and an overweighted theological program ("Once More: The Purpose of Luke's Prologue", pp. 259–271). The latter view is represented by Klein, "Lukas 1, 1–4", pp. 193–216.

of the apodosis it places the present writing smoothly in line with the narratives of others and their sources. In between the two expressions a participial clause is inserted to explain the particular circumstances of the Lukan writing. Although it is difficult to ascertain the significance of each and every expression of this clause,<sup>147</sup> they show, on a general level, that the author's reception of the tradition from the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word did not result in a merely passive reproduction of their accounts, but in a thorough, active familiarity with the entire corpus of available information. On the basis of Josephus' usage of the term, David P. Moessner has recently shown in some detail that the participial verb *παρηκολουθηκότι* means that the author has not so much investigated the material critically as become actively informed of it or achieved an immediate comprehension or valuation of its significance.<sup>148</sup> The author is first of all precisely a writer, according to the prologue, but the authorial activity is combined with a process of getting and staying informed.<sup>149</sup> The finished product, the prologue implies, is oral history as story; it is the outcome of the author's reception of information from eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, of his active attempt to carefully (*ἀκριβῶς*) familiarize himself with all that material and, finally, of his authorial creativity resulting in an orderly narrative. What he received from the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word is a sufficient basis for the authorial activity, and now he is to arrange it orderly (*καθεξῆς*) according to his knowledge and understanding,<sup>150</sup> the prologue suggests.

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<sup>147</sup> In regard to syntax, I prefer to relate the two adverbs *ἄνωθεν* and *ἀκριβῶς* to *παρηκολουθηκότι*, and *καθεξῆς* to *γράψαι*. See, e.g., Alexander, *The preface to Luke's Gospel*, p. 127.

<sup>148</sup> Moessner, "Eyewitnesses,' 'Informed Contemporaries,' and 'Unknowing Inquirers'", pp. 105–122. Similarly also Alexander, *The preface to Luke's Gospel*, pp. 128–130, 134. Cf. already Cadbury, "The Knowledge Claimed in Luke's Preface", pp. 408–409.

<sup>149</sup> Cadbury sees no warrant for assigning to the word the sense of deliberate investigation but leaves the possibility open that "the author is claiming for himself actual presence and participation in the events described" ("Commentary on the Preface of Luke", p. 502). The term is thus a paraphrase of *αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρεταὶ γινόμενοι* (but cf. Cadbury, *ibid.*, p. 510). However, if the author was himself an eyewitness, why would he then refer explicitly to what he, together with others, had received from eyewitnesses? Thornton has shown, among other things, that regardless of authorship, the "we-passages" in the book of Acts do not correspond to the ancient convention of proving autopsy (*Der Zeuge des Zeugen*, pp. 150–197, 199, 360–367). Hence they do not support the author's alleged claim to autopsy. Cf. also Baum, *Lukas als Historiker*, pp. 120–122.

<sup>150</sup> As Dillon correctly points out, this cannot mean simply that the author writes in a chronological order ("Previewing Luke's Project", pp. 221–222; cf. Dillon, *From Eye-*



The scope of the author's information is indicated by the term ἄνωθεν. As an adverb, it describes in what way he has become informed by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. It can mean merely "thoroughly", but such a meaning becomes tautological when one understands also ἀκριβῶς adverbially. Rather, a temporal significance is implied by its close association with ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. With the voice of Paul the author uses ἄνωθεν also in Acts 26:5, and again connects it with the same expression (26:4). There it carries a clear temporal sense, referring back to the youth of Paul. Similarly, the combination of ἀπ' ἀρχῆς and ἄνωθεν in the prologue implies that the author's active endeavour to familiarize himself carefully with all the material from those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word involved an attempt to get informed of everything from the beginning. To be sure, the attempts to define the scope of information more closely are speculative, because the prologue provides no such evidence. We shall see that the book of Acts gives some further clues. What the prologue does imply, however, is the author's conviction that the material from the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word was not limited only to small portions of the past events, but pertained way back to their beginning. *The tradition available to the author was, according to the Lukan perspective, rooted in its entirety in the oral history of persons present at the events themselves.*

*b. Acts 1:21–22*

A point to be clarified somewhat further is the identity of the eyewitnesses. Martin Dibelius stressed, as we have seen, the close connection between eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, whom he regarded as preachers.<sup>151</sup> For Dibelius this was not merely a Lukan perspective, but an indication that the early Christian transmission, in fact, had its primary "Sitz im Leben" in the activity of preaching. Others have tried to distinguish between the two groups,<sup>152</sup> but wrongly so, because the two are in Luke 1:2 described with expressions that relate to one and the same

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*Witnesses to Ministers of the Word*, pp. 269–272), as if he wished to improve the order of Mark. After all, he seems to follow Mark to a significant extent. The order is intended to bring assurance (cf. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, I, p. 10). If there is a contrast implied, it is a contrast between the shape of the underlying (oral) tradition and that of the written narrative. So also Alexander, *The preface to Luke's Gospel*, p. 136.

<sup>151</sup> See above Chap. 1, C:1.

<sup>152</sup> So Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, pp. 32–33; Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, p. 44; Klein, "Lukas 1, 1–4", pp. 204–205; Schürmann, *Das Lukas-evangelium*, I, p. 9 n. 55.

definite article.<sup>153</sup> One may thus ask who these eyewitnesses and ministers of the word were, according to Luke-Acts?

The book of Acts clarifies further some aspects of the Lukan perspective. With the voice of Peter, Acts 1:21–22 deals with the criteria for choosing Matthias as an apostle to replace Judas:

“So of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up – one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection”.<sup>154</sup>

The impression given by Peter is that some people had not only been with Jesus at isolated events of his ministry, but had travelled with him even during his journeys.<sup>155</sup> The fundamental criterion for being included in the group of apostles is, it seems, to have accompanied him during his whole itinerant ministry. This is also how the Twelve are presented in the gospel story. They see and learn as they are with him.<sup>156</sup> The apostle has to be an eyewitness to the story of the earthly Jesus. What “Jesus began to do and teach” (1:1) remains relevant. In Luke-Acts the resurrection is evidently the center of apostolic witnessing, but the basic qualification for performing this apostolic task is to have observed not only the events connected with the resurrection, but also the earthly Jesus during his entire ministry. Hence, when Peter and John are called to defend their teaching and their preaching of the resurrection, they refer to the fact that they simply cannot keep from speaking about what they have seen and heard (4:20). Autopsy is raised to a level of essential importance. It is a central apostolic credential.<sup>157</sup>

That autopsy and the ensuing witnessing of the resurrection are closely linked with the apostles being ministers of the word becomes evident in

<sup>153</sup> For further arguments, see already Cadbury, “Commentary on the Preface of Luke”, p. 498.

<sup>154</sup> δεῖ οὖν τῶν συνελθόντων ἡμῖν ἀνδρῶν ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ ᾧ εἰσηλθεν καὶ ἐξηλθεν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς, ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ βαπτίσματος Ἰωάννου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἧς ἀνελήμφθη ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, μάρτυρα τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ σὺν ἡμῖν γενέσθαι ἓνα τούτων.

<sup>155</sup> Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, II, p. 23.

<sup>156</sup> Roloff, *Apostolat – Verkündigung – Kirche*, pp. 178–184.

<sup>157</sup> In Acts Paul is, together with Barnabas, also called an apostle (14:4, 14); and the resurrected Jesus appears to him in order to take hold of him as a minister and witness (ὕπηρέτην καὶ μάρτυρα) of what he has seen (of Jesus) and of what Jesus will show him in the future (26:16). For whatever reason, the text extends at this point the term “apostle” beyond the group of the Twelve to include “den dreizehnten Zeugen”. As Burckard puts it: “Paulus ist nicht einer von ihnen, aber er ist dasselbe wie sie” (*Der dreizehnte Zeuge*, p. 136; cf., for discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 111–112, 124–125, 128–136).

Acts 6:4. They are to devote themselves primarily to prayer and the service of the word (τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου). Here the second element of the expression οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γινόμενοι τοῦ λόγου in Luke 1:2 is explicated by reference to the twelve apostles. They are eyewitnesses *and* ministers of the word, or eyewitnesses *become* ministers of the word.<sup>158</sup> This service consisted, according to the book of Acts, primarily in teaching, the διδασχὴ τῶν ἀποστόλων (2:42).<sup>159</sup> The word, ὁ λόγος, is the word of God (6:2), but when one relates Acts 6:4 to Luke 1:2, it becomes clear that the word of God has its focus in the tradition which the apostles transmitted as eyewitnesses from the beginning.<sup>160</sup> It was the task of the apostles to work on the word, the concrete manifestation of which they had themselves observed.<sup>161</sup>

c. Acts 10:39a, 41

The second point clarified somewhat further in the book of Acts is the scope of the tradition available from the eyewitnesses. The Lukan prologue, as we have seen, implied that it pertains back to the beginning of events. The passages in the book of Acts discussed thus far suggest, more precisely, that it ranged from the baptism of John until the day when Jesus was taken up (cf. Acts 1:3), a time during which the apostles accompanied Jesus on his journeys.

Acts 10:39a confirms this impression and broadens it somewhat: “We are witnesses” says Peter to the gentile audience, “to all that he did both in Judea and [in] Jerusalem”.<sup>162</sup> In the previous lines Peter has described *in nuce* the entire career of the earthly Jesus, from the beginning in Galilee. In the following lines he continues by reference to Jesus’ death and appea-

<sup>158</sup> Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the Word*, p. 271; Dillon, “Previewing Luke’s Project”, pp. 214–215.

<sup>159</sup> Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, pp. 234–245.

<sup>160</sup> Kittel blurs somewhat the basic didactic aspect of the service of the word, stressing that it is equivalent to the witness and message about Jesus (“λέγω”, p. 115). The Lukan prologue, to which Kittel refers, suggests that the ministers of the word are primarily those who transmit tradition.

<sup>161</sup> Feuillet points out the tendency towards the personification of the λόγος in Luke-Acts, noticing the similarities between Luke 1:1–2 and 1 John 1:1–2 and arguing that the Lukan prologue is dependent upon Johannine tradition (“Temoins oculaires et serviteurs de la Parole”, pp. 241–259). However, precisely the mere tendency towards the personification of the λόγος in Luke-Acts as compared to the more developed view of the Johannine literature speaks against Feuillet’s proposal.

<sup>162</sup> ἡμεῖς μάρτυρες πάντων ὧν ἐποίησεν ἔν τε τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ [ἐν] Ἱερουσαλήμ.

rance, stressing again in 10:41 the apostles' special position as eyewitnesses; Jesus was revealed "not to all the people but to witnesses previously chosen by God, to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead".<sup>163</sup> Not merely isolated events are rooted in the autopsy of the apostles, not merely the resurrection, no matter its importance, but the entire history concerning Jesus, from the beginning of his active ministry to his ascension.<sup>164</sup> *The oral history of the apostolic eyewitnesses embodies, according to Luke, the entire story of Jesus.*<sup>165</sup>

### 3. The Johannine Perspective: History as Authorial Legitimation

The Johannine literature attaches much importance to seeing. It uses forms from βλέπειν, θεάσθαι, θεωρεῖν, ἰδεῖν and ὄραν to express the visual act.<sup>166</sup> The prologue twice employs the language of seeing in a characteristic manner (1:14, 18).

Most of these instances are transparent and have a meaning which goes beyond the one of direct sensual perception.<sup>167</sup> The real object of seeing is hidden from those who observe only with their eyes. On many occasions seeing is a spiritual seeing describing the encounter with Jesus in faith,<sup>168</sup> with little or no immediate connotation of a direct sensual seeing of the Jesus of history. But it is not entirely identical with faith in the Johannine literature.<sup>169</sup> Distinctions remain. There are some passages that supplement the notion of spiritual seeing. Three texts are of special interest: John 19:35; 21:24 and 1 John 1:1–4.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>163</sup> οὐ παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, ἀλλὰ μάρτυσιν τοῖς προκεχειροτονημένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἡμῖν, οἵτινες συνεφάγομεν καὶ συνεπίομεν αὐτῷ μετὰ τὸ ἀναστῆναι αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

<sup>164</sup> In a note on μάρτυς Casey states: "The qualification of a μάρτυς in Luke-Acts is that he should be one of those fore-ordained of God to see the risen Jesus, and so an eye-witness of the Resurrection" ("Μάρτυς", p. 30). But this is only one part of the picture.

<sup>165</sup> For the witness character of Luke-Acts, see Pokorný, *Theologie*, pp. 11–13.

<sup>166</sup> For statistical surveys and discussion, see Mussner, *Die johanneische Sehweise*, pp. 18–24; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, I, pp. 501–503.

<sup>167</sup> An extensive treatment of the various aspects of the theme of seeing in the Johannine gospel narrative is given by Hergenröder, *Wir schauten seine Herrlichkeit*.

<sup>168</sup> E.g., John 6:40, 62; 12:45; 14:9, 19; 16:10, 16–17, 19.

<sup>169</sup> Mussner, *Die johanneische Sehweise*, pp. 23–24.

<sup>170</sup> It is surprising that Lemcio's attempt to maintain an appropriate idiom and a sense of time in John takes no account of these passages (*The past of Jesus*, pp. 91–106).

## a. John 19:35

Although the dominating perspective of seeing in the Johannine literature thus moves into the realm of what can be observed only with the eyes of faith, John 19:35 relates, in seemingly parenthetical fashion,<sup>171</sup> faith and truth to the concrete observation of a historical event: “And the one who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true. And this one knows that he tells what is true, in order that you too may believe”.<sup>172</sup> The object of seeing referred to in the context is the piercing of Jesus’ side, with blood and water at once coming out from the body. This is an event presented at a historical distance and open for everyone who attended the event to observe. The episode is part of the history of the past. Hence, faith and truth are not swallowed up entirely by the present dimension of the story; rather, truth finds its basis in the concrete observation of a past event, and faith is aroused in relation to that truth.

The verse appears, as a matter of fact, to be a legitimation of the faith of those who were not eyewitnesses. The gospel story, with all its emphasis on a seeing aided by the Paraclete, exhibits an awareness that the present situation of faith is distanced by time from the past history of Jesus. The audience of the story are to believe *too*, just, it is implied, as the one who observed the event had believed. Through him the hearers/readers are truthfully related to the history of the story. They benefit from his oral history. Subsequently the Johannine Jesus blesses in similar fashion those who have not seen and (yet) have come to believe (20:29b), without thereby implicitly blaming Thomas who believed because he saw for himself.<sup>173</sup> At a time when the audience found itself separated from the history of the story, spiritual seeing came to the forefront. Yet, the physical observance of the historical Jesus was maintained as a fundamental basis of faith.<sup>174</sup> The faith of the story is the faith of history, and vice versa.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> BDF questions its genuineness (§ 291:6). But only some Latin MSS omit the verse. For the Johannine character of 19:34b–35, cf., e.g., Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie*, pp. 229–230.

<sup>172</sup> καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκεν, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, καὶ ἐκεῖνος οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύ[σ]ητε.

<sup>173</sup> Thus John 20:29b is not a comparison with 20:29a implying that Thomas is worse off than the others. See Wenz, “Sehen und Glauben”, pp. 17–25.

<sup>174</sup> Hengel thus states in conclusion: “Sie [die Augenzeugenschaft] läßt sich nicht auf ein ausschließlich ‘geistiges Schauen’ reduzieren, so sehr dieses für das Evangelium bedeutsam ist. Joh 20,29 wie 19,35 deuten auf ein reales, physisches Sehen hin, das der Evangelist zwar in seiner Bedeutung einschränkt, auf das er aber bewußt nicht verzichten will” (*Die johanneische Frage*, p. 265).

<sup>175</sup> Hahn concludes similarly: “Die bisherige Betrachtung der johanneischen Aussagen

While presented in parenthetical fashion, the verse has repercussions that go beyond its immediate argumentative context. It is perhaps significant that neither the subject nor the object of seeing is specified in 19:35. The object has to be inferred from the previous verses, as probably also the identity of the subject.<sup>176</sup> The one who has seen is the one who has testified, not this or that person who has seen this or that. In this way seeing takes on a significance that transcends the specific event to which it primarily refers, without thereby losing its character of real sensual perception.

#### b. John 21:24

In 21:24 the reference to seeing in 19:35 is developed into an authorial qualification that enlarges its significance: “This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has been writing them. And we know that his testimony is true”.<sup>177</sup> The subject is now explicitly identified as the beloved disciple (cf. 21:20–23) and given authorial status. The object of the disciple’s activity is also specified twice. The things that he has testified to and the things that he has been writing are one and the same – both times the demonstrative pronoun is used – and most likely, as 21:25 implies,<sup>178</sup> they refer to the entire Johannine story of Jesus.<sup>179</sup>

What is at stake is the authority of the written account of Jesus.<sup>180</sup> Whatever the precise literary genre of the gospel narrative, it is evident that at a certain stage someone preferred to compose neither a collection

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hat ergeben, daß das rechte ‘Sehen’ auf den ‘Glauben’ angewiesen ist, daß aber der Glaube nicht Glaube an Jesus Christus wäre, wenn er nicht einen ganz konkreten Anhalt in der Geschichte hätte” (“Sehen und Glauben”, pp. 139–140).

<sup>176</sup> The most common proposal is that the beloved disciple mentioned in 19:26–27 is the implied subject. Differently, however, Casey, *Is John’s Gospel True?*, pp. 159–164. The exact identity of that disciple is, of course, another matter. Charlesworth surveys the literature on 21 individual or collective, Johannine or extra-Johannine, candidates for the role of the beloved disciple (*The Beloved Disciple*, pp. 127–224). In a recent article Schneiders argues the intriguing thesis that the beloved disciple is actually a textual paradigm for several leading figures in the Johannine school, some of whom were disciples of the pre-Easter Jesus (“Because of the Woman’s Testimony ...”, pp. 513–535).

<sup>177</sup> οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων καὶ ὁ γράψας ταῦτα, καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν.

<sup>178</sup> The evidence for treating 21:25 as an appended scribal gloss is very slim.

<sup>179</sup> Dodd held the view that they refer only to 21:20–23, or possibly the whole of John 21 (“Note on John 21, 24”, pp. 212–213). But see already Zahn, *Einleitung*, II, pp. 488–489.

<sup>180</sup> Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee*, pp. 71–72.

of sayings nor a tractate of revelations, but another account of the life and deeds of a historical person.<sup>181</sup> That writing needed a legitimating foundation.<sup>182</sup> The editor(s) adding 21:24–25 took refuge in a person who, they believed, had been an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus.<sup>183</sup> The eyewitness testimony of 19:35 is corroborated with the presence of the disciple at the last supper, where he is next to Jesus (13:23, 25), in the courtyard with Peter (18:15–16) and at the cross (19:26–27). Moreover, at the empty tomb he is the one to perceive what had happened (20:8), and at the appearance in Galilee he is the first to recognize the risen Lord (21:7). Now, in 21:24, his oral history becomes the focal point of assuring the validity of the entire narrative.

We thus confront a kind of “Horizontverschmelzung” between the past and the present,<sup>184</sup> but without losing a sense of the pastness of history.<sup>185</sup> *The disciple’s status as an eyewitness of key points in Jesus’ career served, it seems, as a legitimate basis for conferring on him an authorial status, thus linking the faith that the written narrative is to encourage (cf. 20:31) to the history of the past.*<sup>186</sup>

<sup>181</sup> This is correctly stressed by Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie*, pp. 250–251.

<sup>182</sup> Casey speaks of “legitimating traditions” (*Is John’s Gospel True?*, p. 202). This is a good addition to the simple alternative to understand 19:35 as being either literally true or a false claim to be literally true. On a general level, however, Casey’s notion of John’s gospel as “profoundly untrue” (*ibid.*, p. 229) goes, in my view, far beyond what evidence allows for. From the perspective of oral history, Casey betrays a view of the relationship between historical truth, legitimating traditions and narrative fiction that is amazingly simplified. Cf., e.g., O’Day’s critique of his concept of truth as historicity (“Review”, p. 309). For a more balanced discussion of what is “authentic” in the Johannine narrative, cf. Ensor, *Jesus and His “Works”*. On occasion, however, Ensor might take too lightly the Johannine vocabulary, style and theology. Cf. the critique of Menken, “Review”, pp. 392–395.

<sup>183</sup> It is not necessary here to determine the exact significance of the first person plural in 21:24. For the most thorough treatment of the issues relating to the so-called Johannine question, see Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*, to the present issue especially pp. 224–225.

<sup>184</sup> Mussner uses Gadamer’s well-known hermeneutical program to explain the Johannine topic at hand (*Die johanneische Sehweise*, pp. 14–15, 72–75 *et passim*). It has been employed also as a label with broader implications for the Johannine notion of time. See, most recently, Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*, II, pp. 133, 247–283, 287, 290–291, 296–297.

<sup>185</sup> Mussner, *Die johanneische Sehweise*, pp. 43–44; Hahn, “Sehen und Glauben”, p. 140; Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie*, p. 254.

<sup>186</sup> Quast thus concludes: “Although the Johannine tradition stressed the guidance of the Spirit (13.16), the Johannine community did not feel itself to be completely without the need for authoritative witness. In 21.24 expresses a concern for a validating testimo-

## c. 1 John 1:1–4

While statements such as the one in John 1:14 receive their “anti-docetic” dimension already within the gospel narrative itself,<sup>187</sup> 1 John 1:1–4 brings out even further the historical aspects of the story by means of references to autopsy:

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and our hands touched upon, concerning the word of life – and the life was revealed, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us –, what we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, in order that you too may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. And we write these things in order that our joy may be complete”.<sup>188</sup>

Verbs for seeing are used four times (ἐώρακαμεν ... ἐθεασάμεθα ... ἐώρακαμεν ... ἐώρακαμεν). The first two occurrences are followed by statements that stress further the reality of sensual perception. And while 1:1 refers first to hearing and then to seeing, 1:3 changes the order and mentions seeing first. Moreover, three times the verb ὀρᾶν is used; it is put in the perfect tense, showing the permanent historical basis of the present testimony, proclamation and writing. Autopsy is thus of prime importance.

The text appears to be apologetic, especially when viewed as a correction of some distorted interpretations of John 1:1–18.<sup>189</sup> To be sure, Georg Strecker and Udo Schnelle deny any direct literary relationship between the two prologues in view of the substantial difference between them.<sup>190</sup> It is indeed true that a literary dependence in the modern sense

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ny and in Jn 19.35 we see a similar interest. From this we see that the Beloved Disciple was regarded as a witness to certain events important for the faith of his community” (*Peter and the Beloved Disciple*, p. 161).

<sup>187</sup> Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie*, pp. 230–249.

<sup>188</sup> ὃ ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὃ ἐώρακαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς – καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐώρακαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν – ὃ ἐώρακαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν, ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ’ ἡμῶν. καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ἧ πεπληρωμένη.

<sup>189</sup> So, e.g., Brown, *The Epistles of John*, pp. 176–182.

<sup>190</sup> Strecker, “Die Anfänge der johanneischen Schule”, pp. 31–47 (“Das vierte Evangelium und der erste Johannesbrief sind unabhängig voneinander, von verschiedenen Vertretern der johanneischen Schule geschrieben worden”, *ibid.*, pp. 40–41); Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie*, pp. 66–67; Strecker, *Die Johannesbriefe*, pp. 56–57.



cannot be assumed, but that does not rule out the possibility of other forms of connections.<sup>191</sup> Against Strecker and Schnelle one must insist that a correction of possible distorted interpretations inevitably involves certain differences in wording and emphasis, especially when we realize that in antiquity even a literary relationship involved oral elements. How else would correction be possible but through changes? Schnelle provides no arguments at all for interpreting θεᾶσθαι in 1 John 1:1 as totally unrelated to John 1:14.<sup>192</sup> But precisely the fact that in a row of occurrences of ὁρᾶν in the perfect tense the text breaks off with a single occurrence of θεᾶσθαι in the aorist – exactly the same form as used in John 1:14 – is indeed noteworthy. It indicates that the reference to seeing for oneself, with the emphatic stress on sensual perception by touch, is an apologetic attempt to clarify that the glory which “we looked at” (John 1:14) was of one who lived a life so real that we could even feel it with our own hands. Autopsy is a means to defend the Jesus event as an event of history.

The object of autopsy is therefore the earthly Jesus. Scholars differ nonetheless in their interpretation of “what was from the beginning”.<sup>193</sup> Quite evidently it is not to be equated with the precreational beginning implied in the ἐν ἀρχῇ of John 1:1, 2. Besides neglecting the difference between “in” the beginning and “from” the beginning, this interpretation destroys the parallelism to the “what” of sensual perception that follows. If that parallelism is taken seriously, the initial phrase of 1 John 1:1 must refer to Jesus’ active ministry. This interpretation is supported by the use of ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς elsewhere in the Johannine epistles. Out of eight instances, four refer to the love commandment given by Jesus during his ministry, at the last supper (1 John 2:7; 3:11; 2 John 5, 6).<sup>194</sup> The occurrence in 1 John 2:24 can be interpreted in line with this. In 1 John 2:13, 14 the phrase is as enigmatic as in 1:1 and must therefore be interpreted in light of the others. The only real exception to the suggested meaning of ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς is 1 John 3:8, but the context is here entirely different and without significance for the christological use of the phrase.<sup>195</sup> 1 John 1:1 certain-

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*, pp. 157–158.

<sup>192</sup> Schnelle states merely: “Auch der Gebrauch von θεᾶσθαι (6mal im Evangelium, 3mal im 1Joh) in Joh 1,14/1Joh 1,1 und die vergleichbaren Wendungen ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν und ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα in Joh 1,1.2/1Joh 1,2 können eine literarische Abhängigkeit des Briefprologs vom Prolog des Evangeliums nicht erweisen” (*Antidoketische Christologie*, p. 67).

<sup>193</sup> For a survey of different proposals, see Brown, *The Epistles of John*, pp. 155–158.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. John 13:34; 15:12, 17.

<sup>195</sup> In 3:8 we are perhaps to think of the phrase as referring to Cain’s murder of his

ly explains John 1:1, 2, but in the sense that the precreational Logos finds its concrete manifestation in the earthly Jesus. From the very beginning, it is implied, Jesus could be heard, seen and touched.

The apologetic use of autopsy is, as in John 21:24, related to authorial status. The *γράφομεν* in 1 John 1:4a is the main verb of the entire prologue. “And we write these things” thus refers primarily to what has just been accounted for by means of autopsy. Yet, the relationship between autopsy and authorial status is different from the one in the gospel narrative. Those responsible for 1 John claim validity by referring to their own direct involvement in the events of history. The link to autopsy is, in distinction to John 21:24, immediate and direct. One finds no editor(s) conferring an authorial status on an eyewitness, as in the Johannine gospel narrative, nor is the autopsy channelled through stages of transmission, as in the Lukan prologue. The implied authors of 1 John claim to have been the eyewitnesses themselves.

*Autopsy is thus presented as a collective phenomenon.* “We” is emphatic, placed at the end of the clause in 1:4a.<sup>196</sup> This does not mean that there is no trace of an individual author. The use of “we write” in 1:4a stands in sharp contrast to the seventeen other epistolary instances of the same verb in the Johannine letters – twelve of them are in 1 John. On each of these occasions, the author speaks as “I”.<sup>197</sup> Instead of conferring authorial status to someone else being an eyewitness, the individual author identifies in 1:4 his own activity in relation to a group, “we”,<sup>198</sup> distinct

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brother. Cf. John 8:44 with 1 John 3:12. Philo considers this fratricide to take place *κατ' ἀρχὰς εὐθύς* (*Praem. Poen.* 12:68).

<sup>196</sup> Codex A, the Byzantine tradition, the Vulgate, the Syriac and the main Coptic versions, using “to you” instead of “we”, harmonize 1:4 with 1:3.

<sup>197</sup> Mussner tries to explain the use of “we” in the Johannine literature as related to the concept of seeing. It shows, according to Mussner, that the kerygma “als bleibendes ‘Produkt’ des von den Augen- und Ohrenzeugen an Jesus, dem fleischgewordenen Logos, ‘Geschauten’ ist das Werk einer *Gemeinschaft*, das in der Kirche als apostolische Tradition weiterlebt” (*Die johanneische Sehweise*, p. 67). But the author is one single person. Mussner neglects the intriguing tension emerging from the repeated occurrences of the first person singular.

<sup>198</sup> The presence of “we” as an epistolary plural equivalent to “I” has been greatly exaggerated in New Testament scholarship. See Byrskog, “Co-Senders, Co-Authors and Paul’s Use of the First Person Plural”, pp. 230–250, and the literature referred to there. Similarly also, though with slightly different conclusions, Murphy-O’Connor, “Co-authorship in the Corinthian Correspondence”, pp. 562–579; Müller, “Der sogennante ‘schriftstellerische Plural’”, pp. 181–201. As regards 1 John, it is evident that the author is perfectly capable of writing “I” when he wishes to refer to himself as an individual. So Brown, *The Epistles of John*, p. 158.

from others, “you”.<sup>199</sup> It is not necessary to discuss the exact identity of that group. What is evident in the world of the text is that the author does not regard the autopsy of the incarnated word as an individual experience, nor does he make distinctions between different functions in the transmission process. He repeats a similar emphatic “we” in 1 John 4:14 as he again speaks of seeing and testifying. Normal distinctions in the transmission process are swallowed up in the symbiosis of the group. The author is an individual, but maintains a collective self-understanding, regarding himself as involved in the oral history of a community. According to this conception of himself and his activity, he is indeed someone who has seen, and also someone who proclaims and testifies, and someone who writes – all in one. We have thus moved from a single, anonymous eyewitness at the cross (John 19:35), whom the editor(s) accorded authorial status (John 21:24), to a group of proclaiming and writing observers of Jesus. *By understanding autopsy as part of the oral history of a group, the author grounds and legitimizes the present writing in the real life of Jesus of history.*

#### 4. 2 Peter 1:16: History as Pseudonymous Legitimation

At a time when the parousia was severely called into question, the author of 2 Peter found it necessary to defend the reliability of the Old Testament prophecies. To this end he refers to the autopsy of the transfiguration of Jesus. With the voice of Peter, now turning into the first person plural, the author stresses that “we” did not follow cleverly devised myths, “but had been eyewitnesses of his majesty” (1:16).<sup>200</sup> The purpose is thus clearly apologetic. The aim is to defend a present belief by reference to the autopsy of a past event.<sup>201</sup>

Autopsy is again – as in 1 John 1:1–4 – presented as a collective phenomenon. The remarkable shift into the first person plural is probably not merely a stylistic feature. In 1:18, where the reference to seeing is supplemented with a reference to hearing for themselves, the pronoun puts a certain emphasis on “we”. Of course, with the statement “we made known to you” in 1:16 the author does not wish to say that Peter and all

<sup>199</sup> So de Jonge, “An Analysis of 1 John 1.1–4”, p. 327.

<sup>200</sup> ἄλλ' ἐπόπται γενηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος.

<sup>201</sup> Smith argues that the transfiguration is recalled in order to emphasize the authority of the apostles, especially Peter (*Petrine Controversies*, p. 82). But Smith neglects the explicit aim expressed in 1:19–21.

the other apostles were the ones actually preaching to the addressees. The shift into the first person plural serves instead to ground the belief in the parousia within a larger group of eyewitnesses. Not only one individual had seen and heard Jesus on the holy mountain, but there was a group of people that could testify to the historical veracity of Jesus' transfiguration.

However, the autopsy is here not open to everyone. The term used for "eyewitnesses" is ἐπόπται, which is at home within the language of mysteries.<sup>202</sup> Plutarch, for instance, who is roughly contemporary with the author of 2 Peter, uses in *Demetrius* 26:2 ἐποπτεία for the highest grade of initiation in the Eleusinian mysteries, and in *Alcibiades* 22:3 he employs the term ἐπόπται for the ones admitted into that grade.<sup>203</sup> Those present at the transfiguration were thought of, it seems, as specially initiated persons. The autopsy of Jesus' majesty is not the observation of an ordinary event. It is experienced by a group, but only by a very special group of people.

The restrictive implication of autopsy is perhaps related to the choice of literary medium. For the first time in the New Testament autopsy is used in a pseudonymous writing.<sup>204</sup> References to autopsy in the Pauline letters are found in writings dictated by Paul himself; the gospels are anonymous writings, with the implied author exhibiting some kind of relationship to the oral history of the real author. 2 Peter seems to be entirely pseudonymous.<sup>205</sup> Bridges from the implied author named Peter to the real author and his oral history are more difficult to find than in 1 John. Anton Vögtle even suggests that the actual reason for attributing the writing to Peter is not to be sought in the notion of a pro-Petrine community aiming to defend the authority of Peter against (gnostic) misconcep-

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<sup>202</sup> So, e.g., Fornberg, *An Early Church*, p. 123; Smith, *Petrine Controversies*, p. 82; Bauer, *Wörterbuch*, p. 619; Vögtle, *Der Judasbrief / Der 2. Petrusbrief*, p. 167. But cf. also the cautious remarks by Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, pp. 215–216.

<sup>203</sup> For further references, see LSJ, p. 676.

<sup>204</sup> Already Harnack stressed the pseudonymous character of 2 Peter: "Er [der Brief] ist ein wirkliches Pseudonym" (*Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, I, p. 468). For Harnack, 2 Peter was the only really pseudonymous writing in the New Testament. Cf. *ibid.*, p. viii.

<sup>205</sup> I distinguish between "secondary attribution" and "pseudonymous attribution". The former category of writings builds substantially on earlier tradition and identifies the present writing through reference to a person of decisive importance within that tradition, as we find in, e.g., the book of Isaiah. I have previously tried to elaborate that distinction in *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 140–148.

tions,<sup>206</sup> but in the fact that Peter was an eyewitness through whom the author used the transfiguration as the fundamental proof for the reality of the parousia.<sup>207</sup> If this is correct – I see no conclusive objection against it – the reference to the autopsy of a past event is a means to link the authorial activity to the oral history of eyewitnesses, but this means is now entirely conditioned by the choice of a different literary medium. *It has entered into the narrative substructure of an entirely pseudonymous writing, even fostering, it seems, pseudonymous attribution and authorship.*

### 5. The Perspective of Papias: Oral History as Written Narrative

In the third book of his ecclesiastical history Eusebius quotes from Papias' Λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξήγησις. Eusebius held Papias to be a man of "very little intelligence" (*Hist. Eccl.* III 39:13). As a good historian, he realizes therefore the need to explain the reference to him. In the preface of his own work, according to Eusebius, Papias "makes plain that he had not at all himself been a hearer and eyewitness of the sacred apostles, but teaches that he had received the things about the faith from those who knew them" (*Hist. Eccl.* III 39:2).<sup>208</sup> The quotation from Papias' work that follows in III 39:4 betrays accordingly the importance of tracing all information back to the disciples of the Lord:

"And if ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter had said, or what Philip or what Thomas or James or what John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples [had said], further that which Aristion and the presbyter John, the Lord's disciples, say. For I did not suppose that the things from the books would help me so much as the things of a living and enduring voice".<sup>209</sup>

The list of disciples is puzzling. It has no exact correspondence in the New Testament. Ulrich Körtner rejects any notion that it is taken from

<sup>206</sup> So, most extensively, Smith, *Petrine Controversies*, pp. 67–101. Cf. also Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 161, and more recently, Dschulnigg, *Petrus*, pp. 198–199.

<sup>207</sup> Vögtle, *Der Judasbrief / Der 2. Petrusbrief*, p. 126.

<sup>208</sup> ἀκροατὴν μὲν καὶ αὐτόπτην οὐδαμῶς ἑαυτὸν γενέσθαι τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποστόλων ἐμφαίνει, παρεληφέναι δὲ τὰ τῆς πίστεως παρὰ τῶν ἐκείνοις γνωρίμων διδάσκει.

<sup>209</sup> εἰ δέ που καὶ παρηκολουθηκῶς τις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἔλθοι, τοὺς τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀνέκρινον λόγους, τί Ἀνδρέας ἢ τί Πέτρος εἶπεν ἢ τί Φίλιππος ἢ τί Θωμᾶς ἢ Ἰάκωβος ἢ τί Ἰωάννης ἢ Ματθαῖος ἢ τις ἕτερος τῶν τοῦ κυρίου μαθητῶν ἅ τε Ἀριστίων καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης, τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί, λέγουσιν. οὐ γὰρ τὰ ἐκ τῶν βιβλίων τοσοῦτόν με ὠφελεῖν ὑπελάμβανον ὅσον τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης.

the gospels or other post-canonical writings and fails to detect a particular logic behind the order in which the disciples are mentioned.<sup>210</sup> While Körtner underestimates the influence of John 1:35–51 and – especially – John 21:2,<sup>211</sup> he stresses rightly that Papias had no fixed apostolic criterion for selecting the truthful reports about the Lord. It is noteworthy that while Eusebius speaks of ἀπόστολοι as he accounts for Papias' lack of autopsy, the quotation itself employs the term μαθηταί.

The basic criterion of Papias, according to Körtner, is that the reports must ultimately derive from eyewitnesses.<sup>212</sup> This is confirmed in the subsequent lines. As Eusebius discusses the two Johns mentioned in Papias' quotation,<sup>213</sup> he stresses that while Papias received the words of the apostles from their followers, he actually heard Aristion and the presbyter John, often being able to quote them by name and give their traditions in his writings (*Hist. Eccl.* III 39:7). The closer to an eyewitness, the better.<sup>214</sup> He also tries to show that Papias was with the daughters of Philip and received directly from them a wonderful story (*Hist. Eccl.* III 39:9). And in Papias' famous account of Mark and his writing, which we will discuss more fully below,<sup>215</sup> it is again stressed that Mark himself "had neither heard the Lord nor followed him, though later on, as I said, [he followed] Peter" (*Hist. Eccl.* III 39:15).<sup>216</sup> This information Papias knows from the presbyter.

For Papias, evidently, the tradition that is firmly based on the oral history of the original eyewitnesses has most value. *Literary compositions are essentially nothing else but the written outcome of the oral history of those who were present*, and this might, at the end, have been a defence for Papias' own writing.<sup>217</sup>

<sup>210</sup> Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis*, pp. 177–181.

<sup>211</sup> See Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*, pp. 80–95.

<sup>212</sup> Körtner states in conclusion: "Papias beansprucht weder die Autorität eines schriftlichen Kanons, noch einer mündlichen Regula Fidei, sondern die einer historisch einmaligen Größe von Vätergestalten, die ihrerseits nicht die Apostolizität von Überlieferungen, sondern deren Legitimation durch Augenzeugenschaft verbürgen" (*Papias von Hierapolis*, p. 182).

<sup>213</sup> The much discussed issue of who the two Johns were need not concern us here. See Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*, pp. 75–95.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Baum, "Papias, der Vorzug der Viva Vox", pp. 148–149.

<sup>215</sup> Chap. 6, B:4–8.

<sup>216</sup> οὔτε γὰρ ἤκουσεν τοῦ κυρίου οὔτε παρηκολούθησεν αὐτῷ, ὕστερον δέ, ὡς ἔφην, Πέτρῳ.

<sup>217</sup> So Löhr, "Kanongeschichtliche Beobachtungen", pp. 237–241; "Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit", pp. 212–213.

## 6. Reality or Fiction: Early Christian Notions of Autopsy

a. *“Did It Really Happen?”*

What we see in the early Christian texts is not the direct report of the practice of autopsy but the inclusion of the notion of autopsy into narrativizing processes. Some of these authors did not produce actual narratives, but the narrativizing process comes through as their comments presuppose a conceptual world of an implicit story where eyewitness testimony plays a significant role. The history implied in the references to eyewitnesses led to various elaborations as it entered the narrative world of the different authors, developing in the writings themselves an intra-textual sense of pastness.

The narrativizing process among the historian was never, as we saw, a straight move from the eyewitness testimony to the explanatory narrative. Notions of autopsy could be elaborated and perhaps even added as part of the need to produce a persuasive account of the past. The quest of the modern historian, by contrast, is often for factual truth: “did it really happen?” That has not been our primary concern as we dealt with the early Christian texts, yet it cannot be neglected, as scholars of the other extreme tend to do. If we are to assume that it was history in its extratextual and extrafictional pastness that entered into the story in the different ways we have outlined, we have to settle our minds as to whether the early Christian authors did what they said they – or some others – did. Are the references to autopsy in the early Christian texts to be seen merely as literary embellishment due to narrative and rhetorical aims or as indication of the incorporation of real phenomena of past history? Or do they reflect both?

The answer is not all that simple and straightforward, as the previous survey of the ancient historians show. One might indeed defend and legitimize oneself and one’s own writing by the use of persuasive narrative strategies about autopsy, but there is also nothing that excludes the possibility that an ancient author did so by accounting for what actually happened. It is not without reason that Polybius’ serious and polemical discussions of the proper method of historical inquiry have been seen as a means to win the confidence of the audience.<sup>218</sup> The narrativizing processes of the Greek and Roman historians exhibit everything from strong literary embellishment of a rhetorical kind to apologetic aims based on methodological convictions and actual practice.

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<sup>218</sup> Vercruyse, “À la recherche du mensonge et de la vérité”, pp. 34–35.

The previous section made evident that some early Christian writers authorized their own compositions by referring to eyewitnesses. But looking at these Christian texts as a whole, one realizes that they did so in an amazingly timid way as compared to many extra-Biblical authors. Not only are their references to autopsy comparatively few, which might be due to the literary genres used, but in no case do we have a clear statement of direct autopsy by the individual author himself. Autopsy is indirect, in the sense that the author either refers to other eyewitnesses or identifies himself with a group that, provided the writing is not entirely pseudonymous, may find its roots in the life of the earthly Jesus. One never finds a single author claiming individual autopsy of the earthly Jesus. Paul is the only one among the New Testament writers who refers to his own perception, but then of the risen Christ as a means to legitimize his apostolic activity. Autopsy of the earthly Jesus is for him mediated by tradition. So the question becomes a slightly different one: do the texts, with their explicit or implicit narrative world of eyewitnesses, reveal traces of real people who served as informants concerning the words and deeds of Jesus?

### *b. The Broad Perspective*

Dennis Nineham discussed the role of eyewitnesses in early Christianity and brought out some general and rather broad reflections which speak, in his opinion, against the direct impact of the eyewitnesses at the stage at which the canonical gospels were in process of composition.<sup>219</sup> Do they hold water, considering what we are now in a position to know about autopsy in antiquity?

First one needs to address the issue from a broad perspective. Here one feels indeed a basic dilemma of our discipline. A detailed study of each and every instance of relevance leads to a circular reasoning with very hypothetical results.<sup>220</sup> To the extent that we are interested in extratextual phenomena of history, it is therefore essential to maintain, as I have tried in the present study, a view of the larger setting of autopsy.

The general perspective that we have gained makes it indeed very difficult to assume that the references to eyewitness testimony had no basis whatsoever in the past history of the early Christian authors. Chapter two made evident that autopsy was an extremely common phenomenon in contexts where people were eager to find out things about the past, and

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<sup>219</sup> Cf. above Chap. 1, C:3.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. above Chap. 1, D:2.



we noticed, in the same chapter, that several individuals around Jesus are likely to have informed others of what they had seen – the local people, Peter, some women, Jesus' closest relatives. We have also noticed that the ancient historians had a quest for the factual truth of history, though they integrated it with a sense of what was interpreted as true.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, the rhetoricians teach us, as we saw earlier in this chapter, that despite the extensive elaborations bordering on fabrications, there should be a hard core of factual truth to build on. The interrogation of a witness was a vital part of the *inventio*, because a basis of facts was after all the most effective means of persuasion. The narrative should have a convincing story, and *the most convincing story is the one that truthfully interacts with history*.

### *c. Apologetics and the Sparity of References*

Is not the sparity of references to autopsy then an indication that it actually played no significant role in the origin and development of the gospel tradition? Is it not reasonable, therefore, to understand them as mere apologetic strategies of the author? Nineham interprets Luke's and John's interest in eyewitness testimony as "a specialized, reflective, and apologetic concern, related to their peculiar circumstances, and forced upon them, in part at least, by contact with sophisticated inquirers and opponents".<sup>222</sup>

Such a manner of reasoning neglects again the wider socio-cultural perspective. Generally speaking, *the very fact that the early Christian writers are rather timid in their use of autopsy should warn us against regarding such references as being nothing else but apologetic features of specific writings*. Such features are present, to be sure. In the previous section we saw that the Johannine notion of autopsy involved a coherent and sophisticated apologetic aim. Does that mean that these writings give no indication whatsoever as to how the author(s) went about composing the narrative?

Not necessarily! Josephus, to take a writer roughly contemporary with the Johannine literature, also refers to autopsy in order to defend his account of historical matters, as we have seen.<sup>223</sup> He does so much more boldly and apologetically than any of the early Christian writers, not being shy to stress again and again his own personal involvement in the events. But for all we know of him, it would indeed be hasty to conclude

<sup>221</sup> Chap. 4, B:2–4.

<sup>222</sup> Nineham, "Eye-Witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition. III", p. 254.

<sup>223</sup> Chap. 2, A:5, Chap. 4, A:3 and Chap. 5, A:3a.

that he never actually saw or experienced anything of that which he claims to have seen and experienced. While part of the explanation to this difference between Josephus and the gospel writers certainly has to do with genre and purpose, one is still struck by the evangelists' modesty in this regard. If they solely were to defend the veracity of their records with rhetorical and narrative means, without at the same time attempting to be true to their actual proceedings, a much more forceful and direct way of anchoring the writings in the oral history of eyewitnesses would indeed have been in line with contemporary practice.

*d. Apologetics and the Lapse of Time*

Another argument that has been brought out against the assumption that the references to autopsy may reflect the actual practice behind the writings is that they occur rather late. It should be noted, says Nineham, "that almost all these passages come from the later books of the New Testament".<sup>224</sup> This is certainly true and should, as Nineham continues, be seen in relation to the increasing need to defend one's own version of the foundational events of history. But is this explanation actually to be used against the notion of autopsy as playing a role in the origin and development of the gospel tradition? We just rejected such a line of arguing. An apologetic aim in no way necessitates rhetorical and narrative forgery.

The argument of apologetics is a subtle one, and I shall discuss it by reference to the picture of the disciples in the synoptic gospel narratives. We have seen that the author of Luke-Acts is most explicit about their function as witnesses. They are apostolic eyewitnesses of extended parts of Jesus' active ministry, from the beginning in Galilee to the ascension, and their oral history constitutes, according to the author, the basic tradition of the Lukan story. The Matthean perspective is different from the Lukan one, yet it contains notable similarities. The author makes no explicit attempt to relate his own literary endeavour to eyewitnesses encoded as characters in the story, but at the end he opens up the internal, narrative world of the story to his own present time by quoting Jesus' authoritative saying that the disciples should teach the nations to obey everything that he has commanded them (Matt 28:19–20). In the Matthean story as a whole, the disciples have been educated by Jesus; they have listened to his teaching in public as well as in private; they have observed his mighty deeds; they have become scribes for the kingdom of heaven (Matt 13:52), well capable of transmitting Jesus' teaching in word and

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<sup>224</sup> Nineham, "Eye-Witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition. III", p. 253.

deed, of teaching others everything that he has commanded them. In this way the author grounds his own activity in the past story about Jesus, assuming that the learned disciples, especially Peter, form a transmitting context which carries Jesus' teaching down to the present situation of his community.<sup>225</sup> As in Luke-Acts, the oral history of the disciples appears in Matthew as the basis of the author's own story.<sup>226</sup>

Already the difference between the picture of Jesus' followers in Luke-Acts and in Matthew shows that the function of the group was the object of variegating interpretation and elaboration. When compared with the Markan gospel story, the difference becomes even clearer. While the twelve disciples are indeed eyewitnesses of Jesus' active ministry in Mark, one finds no comparable emphasis on them as a group of informants and transmitters of Jesus' teaching in word and deed. They do preach, teach and perform mighty deeds (Mark 6:12–13, 30), but by the same token their incapability of understanding what is at stake is repeatedly accentuated.<sup>227</sup> Robert P. Meye, to be sure, understands the negative trait of the Twelve as a correlative to the notion of the messianic secret and argues that in the end they are restored as authoritative witnesses to Jesus ministry for the post-Easter community; they become witnesses of the risen Lord, Meye argues, and thus "provide the nexus between the historical Jesus and the Marcan Church".<sup>228</sup> But the Twelve are, as a matter of fact, never restored within the Markan story.<sup>229</sup> On the basis of 14:28 and 16:7, Meye assumes that after the final encounter with the divine teacher in Galilee they do "really understand",<sup>230</sup> without taking into account that the author never tells the hearers/readers of any such encounter. The women at the tomb are commanded to tell the disciples of the coming

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<sup>225</sup> See further Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 221–234, 238–245, 254–261. For Matt 20:16–20 more specifically, see Byrskog, "Slutet gott, allting gott", pp. 85–98.

<sup>226</sup> For Peter, cf. below Chap 6, B:9.

<sup>227</sup> 4:13, 40–41; 6:52; 8:17, 21; 9:6, 10, 32; 10:32.

<sup>228</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, pp. 61–87, 132–136, 181–183; quotation from pp. 182–183. Stock argues similarly that being with Jesus is the most prominent feature of Markan discipleship, regarding 14:28 and 16:7 as invitations to a resumption of the disciples' being with Jesus (*Boten aus dem Mit-Ihm-Sein*, pp. 165–166, 171–173, 195–196).

<sup>229</sup> In criticizing Stock, Kelber rightly comments: "But even if we were to share Stock's preference for a happy resolution, it would have to be projected outside the given story. But is such a projection warranted in view of the absence of a narrated resolution?" ("Apostolic Tradition and the Form of the Gospel", p. 29). Kelber's article provides a helpful review of various studies of the disciples and discipleship in Mark – though not that of Meye.

<sup>230</sup> Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve*, p. 85.

meeting in Galilee, but – and so the story ends – they are too afraid to say anything to anyone. The Twelve are implicitly promised to be restored, but the actual meeting in Galilee is never reported. In the Markan story, the twelve disciples seem to play the role of “pre-Easter people”, unfinished and shaky in understanding and faith.<sup>231</sup>

The conclusion lays close at hand: the authors of Luke-Acts and Matthew strengthened the twelve disciples’ formative role in the transmission of the tradition about Jesus’ active ministry. Yet, they did not invent it, for all we know. It is well explainable why the authors of Luke-Acts and Matthew elaborated the Markan view the way they did.<sup>232</sup> The Markan narrative, despite its rather pessimistic view of the Twelve, presents the disciples as students in close contact with their teacher and involved in a dynamic learning process.<sup>233</sup> That students and followers of a certain person are most capable of knowing and conveying the material related to that person is a natural sociological inference, which is evident with variegating patterns in the socio-cultural setting of the Jewish, Greek and Roman spheres of antiquity.<sup>234</sup> As time passed and it became more urgent to relate the present time to the “holy past”, it was but a short step for the Lukan and the Matthean author to enhance the group of disciples – especially Peter – to form a body of teachers and tradition carriers.

Apologetics thus provides only part of the explanation why the notion of autopsy occurs in late texts. *The essential factor is not merely the need for apologetics, but time.* It must have been quite natural that as time passed the references to eyewitnesses became more explicit. Any historically sensitive person is aware of the problem caused by the lapse of time. So also in antiquity. Most ancient historians, starting with Thucydides,<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Schmahl emphasizes the negative role of the Twelve as pre-Easter characters. “Als Jünger erscheinen daher die ‘vorösterlichen’ Zwölf als eine noch unfertige und schwankende Größe”, he concludes (*Die Zwölf im Markusevangelium*, p. 144).

<sup>232</sup> The development would, of course, be rather different if one assumed that the Markan perspective is the latest one of the three; but it would then be quite inconceivable why the Markan author diminished the importance of the twelve disciples in this regard.

<sup>233</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*. Robbins shows that the teacher/disciple cycle in Mark contains three phases, the initial phase (1:1–3:6) presenting how the relationship between the teacher and the disciples is established, a second phase (3:7–12:44) presenting how the teacher and the disciples enter into a learning process, and a third phase (13:1–16:8) presenting the separation of the disciples from the teacher.

<sup>234</sup> For various such settings in ancient Israel and ancient Judaism, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 35–196.

<sup>235</sup> For Thucydides, cf., most explicitly, I 1:3, and his discussion in I 20:1–3. Cf. also, e.g., Polyb. IV 2:1–2; Joseph., *Bell.* 1:17–18.

preferred for that very reason to limit their investigations to contemporary history. Although the ancient person entertained a different attitude to and sense of time than the modern, Westernized person does, it needs no further proof to say that the need to account for the sources became urgent as soon as an ancient author felt distanced by time to the events of interest. The historians, as we have seen repeatedly, epitomize this need. So, the references to autopsy may be caused both by apologetic concerns as well as by the authors' own sensitivity to the lapse of time. The two factors go hand in hand, and the evidence suggests that they motivated elaboration, but not forgery. Hence, while the modesty of the references to autopsy indicates that the authors wished to defend their writings by accounting for their methodological practices, as we noticed, the time factor suggests that those references emerged in the matrix of a keen sensitivity to the difference between what was contemporary and what belonged to the past.

### 7. Conclusion: Autopsy as History and Story

Generally speaking, for all we can say, the references to autopsy in early Christian writings reflect how history in its extratextual and extrafictional pastness entered into the world of the story. The implication of the phrase in Luke 1:3, *καθὼς παρέδοσαν ... ἔδοξε κάμοί*, "just as they transmitted ... it seemed good to me also", is that eyewitness testimony has a broad basis in the narratives composed by others, besides the one of the Lukan author, and in their use of sources. Regardless of what that means exactly,<sup>236</sup> one can not escape the impression that an ancient author of the first century, who was in close contact with various oral and written traditions about Jesus, conceptualized large parts of the development of the gospel tradition in terms of oral history. There are, of course, also other, intratextual factors of history embedded in the gospel stories, not least in the Lukan one, but the references to autopsy signal in a general way how the development behind the composition of the narratives became integrated into the stories. Within these stories we see the encoded traces of living people interacting with the past in a context of orality, we see their use of

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<sup>236</sup> I am surprised at the ease by which scholars pass over this piece of information as to how the authors of the gospels went about composing their narratives, often feeling, it seems, bound to a static and anachronistic two-source hypothesis. I tried to place it within a broader context above, Chap. 3, B:4–5. The dissertation of J. W. Scott, "Luke's Preface and the Synoptic Problem" (St. Andrews, 1986), was not available to me.

texts in a constant and dynamic process of re-oralization, we see people cherishing their own memories and recalling the past within the frames of their own conceptual world, we see other people eagerly interrogating them for information, etc., etc.

Autopsy as apostolic legitimation, autopsy as apostolic testimony, as authorial or pseudonymous legitimation, as an oral bridge to the written narrative, in various ways and patterns, by means of different elaborative elements in the narrativizing process, all in all *we detect the traces of how history in its extratextual and extrafictional pastness entered into the story*. To separate the story from its extrafictional pastness, to see only the intratextual and entirely narrativized and fictionalized function of history, closing off the written narrative from its living roots, is a possible scientific enterprise, but within the perspective outlined in this chapter it appears as extremely artificial and anachronistic.

## Chapter 6

# History as Story: Narrativizing One's Existence

The interplay between the interpretative and the narrativizing procedures concerns much more than the literary and argumentative techniques by which the notion of autopsy enters into a story. Paul Thompson senses that "the making of history" can lead to a deeper social understanding only when integrated into the more comprehensive perspective of an experienced historian.<sup>1</sup> Ronald J. Grele, another oral historian, is more modest, but speaks of his task as that of providing possible patterns which may explain what is being said: although the historian does not hold a monopoly over interpretation, he says, it is the "dialectic between the telling of the story and the inquisitive and critical mind, whether of the 'professional' historian or of the interested neighbour, which gives oral history its real dimension".<sup>2</sup>

As far as the ancient authors are concerned, we may go one step further. To an extent that far exceeds the practice of the modern oral historian,<sup>3</sup> they actively related the past to their own ideological interests and conceptual framework as they finally moulded the stories into a comprehensive narrative form. Although they never strived for the kind of social understanding that Thompson speaks of, their written narratives, as we saw in chapter three, were never far removed from the immediate and internalized oral discourse. Through a process of re-oralization, these texts became to them, as Margaret A. Mills says, "words to live by in the profoundest sense";<sup>4</sup> they were interpreted by people who were seeking to

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chap. 1, B:1.

<sup>2</sup> Grele, "Preface", p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> Henige warns, perhaps rightly, that in the attempt to democratize the past, the modern oral historian runs the risk of rendering it trival. S/He "must avoid allowing his informants merely to reminisce" (*Oral Historiography*, p. 109).

<sup>4</sup> Mills, "Domains of Folkloristic Concern", p. 232.

establish and maintain shared meaning and cohesion. Therefore, *as one produced a story about the past, one narrativized and interpreted not merely history, but essentially one's own present existence.*

A supplementary note is necessary here. Elizabeth Tonkin brings out a vital remark as she draws attention to how the social construction of oral history and the stories of others shape the historian's consciousness. Closing her book, she points to the awareness of the "I" and to its survival in the midst of collective representations of the past. "That one's self is both variable and vulnerable may be disconcerting to consider, but it does not follow that selves are non-existent".<sup>5</sup> In view of the old notions of the form-critical emphasis on the creative drive of the early Christian communities,<sup>6</sup> it is indeed noteworthy that today a professor of cultural anthropology seeking to explain the social dimension of oral history does not forget to speak of the identity of the self. The Durkheimian sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, in his influential work *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* from 1925,<sup>7</sup> taught us to speak of the "collective memory" of a group or a culture. And indeed, groups and cultures do nurture a memory of their past; memory is to some extent a social construct; eyewitnesses are certainly part of the broader collective currencies.<sup>8</sup> The early Christian authors, moreover, surely had "collectivist selves", as Bruce J. Malina points out, not "individualistic selves"; they were part of communities, and they were nourished by them, as "dyadic selves" constantly requiring another to know themselves.<sup>9</sup> Yet, the individual consciousness matters also in a collectivistically conditioned context. Groups and cultures might have what we call "memory", which affects the members of those contexts, but *groups and cultures do not remember and recall; individuals do*, as Halbwachs realized and subsequently discussed with much insight.<sup>10</sup> When history becomes story, therefore, one faces the challenge of history becoming interpreted not merely through the interpretative tendencies and instincts of a larger group and a society, but also, and at the end, through the perspective of a single individual.

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<sup>5</sup> Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. my comments already in Chap. 2, B:3.

<sup>7</sup> I have used the new edition from 1952.

<sup>8</sup> See above Chap. 4, A:2.

<sup>9</sup> Malina, *The Social World*, pp. 73–82.

<sup>10</sup> Among Halbwachs' unpublished writings there was one chapter entitled "Mémoire collective et mémoire individuelle", published posthumously in *La mémoire collective*, pp. 1–34.



## A. The Historian and the Story

In creating a story, the author tells something to the audience about herself or himself. The story is, in a sense, "her" or "his" story. But there are many intricate ways in which a person aiming to communicate something that concerns the past can encode her or his own interpretative framework into the story. In antiquity that person, be it a historian or an evangelist, was usually limited by the character of the factual matters of the past, and free fabrication, if not admitted as such, would normally have crossed the borders of acceptable interpretation and been considered a lie or an entertaining fiction.<sup>11</sup> But there were other means, from the more subtle omission to the grand ideological patterns of interpretation.

### 1. Selectivity as Interpretation

One can certainly tell something to an audience simply by excluding an event from the account, especially if one hints at the reason for not dealing with it. The rhetoricians, who always had a particular persuasive form of communication in mind, as we have seen, knew that certain matters had better not be included. One should avoid an excess of unnecessary facts (*rerum*) and words (*verborum*), Cicero says (*De Inv.* I 20:28). Other rhetoricians said very much the same.<sup>12</sup>

Brevity, or the absence of elaboration, according to T. P. Wiseman,<sup>13</sup> was one of the rhetorical mendacities that influenced the historians.<sup>14</sup> They knew that certain "facts" of the past had better not be included in their accounts. As a matter of course, a selection always took place on different levels of research and writing, such as when the historian chose what particular subject to investigate or when circumstances forced him to leave out matters concerning which he could not receive sufficient information. The historians were quite aware of these restrictions.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, there was a certain selectivity within the broad selection of what subject to treat in the written account. The stated rationale behind it

<sup>11</sup> See above Chap. 5, A:1–2.

<sup>12</sup> Cf., e.g., Hall, "Ancient Historical Method", p. 115.

<sup>13</sup> Wiseman, "Lying Historians", p. 146. Cf. above Chap. 5, A:1.

<sup>14</sup> For a full discussion, see Canfora, *Totalità e selezione nella storiografia antica*.

<sup>15</sup> Schepens, "L'idéal de l'information complète", pp. 81–82. Cf. also Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, p. 72.

often had to do with what one simply considered to be worth mentioning. Herodotus, who wished to preserve for posterity great and marvellous deeds of Greeks and foreigners (1:1), speaks, for instance, only of the most notable deeds of Alyattes (1:16), only of those things which gave Cyrus most trouble and are most worthy to be described (1:177), only of one out of three opinions concerning the cause of the Nile's flooding, save to indicate the other two (2:20–22), only of that way of hunting crocodile which is most worthy of mention (2:70). Thucydides, who chose, generally speaking, to describe a war which was noteworthy above all the wars that had gone before (I 1:1), comments, for instance, on his wish to mention only the most memorable things of the Sicilian war (III 90:1) and mentions only the main things of a letter which he knows touched many other matters (IV 50:2).<sup>16</sup> Polybius is quite outspoken concerning the universal historian's need for selectivity and expresses repeatedly his wish not to be too detailed but to include only important matters that other historians have not covered well.<sup>17</sup>

It would indeed be possible to continue down the centuries and illustrate a similar kind of interpretative selectivity.<sup>18</sup> However, the best way to point to its prominence is perhaps to move back to Xenophon. Passages such as the ones in *Historia Graeca* V 4:1 and VI 2:32 indicate that he knew more than he chose to record, for whatever reason.<sup>19</sup> Although he never cares to explain his theoretical conceptions concerning the historian's task, several times, in the very same writing, he is eager to explain what he included or left out from his work. In II 3:56 he makes a brief apology for including sayings not worthy of record; in II 4:27 he wonders whether it is proper to mention the device of an engineer to use large stones in blocking possible approach routes for siege engines; in IV 8:1 he states that he will write concerning the events worth remembering and pass over those which do not deserve mention; in V 1:3–4 he describes the enthusiastic farewell given to Teleutias and expresses his awareness of not describing any noteworthy expenditure, danger or military contrivance, though yet, Teleutias' action is more noteworthy than the

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<sup>16</sup> For further comments on Thucydides' selectivity, see Hornblower, *Thucydides*, pp. 34–44. Cf. also Westlake, *Studies in Thucydides*, pp. 196–197.

<sup>17</sup> I 13:6; I 56:11; I 79:7; XXIX 12:6.

<sup>18</sup> The Latin historians continued this practice. Tacitus, for instance, omits certain details, thus illustrating his independence and interpretative tendency. For references and discussion, see Syme, *Tacitus*, I, p. 189.

<sup>19</sup> Kelly thinks of what Xenophon expected to happen to a copy of his work when he let it out of his hands and became the occasion for a small sociable discussion group ("Oral Xenophon", pp. 149–163).

expenditure of much money and the endurance of many dangers; finally, in VII 2:1 he says that while all the historians record something good done by the large states, he finds the numerous good actions done by a small state to be even more worthy of publication.

As we see perhaps most evidently in the case of Xenophon,<sup>20</sup> the essential criterion of this kind of selectivity remained quite subjective.<sup>21</sup> It was very much up to the individual historian to decide what was “worthy” of inclusion.<sup>22</sup> It was a matter of the author's interpretative framework. To take one last example, the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, according to the London papyrus *P. Oxy.* 842 III 11–43 (cf. XI 1–34; XV 32–XVIII 33),<sup>23</sup> gives great prominence to the naval war of 396 BCE, while Xenophon mentions only the stir caused at Sparta in the winter of 397–396 (*Hist. Graec.* III 4:1–2), ignoring entirely the war itself. An event that was extremely important for the Oxyrhynchus historian was not at all noteworthy for Xenophon.<sup>24</sup> There were, it seems, no objective criteria to determine the selection. Instead, a certain interpretative pattern guided the historian as he set out to make history into story – selectivity as interpretation.

## 2. The Aim to Explain

Interpretation contains intrinsically an aim to explain. When interpretation concerns matters of history, the explanation often has to do with the causes of the past. From its very beginning, history writing was therefore

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<sup>20</sup> For a cautious assessment of the evidence, see Tuplin, *The Failings of the Empire*, pp. 36–40.

<sup>21</sup> Although Xenophon betrays a shift of interest from the state to the individual (cf. Due, “Xenophon som hellenist”, pp. 14–15), Usher's suggestion that he introduces new criteria dealing with actions that illustrate the noblest of human qualities (*The Historians of Greece and Rome*, pp. 96–97) provides only a partial explanation of his selectivity. Proietti rightly points out the risk of modern scholars to introduce a new set of biases in determining what constituted a noteworthy event in Greek antiquity (*Xenophon's Sparta*, p. xix).

<sup>22</sup> Grayson exaggerates, to be sure, when he labels *Hist. Graec.* VII 2:1; II 3:56; IV 8:1 – in that order – as “excessively general, irrelevant or simple-minded elaboration of the immediate context” (“Did Xenophon Intend to Write History?”, p. 36); but he points indeed to the rather accidental character of Xenophon's discussion.

<sup>23</sup> I am using the division of Grenfell/Hunt (eds.), *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, V, pp. 143–194. For a more recent discussion and edition of all three papyri, see McKechnie/Kern (eds.), *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, pp. 3–7, 29–183.

<sup>24</sup> Grenfell/Hunt (eds.), *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, V, pp. 116–117.

etiological.<sup>25</sup> Already Herodotus stated in the initial paragraph of his work that it was his intention to make known the reason (αἰτίην) of the wars between Greeks and barbarians (1:1). As Henry Immerwahr accordingly points out, in Herodotus' work historical knowledge moves on three levels: the events, traditions about events, and the historical work which interprets these traditions.<sup>26</sup> As for the third level, Immerwahr suggests the portrayal of the particular Greek way of life as the unifying theme behind the individual *logoi*,<sup>27</sup> but other suggestions have also been brought out.<sup>28</sup> And Thucydides, despite his high ideals of factual truth and accuracy, also had an explanatory ambition. He tried to give a rationale for historical matters, to give, as he says, the "truest explanation" (ἀληθεστάτην πρόφασιν), and not only the public reasons, of the Peloponnesian war (I 23:6). That this was a matter of subjective interpretation is exemplified in an article by H. D. Westlake, where the forthrightness with which Thucydides conveys his approval or disapproval of groups and individuals involved in the episode concerning the oligarchy of the four hundred in book eight is made clear.<sup>29</sup> Its affect on the Thucydidean narrative can be seen in Hans-Peter Stahl's influential emphasis on the interpretative elements evident in the structuring of the work as a whole.<sup>30</sup> Thucydides' statement that the events of the war "have been recorded in order, as each happened, according to summer and winter" (II 1),<sup>31</sup> has more to it than might appear at first sight.

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<sup>25</sup> Millard, an Old Testament scholar, rightly points out that an "etiological" narrative is not necessarily unhistorical in character and defines it in a purely descriptive way: "An etiological narrative is one that gives the past reason for a present circumstance" ("Story, History, and Theology", p. 40).

<sup>26</sup> Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, pp. 44–45 *et passim*.

<sup>28</sup> In Herodotean scholarship there has been a debate between a "genetic approach" focusing on independent *logoi* and a "unitarian approach" describing the logic behind the finished product. For a survey of the debate concerning the unifying theme in Herodotus' work, see Verdin, "Hérodote historien?", pp. 668–685.

<sup>29</sup> The article is reprinted in Westlake, *Studies in Thucydides*, pp. 181–200. Cf. also Hornblower, *Thucydides*, pp. 155–190.

<sup>30</sup> Stahl states his basic argument concisely: "liegt bereits der Auswahl des Stoffes und seiner Anordnung ein Akt künstlicher Gestaltung zugrunde, so ist das berichtete Geschehen selbst bereits Interpretation, und die Darstellung des Geschehens selbst verdient die Aufmerksamkeit des modernen Interpreten" (*Thucydides*, p. 31). Rawlings develops, in some measure, Stahl's insight with the thesis that Thucydides followed a carefully conceived plan which focused on similarities and contrasts between two ten-year wars (*The Structure of Thucydides' History*).

<sup>31</sup> γέγραπται ἐχῆς ὡς ἕκαστα ἐγίγνετο κατὰ θέρος καὶ χειμῶνα.

No historian was more programmatic about the explanatory purpose of history writing than Polybius. He calls his work a *πραγματική ιστορία* (I 2:8; I 35:9; VI 5:2; XXXVI 17:1),<sup>32</sup> or *πραγματική υπόθεσις* (III 57:4), or *πραγματικὸς τρόπος* (IX 2:4). Although these expressions primarily distinguish a political and military history from a more mythical kind of study,<sup>33</sup> they convey also a didactic intention.<sup>34</sup> “Das Geschichtswerk soll also vorab ein Lehrbuch der Politik sein”, Matthias Gelzer stated.<sup>35</sup> Even more to the point is Polybius' description in II 37:3 of his post-200 narrative as *ἀποδεικτική ιστορία*.<sup>36</sup> The expression connotes something like “history which investigates causes”,<sup>37</sup> or “history which includes evidence and argument”.<sup>38</sup> The purpose of the writing is stated explicitly already at the outset. It is to provide useful study for the active politician and to teach how to bear bravely the vicissitudes of fortune by recalling the calamities of others (I 1:2). Polybius realizes that the reading/hearing of his narrative can also be for pleasure, but in the repeated antithesis between *χρήσιμον* (ὄφελος, ὠφέλεια) and *τερπνόν* (ἡδονή),<sup>39</sup> benefit and pleasure,<sup>40</sup> the scale comes down very sharply on the side of the former.<sup>41</sup> “Aiming therefore,” he says in IX 2:6, “not so much for the pleasure of readers as for the benefit of those who pay careful attention, I disregarded other matters and was led to this lot”.<sup>42</sup>

The purpose of benefit, regardless of the exact meaning of *ἀποδεικτική ιστορία*,<sup>43</sup> is linked to a very prominent explanatory intention. Paul

<sup>32</sup> Cf. also III 47:8; XII 25<sup>e</sup>:1.

<sup>33</sup> So Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe*, pp. 21–32.

<sup>34</sup> So Petzold, *Studien zur Methode des Polybios*, pp. 3–24; Meißner, “Πραγματική ιστορία”, pp. 313–351.

<sup>35</sup> Gelzer, *Kleine Schriften*, III, p. 156.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. also IV 40:1; X 21:8. See further Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe*, pp. 43–53.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Walbank, *Commentary*, I, p. 8 n. 6.

<sup>38</sup> So Walbank, *Polybius*, p. 57 n. 153. Cf. also Sacks, *Polybius on the Writing of History*, pp. 171–172.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. I 4:11; VII 7:8; IX 2:6; XI 19<sup>a</sup>:1–3; XV 36:3; XXXI 30:1.

<sup>40</sup> The notions of benefit and pleasure in Polybius' writings have been much discussed. For a list of the most important contributions, cf. d'Huys, “Χρήσιμον καὶ τερπνόν”, p. 267 n. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Walbank, “Profit or Amusement”, pp. 253–266.

<sup>42</sup> *διόπερ ἡμεῖς οὐχ οὕτως τῆς τέρψεως στοχαζόμενοι τῶν ἀναγνωσομένων ὡς τῆς ὠφελείας τῶν προσεχόντων, τᾶλλα παρέντες ἐπὶ τοῦτο τὸ μέρος κατηνέχθημεν.*

<sup>43</sup> Pédech concludes: “La méthode *apodictique* ne consiste pas dans l'étude des causes, mais dans l'argumentation qui accompagne la réponse à un problème posé” (*La méthode historique de Polybe*, p. 47). But there is a scholarly disagreement on this point.

Pédech has drawn attention to four causative factors in Hellenistic writers: the influence of individuals, the character of political institutions and military expertise, the geographical milieu, and the role of *Tyche*.<sup>44</sup> Polybius adheres to this general pattern, devoting particular attention to the means and the constitution whereby the Romans succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their sole rule in not quite fifty-three years (I 1:5).<sup>45</sup> He often speaks of the causes of the wars. As he states in I 12:6, he wishes “to leave no doubt in the statements of causes”.<sup>46</sup> This is the only way to make history writing useful. “For what is the use of recounting to the readers wars and battles and sieges and captures of cities, if they are not informed of the causes to which each case of success or failure was due?”,<sup>47</sup> Polybius asks in XI 19<sup>a</sup>:1, echoing the comparison in III 7:5 with a physician who is ignorant of the causes of bodily diseases. A statesman, an ἀνὴρ πραγματικός, needs to know how, why and whence each event has originated, he continues. He should be able to learn about it from the study of history. If one takes away those things from the historical inquiry, one has left a clever essay but not a lesson; it pleases for the moment, but benefits nothing for the future (III 31:12–13). It is precisely the study of causes that benefits students of history most (VI 2:8). Polybius’ obligation as a historian is therefore not merely to report passively the facts of history, but to explain – αἰτιολογεῖν – the distinction between beginnings, causes and pretexts (III 6:6–7:3; XXII 18:2–11).<sup>48</sup> Writing history means interpreting it in an explanatory fashion.

Polybius is clearly aware that some matters are impossible to explain by means of human logic. “But, I fear, it is difficult to αἰτιολογεῖν”,<sup>49</sup> he exclaims in XII 25<sup>i</sup>:9, thinking of the success or failure of various persons. He contrasts this procedure with the rather passive, but certainly much easier, invention of phrases by the aid of books, thus criticizing Timaeus. Some situations are especially difficult or impossible to fit into the scheme of causality. On such occasions, Polybius refers to what is outside of human control, to God and *Tyche*: “As regards things the causes of which it is impossible or difficult for a human being to grasp, be-

<sup>44</sup> Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe*, pp. 54–98.

<sup>45</sup> Polybius frequently states this programme. Cf. also I 2:7; III 1:4; III 1:9–10; III 2:6; III 3:9; III 4:2; III 118:9; VI 2:3; VIII 2:3–6; XXXIX 8:7.

<sup>46</sup> μηδὲν ἀπόρημα καταλιπεῖν ὑπὲρ τῶν κατὰ τὰς αἰτίας ἀποδείξεων.

<sup>47</sup> τί γὰρ ὄφελός ἐστι τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσι διεξίεναι πολέμους καὶ μάχας καὶ πόλεων ἔξανδραποδισμούς καὶ πολιορκίας, εἰ μὴ τὰς αἰτίας ἐπιγνώσονται, παρ’ ἃς ἐν ἐκάστοις οἱ μὲν κατάρθωσαν, οἱ δ’ ἐσφάλησαν;

<sup>48</sup> See further Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe*, pp. 78–93.

<sup>49</sup> ἀλλ’ ἔστιν, οἶμαι, τὸ μὲν αἰτιολογεῖν δυσχερές.

ing puzzled one may perhaps refer them to God and *Tyche*” (XXXVI 17:2).<sup>50</sup> Polybius is thinking here of the causes of heavy and persistent rain or snow, of drought or frost destroying the crops, of the outbreak of plague. Such cases are few and should not be exaggerated, according to Polybius (XXXI 30:3; XXXVI 17:1, 4), but the fact that he fuses the influence of transcendental factors into his explanatory ambition points effectively to his own struggles in trying to comprehend the complex dynamics of history.<sup>51</sup> The true historian was to him not merely a recorder of speeches and events; as the author of a historical narrative, he was also an interpreter.

### 3. Interpretation as a Bridge Between the Past and the Present

The interpretation of history, whether we think of it as selectivity or as a more active form of explanation, constitutes essentially the manner in which one bridges the gap between the past and the present, between history and story. Even Herodotus, despite not writing contemporary history and his claim of detachment, indicates already at the beginning that his work is a publication, an ἀπόδεξις, aimed for an audience. The story of his narrative is itself an occasion which links his own present situation to the past. Characteristically enough, in the course of telling his story, he not merely gives appreciation of inscriptions and archaeological remains that could be seen at his own time,<sup>52</sup> but repeatedly uses expressions with the first person pronoun such as ἔτι καὶ ἐς ἐμέ, (καὶ) ἔτι ἐς ἐμέ, καὶ ἐς ἐμέ ἔτι, καὶ τὸ μέχρι ἐμέο, ἔτι δέ ἐπ' ἐμέο and ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὸ κατ' ἐμέ, or with τότε such as ἔτι καὶ ἐς τότε ἐς and τότε αἰεὶ ἔτι, or with the adverb νῦν such as καὶ νῦν ἔτι, ἔτι καὶ νῦν and καὶ νῦν.<sup>53</sup> In this way he abandons for short moments the past time of his story in order to substantiate its reality by referring to the present, to the “now” of the author, subtly narrativizing his own existence in dialogue with what he knows of the past.

<sup>50</sup> ὧν μὲν νῆ Δί' ἀδύνατον ἢ δυσχερὲς τὰς αἰτίας καταλαβεῖν ἄνθρωπον ὄντα, περὶ τούτων ἴσως ἂν τις ἀπορῶν ἐπὶ τὸν θεὸν τὴν ἀναφορὰν ποιῶτο καὶ τὴν τύχην.

<sup>51</sup> Roveri states: “Tyche ist also das x der Geschichte, das Unbekannte, das dem Denker immer vor Augen steht, der das Geschehen rationalisieren und vollständig erklärt vor sich sehen will und der verächtlich das Unsichere und Unbestimmte eines wunderbaren Eingreifens beiseite schiebt” (“Tyche bei Polybios”, p. 315).

<sup>52</sup> See above Chap. 2, A:2.

<sup>53</sup> For references, see Verdin, *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus*, p. 114; Schepens, *L' 'autopsie'*, p. 51.

Later on this tendency became clearer, as one sees in the historians' persistent emphasis on the value of writing contemporary history. Thucydides set the pattern, being interested not in the distant past or the ethno-geographical outlook of other regions, but in the present political and military situation. Only occasionally is there anything said concerning matters earlier than the war. The most prominent exceptions are perhaps the so-called *Archaeology* (I 2–21) – a review of earlier and pre-historic Greek history, making the point that no previous war was of much importance – and the so-called *Pentekontaetia* (I 89–118) – a description of the growth of Athenian power during 480–430.<sup>54</sup> But generally speaking, the past was for Thucydides essentially the beginning of the present;<sup>55</sup> and other ancient historians usually exhibit the same attitude.

*The subjective elements of interpretation are thus essentially the means by which a historian makes sense of his own reality.* Numerous examples could be listed. We even find them in the writings of such strict historians as Thucydides and Polybius. Take Thucydides' portrayal of Cleon, son of Cleaenetus, a prominent representative of the extreme Athenian democracy.<sup>56</sup> In III 36:6 he characterizes him as the most violent of the citizens, and in IV 22:2 he describes him as vigorously attacking the envoys of the Lacedaemonians; in IV 27–28 he claims to be familiar with the discreditable motives of his actions – he mentions Cleon's hidden thoughts no less than four times (IV 27:3, 27:4, 28:2, 28:4) – and refers to his various suggestions as “vain talk” (IV 28:5); in IV 39:3 he inserts a phrase qualifying a proposal of Cleon as “mad”; in V 6–11, describing the battle of Amphipolis, he points several times to Cleon's total incapability as military commander. All in all, Thucydides conceptualizes personal traits and events according to his own interpretative framework of what at present is considered right or wrong. Although other instances with similar interpretative elements of motives, aims and feelings might accord with the

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<sup>54</sup> For briefer accounts, cf. the biographical excurses on the Spartan Pausanias and the Athenian Themistokles (I 128–138), the so-called *Sikelika*, an antiquarian introduction about the colonization of Sicily (VI 2–5), and the digression about Harmodius and Aris- togeiton (VI 54–59; cf. I 20:2).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundation of Modern Historiography*, pp. 41–44.

<sup>56</sup> Woodhead, “Thucydides' Portrait of Cleon”, pp. 289–317. Cf. also, e.g., Montgomery, *Gedanke und Tat*, pp. 55–60; Schneider, *Information und Absicht bei Thukydides*, pp. 20–24, 47–52. For critique against Woodhead, see Erbse, *Thukydides-Interpretationen*, pp. 152–158. Erbse claims that Thucydides' account “zeigt den jeweiligen Vorgang im richtigen, der Sache angemessenen Lichte” (*ibid.*, p. 157). Woodhead might indeed have gone too far in accusing Thucydides of falsification, but Erbse neglects, in my opinion, the strongly interpretative features in Thucydides' story.



factual information,<sup>57</sup> the episode concerning Cleon epitomizes perhaps most clearly how a very severe historian narrativized his own existence by interpretatively encoding a figure of the recent past into his story.

Or take Polybius. Despite his strong explanatory ambition, he is very much concerned to allow only history in its factual pastness to be part of his interpretative story. His concession to patriotism, for instance, is explicit, but carefully hedged. "Now I would grant", he says, "that writers should show partiality towards their own countries, but they should not make assertions about them that are contrary to facts" (XVI 14:6).<sup>58</sup> His attitude to rhetoric is also ambivalent. While he skilfully organizes the subject matter of his narrative and furnishes some speeches stylistically or accepts the rhetorical character of the sources,<sup>59</sup> he condemns historians who placed rhetorical composition in the mouths of their characters;<sup>60</sup> while he praises Ephorus for his phraseology, his treatment and working out of the argument (XII 28:10), he is critical of Zeno's concern with elegance of style (XVI 17:9). His opinion is that "one should bestow care on and be earnest about the proper manner of reporting events ... but one should not place this as the first and leading thing among the moderate men" (XVI 17:10).<sup>61</sup> He still wished to stand for truth as the chief criterion of speeches in historical narratives.<sup>62</sup> As it seems, he struggled restlessly to concretize and diversify his high ideals about historical truth, making his own story into a dialogue between the facts of the past and the practical realities and needs of the present.

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<sup>57</sup> See Westlake, *Studies in Thucydides*, pp. 201–223.

<sup>58</sup> ἐγὼ δὲ διότι μὲν δεῖ ῥητὰς διδόναι ταῖς αὐτῶν πατρίσι τοὺς σπγγραφέας, σπγγωρήσασμ' ἄν, οὐ μὴν τὰς ἐναντίας τοῖς συμβεβηκόσιν ἀποφάσεις ποιέσθαι περὶ αὐτῶν.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Wiedemann, "Rhetoric in Polybius", pp. 289–300. Wooten argues that Polybius' speeches betray an influence from Demosthenes, not Isocrates ("The speeches in Polybius", pp. 248–251). In any event, the influence of rhetoric cannot be denied.

<sup>60</sup> See above Chap. 4, B:2.

<sup>61</sup> δεῖν πρόνοιαν ποιέσθαι καὶ σπουδάζειν ὑπὲρ τοῦ δεόντως ἐξαγγέλλειν τὰς πράξεις ... οὐ μὴν ἡγεμονικώτατόν γε καὶ πρῶτων αὐτὸ παρὰ τοῖς μετρίοις ἀνδράσι τίθεσθαι.

<sup>62</sup> According to Walbank, Polybius did not violate "his strongly felt principles by composing passages of rhetorical fiction" (*Selected Papers*, p. 254); he "cannot be fairly accused of inventing. He is using a long-established convention, and ... shapes and rephrases his material ... so that the result takes on a decidedly personal colouring. But I can find no passage where one can say confidently that Polybius has followed the formula to which even Thucydides in part subscribed when he spoke of recording 'what he thought the speakers would have said'" (*ibid.*, pp. 259–260).

#### 4. Conclusion: Story as Interpretation

It is not necessary to go further down the centuries to illustrate the same phenomenon. Suffice it here merely to note that even such an ardent compiler of sources as Diodorus Siculus has been shown to integrate, after all, his own philosophical and political principles into the narrative.<sup>63</sup> The modern ideal of passively recording oral or written sources evidently never existed.

The historians represent to us the thinking and actions of those ancient persons who were eager to find out and communicate things about the past. And my point taken from them here is a simple one: *the interplay between investigative and interpretative procedures reached its climax as history was narrativized into a coherent story exhibiting the author's own conceptual framework.* In that sense, the story he wrote was indeed "his" story.

The general pattern is that history usually, in some measure, constituted an extratextual and extrafictional reality which was present for the writing person as a hard core of facts, but since even the strictest of historians had an explanatory ambition, not at all regarding himself merely as an objective reporter, the narratives inevitably contain stories about the past history as well as the present existence. Interpretation was the bridge between them, bringing the two worlds of history and story together.

### B. From Eyewitness to Gospel Story

#### 1. Redaction Criticism, Narrative Criticism and Oral History

The presence of interpretative elements in a story might sound as common sense to New Testament scholars. The time is long and for ever passed when the evangelists were regarded as mere collectors of individual units of traditional material. With the emergence of redaction criticism, one detected certain ideological profiles in the redactor's arrangement of and additions to the available material; and with the emergence of narrative criticism, one detected similar and further profiles in the narrative strategies of the finished story.

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<sup>63</sup> The trend to estimate positively Diodorus' own originality in regard to style and content is seen in the works of Palm, *Über Sprache und Stil des Diodoros von Sizilien*, and Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus; idem*, "Diodorus and his Sources", pp. 213–232.

From what we have seen in the present study, however, it becomes obvious that neither of these approaches takes seriously the intricate relationship between history and story. The oral history approach, on the other hand, alerts us to the ancient practice of how *history as an extrafictional reality interacted with an interpretative process during the inquiry as well as during the creation of a story*. In our search for the past, be it the historical Jesus or anything else, we never get around the interpretative and narrativizing elements of ancient inquiry and communication.<sup>64</sup>

As against advocates of redaction criticism, as it has normally been practised, it becomes evident that history was not only embodied in isolated units of anonymous character, but in stories reflecting the experience and values of real people, making the sharp distinction between tradition and redaction and between the oral and the written word invalid. And to continue, in accordance with redaction criticism, to use the pair “historisch” and “geschichtlich” as two very distinctive entities is arbitrary, because it is an invention of New Testament scholars which hardly accords with the ancient notions.<sup>65</sup> The source of the past, the eyewitness, is an observer and participant of a historical event as well as an interpreter of that event, being part of both “Historie” and “Geschichte”. *The oral history approach teaches us that both the event and its meaning are historical facts*.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, as against advocates of narrative criticism, who often abandon any distinction between tradition and redaction, it becomes obvious that the absolutizing of the narrative world of a story focuses too much on the interpreted history and neglects the widespread notion and practice of the interaction between history as a past event and history within the story. All too often our analytical methods tend to silence the oral history and the living voice of the ancient people, burying them under the sophisticated patterns of various literary strategies!

## 2. Oral History Not Becoming Story

In early Christianity some eyewitness testimonies were, to be sure, buried in complex processes of tradition, transmission and redaction. Just as the

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<sup>64</sup> For the historical Jesus, cf. Schröter, “Markus, Q und der historische Jesus”, pp. 173–200. In his book *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte*, Schröter argues that the reception of the sayings tradition in Mark, Q and *Gospel of Thomas* is to be regarded as a “remembrance phenomenon”. For the issue at hand, cf. his final comments on pp. 482–486.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Weiss, “History and a Gospel”, pp. 81–94.

<sup>66</sup> See the introductory remarks in the beginning of Chap. 4.

ancient historians selected what was most worthy of mention, there was a selective process in early Christianity already from the beginning.

What happened, for instance, to all the local rumours that probably existed? Some of them survived, it seems, but were entirely intermingled with other sorts of material in the gospel narratives.<sup>67</sup> Other such rumours, one must infer, were sorted out. And due to the oppressed social identity and weak position of female witnesses, the women's testimonies of the empty tomb were, from early on, the object of a subtle combination of investigative and interpretative procedures with a legitimizing ambition.<sup>68</sup> Their oral history was encoded into a story in a most indirect way.

What about Mary, the mother of Jesus? We have seen that the Lukan author had a special interest in her paradigmatic role and probably intended to list her as his informant concerning certain episodes of Jesus' birth. Mary's aim to remember what happened at that time was evidently part of the tradition available to him. On the basis of Luke 2:19, 51b and Acts 1:14, and the tradition reflected in at least two of these passages, one might indeed hypothesize that Mary was present in Jerusalem and known as a person who carried precious memories of such matters concerning Jesus that were unfamiliar to others.<sup>69</sup>

One should not, therefore, dismiss entirely the notion that some of the material in Luke 1–2 was formed and developed partly on the basis of Mary's oral history, or that some of it, at least, has its origin as family tradition.<sup>70</sup> Thorleif Boman points to the female perspective of the Lukan birth narrative and argues that it must have been formed, as much of the special Lukan material in Boman's view,<sup>71</sup> by a group of women. He thinks of the influence of Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna (cf. Luke 8:2–3; 24:10).<sup>72</sup> But these women disappear entirely as named individuals in the post-Easter period. So why not the mother of Jesus, clearly involved in the event itself and mentioned, as we have seen, at least once by name in a post-Easter situation? If Heinz Schürmann, for instance, is correct to trace Luke 1:26–56; 2:1–20; 2:22–39; and 2:41–51 back to a com-

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<sup>67</sup> See above Chap. 2, B:2.

<sup>68</sup> See above Chap. 4, B:5.

<sup>69</sup> See above Chap. 2, B:6d.

<sup>70</sup> Bauckham argues on the basis of similarities between the Lukan genealogy and the letter of James in matters of Davidic messianism, "Enochic" apocalypticism and pesher exegesis that the genealogy goes back to the brothers of Jesus, and to Jude in particular (*Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, pp. 315–371).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. above Chap. 2, B:5d.

<sup>72</sup> Boman, *Die Jesus-Überlieferung*, pp. 130–131.

munity in the mountains of Judea and in Jerusalem during the sixties,<sup>73</sup> one might indeed envision that Mary's oral history was still vividly told at this time and place. This point would be accentuated if Rainer Riesner is correct to regard the Lukan birth narrative as family tradition and to locate the entire Lukan special tradition in circles around James and other relatives of Jesus, especially in the Jerusalem community as depicted in the first chapters of Acts.<sup>74</sup>

It is evident, however, that the Lukan author did not merely record the memories of Mary. We have no solid indication that he had any direct access to the testimony of the witness besides the sources at his disposal. The birth narrative reflects indeed a complicated and multifaceted transmission process. These sources, and not the immediate hearing of the eyewitness, were the basis of the author's narrative strategies. Thus the oral history of Jesus' own mother comes through only vaguely and indirectly.

It is significant that Jesus' relatives, for all we know, do not appear as informants about any larger parts of the gospel narratives. Mary's treasured memories concern only some aspects of Jesus' birth, and they are entirely integrated into other items of information. James, the ideal informer according to ancient standards, limits himself to certain blocks of material which deal mainly with ethical issues recorded as Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain.<sup>75</sup> The relatives of Jesus say nothing further, as far as evidence goes, about his childhood, his controversies and discussions, his travels and miracles, his death and resurrection. Such items, it seems, have no direct roots in the living voices of his relatives.

It is true, as Joanna Dewey points out,<sup>76</sup> that early Christian texts are not representative of early Christianity as a whole. The recognition of the oral media of early Christianity opens up possibilities for a richer understanding of the earliest years of the Jesus movement. *The oral histories of the local people, of some women, of Jesus' relatives, never became stories of their own.* They were sorted out, or "buried", in the sense that they became entirely integrated into other items of information and other forms of discourse. Dewey is partly correct to point to the influence of a small minority of educated men behind this selective process,<sup>77</sup> but she is

<sup>73</sup> Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, I, p. 145.

<sup>74</sup> Riesner, "Luke's Special Tradition", pp. 48–49. Cf. also Riesner, "James's Speech (Acts 15:13–21)", pp. 276–277.

<sup>75</sup> See above Chap. 4, A:6c.

<sup>76</sup> Dewey, "Textuality in an Oral Culture", pp. 56–61.

<sup>77</sup> She is only partly correct, in my view, because Peter was not among the highly educated, yet his influence cannot be neglected.

wrong to imply that it was the dominance of educated males as such that in effect led to the silencing of the oral media of early Christianity. We only have to think of the central importance of these media in the learned, male rabbinic movement.<sup>78</sup> The issue at stake here has nothing to do with education, gender and various forms media in themselves. The integration of certain eyewitness testimony into other supplementary items shows instead that *the gospel tradition never built merely on the subjective recollection of what certain people happened to remember about the past*. Rumours that were regarded as unreliable, family traditions that were valued so high among ancient people concerned to write about the past, were checked and supplemented. *The educated men were not out to distort and disrupt, even if some modern scholars might feel that is precisely what they did, but to decisively secure the proper enlargement as well as selection of fluctuating oral histories and rumours.*<sup>79</sup>

### 3. Oral History as Written Tradition

The choice of medium was not bound to gender or social status; the enlargement and selection could make use of different media of communication – oral and written. One must of course realize that certain oral histories were available to the evangelists not as oral testimony or oral tradition, but in the form of written material which already had integrated various eyewitness reports into a small narrative.

The most evident example is the passion narrative. Rudolf Pesch, in particular, has developed the view that the Markan author utilized a coherent passion narrative which originated among the Galilean members of the early church in Jerusalem soon after Jesus' death, no later than 37.<sup>80</sup> The pre-Markan passion story as reconstructed by Pesch is found not only in 14:1–16:8, but also in 8:27–33; 9:2–13, 30–35; 10:1, 32–34, 46–52; 11:1–23, 27–33; 12:1–12, 13–17, 34c, 35–37, 41–44; and 13:1–2. Al-

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<sup>78</sup> So Jaffee, "Figuring Early Rabbinic Literary Culture", pp. 71–72.

<sup>79</sup> Hengel, when comparing the role of James with the role of Peter, states: "Die Familie Jesu hatte dagegen keinen derartigen Anteil an der Jesusüberlieferung, m. E. ein Indiz für die relative historische Zuverlässigkeit der synoptischen Tradition" ("Jakobus der Herrenbruder", p. 101).

<sup>80</sup> See, most fully, Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, II, pp. 1–27. He responds to several of his critics in the Tübingen lecture, "Das Evangelium in Jerusalem", pp. 113–155. Green, in his monographical treatment of the passion narrative, follows Pesch in his evaluation of Mark as a conservative redactor (*The Death of Jesus*, pp. 137–147).

though one might wish to question some aspects of Pesch's proposal,<sup>81</sup> his detailed and interrelated arguments concerning the extent of the source make it extremely difficult to find any conclusive reason to reject his hypothesis as a whole. There is sufficient evidence from the use of places and names to locate the narrative in Jerusalem. The precise dating is perhaps the weakest point of his proposal.<sup>82</sup> He builds mainly on the fact that the high priest is referred to without the mention of his name (14:53, 54, 60, 61, 63), arguing that this is conceivable only during the time between 18–37 CE when the hearers immediately knew that it was Caiphas who was in office.<sup>83</sup> This is possible, but not mandatory.

Pesch's hypothesis raises indeed several interesting possibilities concerning Peter's role as an eyewitness and informant of the passion narrative. The Galilean perspective of the story is visible in passages such as 9:30; 14:28, 70; 15:41; and 16:7, and it may, as Pesch himself believes, indicate the particular influence of people from Galilee. Acts 1:11 and 2:7 suggest, furthermore, that Jesus' disciples were identified as Galileans in Jerusalem; and Peter was certainly among them. Moreover, in the pre-Markan account as identified by Pesch, Peter figures prominently.<sup>84</sup> The Galilean perspective of the early passion narrative is, it seems, epitomized through the Petrine perspective.<sup>85</sup> In the passion narrative, therefore, the leading Galilean disciples, and Peter in particular, seem to have narrativized their own existence by producing a narrative concerning Jesus' death and resurrection.

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<sup>81</sup> Other proposals exist indeed. For an annotated list, see Soards, "The Question of a Pre-Markan Passion Narrative", pp. 1493–1500. Cf. also, more recently, Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu*, pp. 8–14.

<sup>82</sup> For critique of this point, cf., e.g., Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu*, pp. 208–210.

<sup>83</sup> Evidently Pesch developed this argument quite late during the successive revisions of his hypothesis. Cf. Pesch, "Das Evangelium in Jerusalem", p. 121.

<sup>84</sup> 8:29, 32–33; 9:2, 5; 11:21; 14:29, 33, 37, 54, 66–72; 16:7.

<sup>85</sup> I find it difficult, however, to accept Crossan's thesis that all four canonical gospel narratives draw on an early form of the *Gospel of Peter*, where Peter speaks in the first person, that is, from the "Cross Gospel", as Crossan calls it (*The Cross That Spoke*). For a refutation of Crossan, see Brown, "The *Gospel of Peter*", pp. 321–343. In a more recent study (*Who Killed Jesus?*), Crossan enters into debate with Brown's views as expressed in the article and his commentary on the passion narrative (*The Death of the Messiah*), but without taking seriously the full force of Brown's critique. Cf. also Crossan, "The Gospel of Peter & the Canonical Gospels. Independence, Dependence, or Both?", pp. 7–51. The dissertation of S. E. Schaeffer, "The 'Gospel of Peter', the Canonical Gospels, and Oral Tradition" (Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1990), was not available to me.

This Petrine perspective is perhaps visible in the Servant christology of the narrative. Pesch elaborates the substructure of the *passio iusti* motif and sees, among other Old Testament texts, a number of allusions to the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>86</sup> Already in the early 1950s, Christian Maurer argued in some detail that a Servant christology had decisively influenced the formation of the passion narrative available to the Markan author;<sup>87</sup> and in his presidential address a few years later Vincent Taylor expressed similar ideas independently of Maurer.<sup>88</sup> These two scholars differ, of course, from Pesch in a number of details, but it is nevertheless noteworthy, for our purposes, that Peter is elsewhere in the New Testament especially associated with the conception of Jesus as God's servant. On four occasions Jesus is explicitly called "servant" (παῖς); on two of these occasions the label occurs on the lips of Peter (Acts 3:13, 26); on the other two in prayers of a community where Peter is present (Acts 4:27, 30).<sup>89</sup> It is not impossible that Luke was aware of its archaic character.<sup>90</sup> In addition, various motifs from Isaiah 53 have shaped the tradition in 1 Peter 2:21–25.<sup>91</sup> Evidently someone considered it appropriate to associate Peter with a text that clearly portrays Christ as the Suffering Servant. The allusions to the Deutero-Isaianic Servant Songs in the Markan passion narrative come thus into new light.<sup>92</sup> The notion of God's servant seems to have played a role in its formation. One might indeed, with Oscar Cullmann, hypothesize that this goes back to Peter.<sup>93</sup> The one who preserved the painful memory of his misconceived attempt to prevent the suffering of Jesus could be the one who after Easter realized and verbalized in a special way that such a suffering was, after all, in accordance with God's purposes as expressed in the Scriptures.

<sup>86</sup> Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, II, p. 14.

<sup>87</sup> Maurer, "Knecht Gottes", pp. 1–38.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, "The Origin of the Markan Passion-Sayings", pp. 159–167.

<sup>89</sup> In Matt 12:18 the term is used in a quotation of Isa 42:1; in Luke 2:43 it means simply "boy".

<sup>90</sup> So, e.g., Jeremias, "παῖς θεοῦ", p. 701; Taylor, "The Origin of the Markan Passion-Sayings", p. 162.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. also 1 Pet 3:18 (περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν, δίκαιος) with Isa 53:10, 11.

<sup>92</sup> In Pesch's delimitation of the pre-Markan passion narrative, the following texts are among the ones to be considered: Mark 9:12/Isa 53:3; Mark 10:34/Isa 50:6; Mark 14:24/Isa 53:12; Mark 14:26–31/Isa 53:3, 6; Mark 14:61/Isa 53:7; Mark 14:65/Isa 50:6; Mark 15:5/Isa 53:7; Mark 15:16–20/Isa 50:6.

<sup>93</sup> Cullmann, *Die Christologie*, p. 74. Cf. also the discussion in Cullmann, *Petrus*, pp. 69–72, where he similarly traces the Servant christology back to Peter, though without mentioning the pre-Markan passion narrative. Cullmann is followed by Taylor, "The Origin of the Markan Passion-Sayings", p. 163.



One wonders indeed how the author of the Markan narrative became acquainted with this source. Pesch is sceptical about Peter's influence behind the Markan gospel narrative as a whole and rejects the identification of the author with John Mark.<sup>94</sup> I find reason to believe otherwise, as I will explain. If the present hypothesis is correct, however, one detects a situation where the oral history of an eyewitness was not buried under the influence of other perspectives, but served early as a decisive factor in the creation of a written tradition. *The evangelist, on this occasion, found the living voice of the apostle in a textualized form which probably had been re-oralized in particular settings.* Oral history had been narrativized already in the tradition; it was mediated to the evangelist through a narrating text.

#### 4. The Papias Note: Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* III 39:15

Peter might, however, have been more than a textualized and re-oralized voice to the Markan author. As is well-known, Papias had a viewpoint that was rather different from the modern redactional and narrative perspective, asserting as self-evident that Peter served as the informant of Mark. Not being an eyewitness himself, Mark wrote down from memory that which he had heard Peter teaching. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica* III 39:15, Eusebius thus quotes from Papias a tradition (παράδοσιν) going back to the presbyter:

"And this the presbyter used to say: 'Having become the interpreter of Peter, Mark wrote accurately – not, indeed, in order – as much as he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor followed him, though later on, as I said, [he followed] Peter, who gave teaching in the form of chreiai but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to falsify nothing in them'"<sup>95</sup>

Papias might have had his own reasons for pointing to Mark's connection with Peter. The second century witnessed the emergence of several

<sup>94</sup> Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, I, pp. 3–11.

<sup>95</sup> καὶ τοῦθ' ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἔλεγεν· Μάρκος μὲν ἑρμηνευτῆς Πέτρου γενόμενος, ὅσα ἐμνημόνευσεν, ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν, οὐ μέντοι τάξει τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου ἢ λεχθέντα ἢ πραχθέντα. οὔτε γὰρ ἤκουσεν τοῦ κυρίου οὔτε παρηκολούθησεν αὐτῷ, ὕστερον δέ, ὡς ἔφην, Πέτρῳ ὃς πρὸς τὰς χρείας ἐποιεῖτο τὰς διδασκαλίας, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς περ σύνταξιν τῶν κυριακῶν ποιούμενος λόγιων, ὥστε οὐδὲν ἤμαρτεν Μάρκος οὕτως ἔνια γράψας ὡς ἀμνημόνευσεν. ἐνὸς γὰρ ἐποιήσατο πρόνοιαν, τοῦ μηδὲν ὧν ἤκουσεν παραλιπεῖν ἢ ψεύσασθαι τι ἐν αὐτοῖς.

attempts to authorize written compositions by reference to Peter. Writings such as *the Gospel of Peter*, *the Apocalypse of Peter*, *the Acts of Peter* and the reconstructed Pseudo-Clementine *Kerygmata Petrou* presumably came into being in the mid-second century or the second half of the second century; 2 Peter was perhaps composed shortly before. Although most of them are later than Papias' own composition,<sup>96</sup> they are likely to reflect tendencies going back to the earlier parts of the century. Clement of Alexandria preserves a notion which exhibits some striking features. In *Stromata* VII 106:4 he speaks, quite polemically, of the heretical Basilides' claim to have had a certain Glaucias, "the interpreter of Peter" (τὸν Πέτρου ἑρμηνέα), as teacher. Basilides was active in Egypt during the reign of Hadrian (117–138 CE).<sup>97</sup> It would certainly be tempting to conclude, in line with Walter Bauer's influential view,<sup>98</sup> that Papias found it necessary to counter the emerging gnostic attempts to claim Peter as a champion, insisting that the true locus of Peter's teaching was to be found in the Markan story. But caution is called for. For all we know from the preserved fragments, Papias is amazingly non-apologetic. Explicit anti-gnostic polemic is missing. He does not give the impression of writing primarily to combat heresy. And Papias claims to quote a tradition from the presbyter, which makes it possible that it was Basilides who reacted against an already existing notion of Mark as Peter's interpreter, not that Papias necessarily reacted against Basilides' claim.<sup>99</sup> The most we can say, therefore, is that while Papias certainly did not write in a theological vacuum, the precise purpose of his writing remains largely unknown to us.

Within the comparative perspective of the ancient historians, Papias' note says nothing that would be conceived as strange or extremely peculiar.<sup>100</sup> On the contrary, it seems very natural, from what we have seen, that an evangelist concerned with an essential event of the past would rely on an important eyewitness and interrogate him from the perspective of

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<sup>96</sup> The exact dating of Papias' writing is uncertain, but it falls probably some time during the first half of the second century CE. Harnack dated it somewhere between 140 (145) and 160 (*Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur*, I, p. 357). For a survey of different proposals, with some criticism of Harnack's late dating, see Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis*, pp. 88–94. Körtner himself dates it early, to c. 110 (*ibid.*, pp. 92–94). Cf. also, more recently, e.g., Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*, p. 77 (c. 120–135).

<sup>97</sup> For a full discussion, see Löhr, *Basilides*, pp. 324–337.

<sup>98</sup> Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei*, p. 188.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Löhr, *Basilides*, pp. 21–23.

<sup>100</sup> Perhaps Papias actually regarded himself as a historian. So Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, p. 67.

his own present concerns and conceptions. Paul probably did something similar as he visited Peter in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18).<sup>101</sup> Although Mark is portrayed in a fashion which perhaps hides his active role in the composition of the narrative, *Papias' statement as a whole fits neatly within the perspective reflected in the methodological conviction and practical reality of the ancient historians*. For Papias, at least, there was a rather direct route from eyewitness testimony to gospel story.

## 5. Papias, Mark and Peter

### a. Markan Interpretation and Eyewitness Testimony

The notion that the second evangelist actually informed himself, or became informed, along the lines indicated by Papias has, for some reason, largely been rejected by recent scholarship.<sup>102</sup> Many scholars quickly classify any defence of the Papias' note as outdated discussions from apologetic conservatives, failing entirely to see that *Papias' view legitimizes no more than other fashionable approaches any naive neglect of various sophisticated interpretative elaborations*. They do not realize, as I have stressed repeatedly, that *a close study of the oral history of an eyewitness brings to the fore the complex interplay between historical truth and interpreted truth on all levels of tradition and transmission, from the eyewitness' involvement in the event to the final story*. We just discussed the fate of certain eyewitness testimonies that were "buried" in the course of tradition, transmission and redaction.

Dennis Nineham produced an amazing argument as he regarded the theological features of the gospels as a reason to reject any real influence of eyewitness accounts in the gospel tradition. His view was that the ancient historians regarded eyewitness testimony as the ultimate datum, as the bed-rock truth below which nobody could dig, so that "history for them consisted largely in discovering and stringing together such testimony".<sup>103</sup> With such a view of matters, it becomes, of course, very striking that the evangelists do not merely "string together" eyewitness reports passively, but create coherent narratives with distinctive, internal theological profiles. Nineham thus argues, for instance, that "if the organization of the material and the connexions between the incidents in Mark are *theological*

<sup>101</sup> See above Chap. 2, B:4.

<sup>102</sup> Telford, in his survey of the debate concerning the pre-Markan tradition, omits any discussion of it ("The Pre-Markan Tradition", pp. 693–723).

<sup>103</sup> Nineham, "Eye-Witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition. III", p. 257.

in basis and intention, then they do not need the activity of eye-witnesses to explain them".<sup>104</sup>

Nineham's view of the ancient historians is simplified and misleading, thus producing a false argument. For all the importance the historians attached to eyewitness reports, their literary ambition was not that of merely stringing them together. As we have seen, not only did the most prolific of them weigh and select the material with critical care, but from the very beginning of history writing their objective stance was always combined with literary and ideological ambitions reflecting their subjectivity and interpretative ambition. Although the ancient historians mostly regarded the reports of eyewitnesses as of prime importance, they intermingled carefully fact and interpretation into coherent narratives. The Markan author, as well as the other gospel writers, did very much the same, and *the internal theological profile of his narrative is therefore no indication that he did not appreciate and use eyewitness testimony.*

#### b. Papias' Informant

Nevertheless, contrary to the opinion of several scholars of previous generations, it has now become customary to regard Papias' statement as apologetic fiction.<sup>105</sup> Almost as a scholarly dogma, it is stated that the testimony of the presbyter John, serving as Papias' informant, has no real value as regards the relationship between Mark and Peter. Papias was not reliable; that is what Eusebius thought; and he was correct, we are told.

This scepticism often goes hand in hand with an emphasis on Papias' anti-gnostic tendency. Kurt Niederwimmer, in an article published in 1967, influenced New Testament scholarship strongly in this direction.<sup>106</sup> Three arguments speak against the veracity of Papias' note, according to Niederwimmer.<sup>107</sup> Firstly, the Markan story exhibits geographical items carrying the characteristics of a person from outside of Palestine; second-

<sup>104</sup> Nineham, "Eye-Witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition. I", p. 24.

<sup>105</sup> So, e.g., Zuntz, "Wann wurde das Evangelium Marci geschrieben?", pp. 69–71. Zuntz repeats the same, negative judgement in his article "Papiana", p. 262. A notable exception to this trend is Hengel's treatment of Papias' note in, e.g., *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, pp. 47–50, and *Die johanneische Frage*, pp. 75–107. Hengel develops the implications of his view in a forthcoming monograph, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*. Zuntz is aware of Hengel's opinion, but does not discuss his arguments. In addition to Hengel, cf. Ellis, "The Date and Provenance of Mark's Gospel", pp. 801–815; Orchard, "Mark and the Fusion of Traditions", pp. 779–800.

<sup>106</sup> Niederwimmer, "Johannes Markus", pp. 172–188. He discusses most of the older contributions to the issue.

<sup>107</sup> Niederwimmer, "Johannes Markus", pp. 178–185.

ly, the Jewish rites referred to in the story point to an author entirely unfamiliar with these customs; and thirdly, the form- and redaction-critical method has shown that the story emerges not from an eyewitness but out of a complicated and contradictory transmission process involving various early Christian groups. According to Niederwimmer, the most likely hypothesis is that Papias (or his tradition) created the ideal of Mark as Peter's interpreter on the basis of the peculiar linking of the two in 1 Peter 5:13. The purpose of this creation was to combat the authority attributed to Peter in gnostic gospels from this period.<sup>108</sup>

We have already noticed the peculiar lack of anti-gnostic polemic in the fragments preserved from Papias. For the rest, it is important to keep two issues apart. (1) Is it likely that Peter and Mark established connections sufficiently close to argue that the latter was in some sense familiar with the activity of the former? (2) Is it likely that Mark as Peter's interpreter was the author of the Markan story?

As to the first question, one is struck by Niederwimmer's quick dismissal of the presbyter John as being Papias' "alleged" informant.<sup>109</sup> What real evidence do we have for suggesting that the influence from the presbyter is fiction, that it existed only in the imaginative world of Papias? Not much! Eusebius' negative attitude towards Papias is not all that prominent as he comes to this quotation. And he dismisses the studious person to quotations from the presbyter (*Hist. Eccl.* III 39:14). Furthermore, towards the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr provides perhaps an independent confirmation, where he probably states in reference to Mark 3:16–17 that it is written ἐν τοῖς Ἀπομνημονεύμασιν αὐτοῦ (*Dial.* 106:3), that is, we may assume,<sup>110</sup> in the reminiscences of Peter.<sup>111</sup> Another witness appears to be provided by the fragmentary prologue to the Markan gospel in the old Latin MSS:

<sup>108</sup> Niederwimmer, "Johannes Markus", p. 186.

<sup>109</sup> Niederwimmer, "Johannes Markus", pp. 185–186. – For the presbyter mentioned in the quotation as being identical with John the Presbyter mentioned in Eus., *Hist. Eccl.* III 39:4, see Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis*, p. 123.

<sup>110</sup> Marcovich, in his edition of the text, writes ἐν τοῖς Ἀπομνημονεύμασιν (τῶν ἀποστόλων) αὐτοῦ and adduces as support lines 10 and 28 of the same chapter, where ἐν τοῖς Ἀπομνημονεύμασιν τῶν ἀποστόλων αὐτοῦ is used. The pronoun αὐτοῦ thus refers to Christ. Marcovich's suggestion is not implausible. Orchard misses the point as he critically comments on similar views of others that "Jesus himself left no Memoirs" ("Mark and the Fusion of Traditions", p. 789). Yet, Peter is after all, in allusion to Mark 3:17, clearly singled out in the immediate context of the mention of "his reminiscences" – in the previous line in Marcovich's edition.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Abramowski, "Die 'Erinnerungen der Apostel' bei Justin", p. 353.

"... Mark declared, who is called 'stump-fingered', because in comparison with the length of the rest of his body he had small fingers. He has been the interpreter of Peter. After the death of Peter himself, he wrote down this gospel in the regions of Italy".<sup>112</sup>

Donatien de Bruyne's researches led him to date the gospel prologues to the second part of the second century;<sup>113</sup> Adolf von Harnack immediately agreed on this point, specifying the date to somewhere between 160 and 180.<sup>114</sup> That might be too early a dating, as Jürgen Regul has argued,<sup>115</sup> but part of the statement in the prologue is strikingly independent of what is elsewhere said about Mark in texts of a decisively earlier date. The notion that he had small fingers was perhaps an old Roman tradition formulated in Greek,<sup>116</sup> as suggested by the use of the enigmatic term *colobodactylus*. Hippolytus, writing in Greek, is also aware of it (*Ref. VII 30:1*); he might have picked it up while being active in Rome. As it seems therefore, the prologue reflects a certain independent acquaintance with a tradition about the Markan gospel.<sup>117</sup> Papias' "alleged" informant was evidently not entirely alone at the time in postulating a close connection between Mark and Peter, and subsequently, as is well-known, no one questioned it; there was instead a tendency to make it more explicit and direct.<sup>118</sup>

The tradition has roots in the first century CE. Although Papias was indeed familiar with 1 Peter (*Eus., Hist. Eccl. III 39:17*), and evidently also with the Mark mentioned in that letter (*Eus., Hist. Eccl. II 15:2*),<sup>119</sup>

<sup>112</sup> ... *Marcus adseruit, qui colobodactylus est nominatus, ideo quod ad ceteram corporis proceritatem digitos minores habuisset. Iste interpretis fuit Petri. Post excessionem ipsius Petri descripsit idem hoc in partibus Italiae evangelium* (in Regul, *Die antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe*, p. 29).

<sup>113</sup> De Bruyne, "Les plus anciens prologues latins", pp. 209–211, 214. For Mark's prologue, cf. similarly Heard, "The Old Gospel Prologues", pp. 4–6. Among modern commentators, cf., e.g., Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, p. 9; Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, pp. xxvi, xxxi.

<sup>114</sup> Harnack, "Die ältesten Evangelien-Prologe", p. 335.

<sup>115</sup> Regul, *Die antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe*, pp. 84–94, 97–99. In view of the lack of textual evidence, Regul himself leaves the matter open.

<sup>116</sup> North's attempt to trace it back to Mark's "desertion" as reported in Acts 13:13 is exciting, but it rests in large measure on fanciful conjectures ("Μάρκος ὁ κολοβοδάκτυλος", pp. 498–507).

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> I am thinking primarily of Ireneaus and Clement. The texts are quoted by Orchard, "Mark and the Fusion of Traditions", pp. 790–794.

<sup>119</sup> *Eus., Hist. Eccl. II 15:2* is to be regarded Eusebius' own composition (Harnack, "Pseudopapianisches", pp. 159–163), perhaps formed on the basis of the quotation in *Hist. Eccl. III 39:15* (Corssen, "Zu Eusebius h. e. III, 39 und II, 15", pp. 245–246).

in the quotation he links the information not to his own invention, but to a tradition from a person whom, according to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* III 39:7, 14), Papias himself had heard, relied upon and frequently quoted by name.<sup>120</sup> It is noteworthy that while Papias refers to other presbyters in the past tense, to what they “had said”, Aristion and the presbyter John are referred to in the present tense (Eus., *Hist. Eccl.* III 39:4), as if they were still exhibiting a decisive influence.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, in the quotation about Mark, Papias uses the imperfect, thus referring not to an isolated utterance, but to something which the presbyter said repeatedly. It takes strong arguments to dismiss such an acknowledgement altogether.

If we take seriously Papias' direct anchoring of the tradition with a person of immediate importance to himself, we move the date of the notion concerning Mark and Peter back towards the end of the first century.<sup>122</sup> The chronological connection between 1 Peter and the repeated view of the presbyter thus becomes too tight to allow any genetic relationship between the two. Instead, one finds, it seems, a synchronous and reciprocal confirmation of a tradition closely connecting Mark and Peter,<sup>123</sup> speaking of Mark in one case as Peter's “son” and in the other case as his “interpreter”.

### c. Mark and Peter in the New Testament

It is difficult to see how that tradition came into being without assuming some kind of factual basis. The New Testament, it is true, connects John Mark primarily with his cousin Barnabas and – in a somewhat ambiguous manner – Paul.<sup>124</sup> Ulrich Körtner has surveyed the texts and concludes

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<sup>120</sup> Some scholars claim that the tradition of the presbyter according to Eus., *Hist. Eccl.* III 39:15 ends with the first sentence and that the rest is Papias' own interpretation. So, e.g., Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 2. But this is an unprovable assertion. Neither Papias nor Eusebius signal any such break. As it seems from the present text, Papias reproduces in his own words what he is convinced to have heard from the presbyter several times.

<sup>121</sup> This observation speaks against, rather than for, Reicke's view that Papias presupposed the identity of the presbyter John with the apostle John, who is mentioned as among the presbyters of the past (*The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 161–162).

<sup>122</sup> Hengel states the following about the presbyter John: “Dieser Johannes muß ein bedeutender Lehrer und Traditionsträger der Generation vor Papias, d. h. in den Dekaden vor der Jahrhundertwende, gewesen sein” (*Die johanneische Frage*, p. 93). Hengel's book provides the cumulative evidence for this view.

<sup>123</sup> So also Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 150 n. 56.

<sup>124</sup> Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24. It is likely that the John Mark of Acts is the same person as the Mark referred to in Col 4:10; 2 Tim

that the tradition associated with Peter took over, for some reason, the figure of Mark from the Pauline tradition.<sup>125</sup> But Körtner is unable to find a satisfactory explanation of this feature within 1 Peter and the general development of traditions. On the basis of such texts as 1 Corinthians 1:12 and 1 Clement 5:3–7, we may assume only that there existed a certain rivalry between the Petrine and the Pauline tradition, but not that the former integrated an element from the latter.<sup>126</sup> Körtner admits therefore that we cannot exclude the influence of reminiscences of a historical Mark and his variegating role in the first years of the Christian mission.<sup>127</sup>

Acts 13:5 indicates perhaps part of his role. The use of the term ὑπηρέτης suggests probably that he served Barnabas and Paul with material that aided them in their preaching activity. The term was used for someone who handles documents,<sup>128</sup> as in Luke 4:20. While Luke 1:2 informs us that the apostolic eyewitnesses are the actual “ministers of the word”, it is noteworthy that in 13:5 John (Mark) is mentioned – somewhat abruptly – immediately after the report that Barnabas and Paul preached the word of God in the synagogues of Salamis. Somehow, it seems, his ministry had to do with serving them as they were preaching.

It is perhaps also possible to perceive vaguely the evolving contacts between Mark and Peter. Acts 12:12 probably employs an old (local) tradition.<sup>129</sup> And while it in no way shows that here and through Peter Mark

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4:11; Phlm 24. Col 4:10 calls him the cousin of Barnabas, and the book of Acts repeatedly mentions him in close connection to Barnabas. We have, moreover, no basis for assuming that Papias and subsequent writers were thinking of yet another Mark. See, e.g., Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, pp. xxviii–xxix.

<sup>125</sup> Körtner, “Markus der Mitarbeiter des Petrus”, pp. 160–173. He states the main conclusion on p. 167: “Die erste und nächstliegende Schlußfolgerung lautet, daß die Figur des Markus aus der paulinischen in die petrinische Tradition gewandert ist”. Cf. also Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis*, p. 211.

<sup>126</sup> Herzer argues against the general notion of extensive Pauline influences in 1 Peter (*Petrus oder Paulus?*). He explains the mention of Mark in 1 Pet 5:13 on the basis of the author’s dependence upon Acts 12:12, 25 (*ibid.*, pp. 71–73, 262). Herzer neglects however, in my view, to ask specifically why the author of 1 Peter chose in the first place to include a reference to Mark at this point.

<sup>127</sup> Körtner, “Markus der Mitarbeiter des Petrus”, p. 171: “Hier halte ich historische Erinnerungen an einen geschichtlichen Markus und dessen wechselhafte Rolle in den ersten Jahren der christlichen Mission nicht für ausgeschlossen”. The statement is repeated in Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis*, p. 211.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Holmes, “Luke’s Description of John Mark”, pp. 63–72; Taylor, “The Ministry of Mark”, pp. 136–138.

<sup>129</sup> Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter*, p. 48 n. 225.



became acquainted with the passion narrative, as Bo Reicke claims,<sup>130</sup> it does indicate that Peter entertained special connections with the house church of John Mark's mother in Jerusalem. One may also take note of the fact that Mark was closely related to Barnabas, who evidently was his relative (Col 4:10). For all we know, Barnabas sided with Peter during the incident at Antioch (Gal 2:13); and it is not impossible that Mark was present there as one of "the other Jews", because Acts gives indication of his connections with the church in Antioch (Acts 12:25–13:5; 15:35–39). Moreover, another conflict takes place there, the separation of Barnabas (and Mark) from Paul (Acts 15:39). This drastic measure of separation is inconceivable without some deeper theological differences between Barnabas and Paul affecting it, such as the ones indicated in Galatians 2:11–14.<sup>131</sup> The texts, of course, suggest nothing as to Mark being Peter's "son" or "interpreter", but they indicate the possibility that Mark, in fact, knew and appreciated Peter. And in view of the indication that he assisted Barnabas and Paul in a particular way during their activity of preaching, it is perfectly possible that he entertained a similar function also in relation to Peter.<sup>132</sup>

One may indeed end up in total agnosticism in regard to the information provided by Papias. Possible, but nothing more – the ban of "critical" scholarship! However, following the dictum that an ancient author is correct until proven otherwise, it is difficult to see any conclusive reason for labelling it as historically incorrect on all points. It is supported, as we have seen, by 1 Peter 5:13 and Acts 13:5; 12:12, and by the texts depicting Mark's relations with Barnabas, though indeed in a fragmentary and vague way.

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<sup>130</sup> Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels*, p. 163. Unfortunately this kind of hypothetical statements sometimes diminish the value of Reicke's intriguing ideas.

<sup>131</sup> The question of the existence of traditions behind Acts 15:36–41 is hotly debated. I cannot enter into that debate here but assume, with many others, that the author had some local traditions from Antioch at his disposal. Whether these traditions also contained an account of the incident at Antioch is difficult to know.

<sup>132</sup> Wehr argues that the author of 1 Peter cared less whether Silvanus and Mark were connected to Paul or to Peter. He merely selected two apostolic co-workers whom he knew of. The two appear in the New Testament "nur in der Begleitung des Paulus. Daß sie mit Petrus in Verbindung gestanden hätten, ist nicht nachzuweisen" (*Petrus und Paulus*, pp. 199–200; quotation from p. 199). But this is certainly too simplistic a view. Evidence is more complicated than that.

## 6. Papias, Mark, Peter and the Markan Story

Granted Mark entertained a particular relationship to Peter, one still has to deal with the second question mentioned above: does the Markan story reflect such a relationship? As we saw, Niederwimmer's three arguments against the veracity of the Papias' note concern not so much Papias himself and his statement as the character of the Markan narrative. And this is evidently where scholars feel most hesitant.<sup>133</sup>

Niederwimmer is arguing a negative case, and he fails to convince. His three arguments listed above are, at closer scrutiny, seen to be one-sided or wrong. He does not at all consider the fact that the Markan narrative exhibits an unusual amount of correct Aramaic words and formulas, to the extent that Hans Peter Rieger, the learned expert, concludes "daß Markus des Aramäischen mächtig war".<sup>134</sup> Martin Hengel, with his profound knowledge of ancient matters, has also pointed out that the Markan narrative betrays indeed a familiarity with Jerusalem and Palestinian Judaism.<sup>135</sup> The author's "deficient knowledge" of the geography of Galilee, which Niederwimmer brings attention to, is quite understandable from the viewpoint of a Jerusalemite who without modern maps tried to establish his bearings in a strange area far away – with ancient standards – from his home city.<sup>136</sup> As concerns his "misguided" account of Jewish rites, it is likewise, according to Hengel, important to remember that the story purposely presents these customs polemically and tendentiously. Josephus, by comparison, repeatedly seeks recognition as a trustworthy historian, yet he can also be careless and tendentious.<sup>137</sup> The Markan author did not have the ambition of a historian, so one should not ask too much of him.

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<sup>133</sup> Thus Körtner, after acknowledging Mark's variegating role in the first years of the Christian mission, continues: "Ihn [Markus] als Verfasser des Markusevangeliums anzusprechen, ist angesichts der gegenwärtigen Kenntnisse völlig abwegig" ("Markus der Mitarbeiter des Petrus", p. 171; cf. Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis*, pp. 17–18, 211). Körtner relies here entirely upon Niederwimmer's article. Similarly Schweizer, "Markus, Begleiter des Petrus?", pp. 751–752.

<sup>134</sup> Rieger, "Die lexikalischen Aramaismen", p. 84.

<sup>135</sup> Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 46. Cf. also Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, p. xxviii.

<sup>136</sup> Ellis finds it even likely that the writing originated in Palestine itself, in Caesarea ("The Date and Provenance of Mark's Gospel", pp. 801–815). Cf., for the same location proposed by Reicke, above Chap. 1, C:4.

<sup>137</sup> Cf., e.g., Gempf, "Public Speaking", pp. 288–291.

Hengel does not comment here on Niederwimmer's third point,<sup>138</sup> but Niederwimmer builds partly, and in a simplistic fashion, on Nineham's proposal that the form-critical method excludes the role of eyewitnesses;<sup>139</sup> and I have tried several times above to point out some of the general misconceptions implied by that position.<sup>140</sup> Niederwimmer's reliance upon the form- and redaction-critical method constitutes, at it seems, a conceptual prison preventing other possible ways of approaching the problem to have some bearing. Moreover, scholarship has proved him wrong on at least one point, namely his emphatic notion of the strong influence of various early Christian groups in a contradictory transmission process. This idea is highly questionable, not only in view of what we know today of the role played by individual persons in different settings and forms of ancient transmission processes,<sup>141</sup> but also in view of several studies pointing to the sophisticated literary technique and strategy of the Markan story.<sup>142</sup> Its style cannot any more be labelled as "barbarous" or "unrefined". Although the gospel story is written in a relatively simple and popular form of Greek, such stylistic features as parataxis, direct speech and the historical present – to mention a few – serve the literary purpose of making Jesus a contemporary of those who hear/read the story. The influence from the actual use of the traditions in the worship and mission of the early Christian communities is not to be denied, but it is indeed likely that certain specific individuals played a significant role both in the transmission process as well as in the "literaturization" of the traditions in the form of gospel narratives.

An indication of Peter's importance is the significant characterization of him in the Markan narrative itself. He is mentioned altogether twenty-five times. Given the smaller extent of the Markan narrative, this is more frequently than in the other synoptic gospels.<sup>143</sup> As we noticed above,<sup>144</sup> the gospel tradition as a whole pictures him as an eminently prominent

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<sup>138</sup> But see, e.g., his critique against the form-critical approach to Mark in Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 34.

<sup>139</sup> Niederwimmer, "Johannes Markus", pp. 175 n. 15, 176, 177 n. 23. Niederwimmer refers only to the first of Nineham's three articles on the subject.

<sup>140</sup> Chap. 2, B:3; Chap. 3, A:4 and B:4d; Chap. 5, B:6.

<sup>141</sup> This critique against the form-critical method was actually brought out long before Niederwimmer wrote his article. See, e.g., Fascher, *Die formgeschichtliche Methode*, pp. 13, 231–232; Easton, *The Gospel before the Gospels*, pp. 115–116. Niederwimmer – as many others – neglects it entirely.

<sup>142</sup> See the review of Telford, "The Pre-Markan Tradition", pp. 706–709.

<sup>143</sup> For statistics, see Feldmeier, "The Portrayal of Peter", p. 59.

<sup>144</sup> Chap. 2, B:4.

spokesman of the group of disciples and as an eyewitness, and it indicates his role as a transmitter of the Jesus tradition. This goes, of course, for the Markan view as well. In the Markan narrative he is, in addition, the first to be called by Jesus, and Andrew is in that context, quite strikingly, described as “the brother of Simon” (1:16). After the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law, the group following Jesus is referred to as “Simon and those that were with him” (1:36). Andrew and the whole company of disciples are thus defined by reference to Simon. He is accordingly also the first to be mentioned in the lists of the disciples, whether in the company of all the other eleven disciples (3:16) or together with two or three of them (5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33). Furthermore, apart from 9:38 and 10:35–40, he is the only disciple to appear before Jesus as an individual.<sup>145</sup> And finally, towards the end of the story, he is the last disciple whom Jesus addresses personally in Gethsemane (14:37) and the last one to accompany Jesus all the way into the courtyard of the high priest (14:54). At the very closure of the story, he is again singled out for special mention in the group of disciples (16:7).

It is difficult to find a plausible explanation of this characteristic picture of Peter without assuming some kind of particular extrafictional circumstance.<sup>146</sup> The Markan author could, of course, have received information concerning his role from the various traditions at his disposal; it is likely that he did so, especially in the passion narrative. But he uses that information actively and consistently. In twenty-four instances Peter’s name occurs in comments of the narrator. It is employed by Jesus himself only once, in 14:37. Moreover, his active familiarity with the Petrine material is seen in his consistent use of the names Simon and Peter. The former is used up to the list of names in 3:16, where it is explicitly stated that Jesus gave him the name Peter. Afterwards that name is always employed when the narrator speaks. Simon is again used only when Jesus addresses him in 14:37. Finally, Peter is mostly mentioned at structurally vital points in the narrative, five times at the beginning (1:16 [*dis*], 29, 30, 36), three times at the important turning-point in chapter eight (8:29, 32, 33) and nine times at the beginning of the passion narrative (14:29,

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<sup>145</sup> 8:29, 32–33; 9:5; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29–31.

<sup>146</sup> Wiarda, in a recent article, argues that the Markan narrative portrays Peter with a greater degree of individualization and distinctiveness than is often acknowledged. A final comment of his is suggestive: “Distinctive characterization ... raises the question of whether the storyteller portrayed Peter under the constraint of a prior conception of his person” (“Peter as Peter”, p. 37).

33, 37 [*dis*], 54, 66, 67, 70, 72).<sup>147</sup> As it seems, whoever composed the Markan narrative – and evidence suggests John Mark – that person had indeed a special interest in Simon Peter.

### 7. Papias, Mark, Peter and the Early Christian Preaching

Is it possible to substantiate this evident interest in Peter with indication from the compositional activity of the Markan author? Robert W. Guelich has repeated and developed the old proposal that Peter's speech in Acts 10:34–43 reveals the skeleton outline of a primitive kerygma similar in form and content to the Markan story;<sup>148</sup> and Richard J. Bauckham has suggested that the kerygmatic summaries in the speeches of Acts are in fact, as he says, "the literary tip of a vast oral iceberg".<sup>149</sup> C. H. Dodd initiated this view in the early 1930s,<sup>150</sup> building on Martin Dibelius' thesis that the speeches in Acts are indicative of an early sermon pattern.<sup>151</sup> As regards the pre-Lukan character of the speeches in Acts, the consensus, it seems, has now moved away from Ulrich Wilckens' insistence on the strongly redactional character of most of them and acknowledges the author's thorough dependence on earlier material.<sup>152</sup> Guelich refers to

<sup>147</sup> Cf. the chart in Hengel, *Studies in Mark*, pp. 155–156 n. 72.

<sup>148</sup> Guelich, "The Gospel Genre", pp. 209–213; cf. pp. 201–204.

<sup>149</sup> Bauckham, "Kerygmatic summaries", pp. 185–217; quotation from p. 216.

<sup>150</sup> Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative", reprinted in his *New Testament Studies*, pp. 1–11. Cf. also Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 17–35, 46–52.

<sup>151</sup> Dibelius stated his view in *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, p. 15: "Wir haben also das Recht, von einem Schema zu reden, an das der Verfasser sich bewußt bindet und das aus folgenden Gliedern besteht: Kerygma, Schriftbeweis, Bußmahnung". Cf. also Dibelius, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, p. 131 (originally published in 1926). More fully in his Heidelberg lecture, "Die Reden der Apostelgeschichte und die antike Geschichtsschreibung" from 1944, reprinted in Dibelius, *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 120–162, especially p. 142. He treated the Cornelius story in an article from 1947 (*Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 96–107). Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 139–140.

<sup>152</sup> Wilckens states his conclusion several times, e.g., "Bei der Komposition der Reden in 14 und 17 hat Lukas nachweislich ein traditionelles Schema heidenchristlicher Missionspredigt benutzt, während ein solcher Rückgriff auf vorgegebene Überlieferung im Blick auf die judenchristlichen Predigten 2–13 nicht nachweisbar ist" (*Die Missionsreden*, p. 99), or, "die Apostelpredigten des ersten Teils der Acta haben sich im großen ganzen ... als programmatische Kernstücke *lukanischer* Theologie herausgestellt" (*ibid.*, p. 188). The latest edition of Wilckens book, where he evidently modified his position somewhat, was not available to me. He devoted a separate article to Acts 10:34–43, where he similarly states: "Somit ist bis in alle Einzelheiten hinein erwiesen, daß – mit

Peter Stuhlmacher and Graham Stanton as bringing out further significant arguments for the pre-Lukan character of the speech in 10:34–43;<sup>153</sup> to these arguments Guelich adds his own; and Bauckham, in a different sense, strengthens the case for the existence of some flexible, early summaries. There is no need to repeat that discussion here.<sup>154</sup>

Guelich and Bauckham avoid discussing the role of Peter;<sup>155</sup> and so did Dodd.<sup>156</sup> Stuhlmacher is more emphatic, urging us “*Petrus nicht außer Acht zu lassen*”.<sup>157</sup> Caution is indeed appropriate,<sup>158</sup> especially since the core of Paul’s preaching in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41) is somewhat akin to that of Peter’s sermon in Acts 10:34–43.<sup>159</sup> It is nevertheless noteworthy that Peter’s speech, far from being an interpolation into a legend of the conversion of a centurion,<sup>160</sup> is placed within a sequence of

Ausnahme von v. 42b – die ganze Rede in c. 10 in ihrem Aufbau und ihrem Inhalt von Lukas gestaltet worden ist” (“Kerygma und Evangelium”, p. 235).

<sup>153</sup> Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, pp. 277–278 n. 2, 279 n. 1; Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 70–81.

<sup>154</sup> The most important literature is listed by Bauckham, “Kerygmatic summaries”, pp. 189–190 n. 17. – Nineham tried to refute Dodd’s proposal (“The Order of Events in St. Mark’s Gospel”, pp. 223–239). His critique is biased from the insistence that “historical curiosity, as such, was something in which the early Church was conspicuously lacking” (*ibid.*, p. 231), implying that there is no conceivable “Sitz im Leben” for the skeleton outline of the early kerygma. For further critique of Nineham, see Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 76–78.

<sup>155</sup> Guelich does not refer to Peter’s speech in his discussion of him as a possible influence behind the Markan story (*Mark 1–8:26*, pp. xxv–xxix). Lührmann rejects Guelich’s proposal entirely (*Das Markusevangelium*, p. 5), not noticing that Guelich avoids bringing Peter’s role into the discussion.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. his statement in *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 21: “We may with some confidence take these speeches to represent, not indeed what Peter said upon this or that occasion, but the *kerygma* of the Church at Jerusalem at an early period”. But Dodd was positively inclined to the notion that the Markan story “has some special relation to the tradition as handed down by Peter” (“The Gospels as History”, p. 128).

<sup>157</sup> Stuhlmacher, “Das paulinische Evangelium”, p. 181. Stuhlmacher discusses here the early Christian use of the term εὐαγγέλιον. But cf. also his comments in “Zum Thema”, pp. 22–23, 26; “Das paulinische Evangelium”, pp. 181–182; *Biblische Theologie*, I, pp. 50, 57. See also Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, pp. 55–56.

<sup>158</sup> Perkins is quite certain. While the speeches of Peter in Acts may reflect established patterns of early Christian preaching, they “do not”, in her view, “provide evidence for the preaching of the historical Peter” (*Peter*, p. 34). Can we really be that certain?

<sup>159</sup> Note however that Paul’s address in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch exhibits its own peculiar “proem homily” form. See Bowker, “Speeches in Acts”, pp. 96–111.

<sup>160</sup> Against Dibelius, *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, p. 97. For further critique, see Haacker, “Dibelius und Cornelius”, pp. 234–251.

episodes concerning Peter. Cornelius is rather passive, serving mainly as the object of Peter's activity.<sup>161</sup> Peter's speech is thoroughly embedded in the context insofar as Cornelius sends for Peter, in order that he and those who come together with him will hear what Peter has to say (10:22, 33), and insofar as the Holy Spirit fell precisely upon all who heard the word (10:44; 11:15). The section dealing with Peter and Cornelius consists thus of eight inter-related episodes.<sup>162</sup> This section is also intimately connected to the previous episodes about Peter in Lydda (9:32–35) and Joppa (9:36–43), because it contains several explicit references back to these episodes.<sup>163</sup> They form a kind of deliberate contrast, in the sense that certain miraculous events among the Jews precede the further expansion of the new faith to the Gentiles. Hence, throughout the entire section Peter's ministry is at the center of attention; 9:32–11:18 forms one large unit held together by this interest.<sup>164</sup>

It is likely that a large part of this unit is pre-Lukan, in spite of evident Lukan elaborations and additions.<sup>165</sup> If we accept the pre-Lukan character of Peter's speech itself, and if we accept that the speech is closely related to the context, and that this context of inter-connected episodes about Peter integrates the speech within its scope, then we have reason to assume that it was located within a setting of traditions concerned with Peter and his activities already before its inclusion in Acts. While absolute certainty is impossible, the evidence speaks for rather than against the assumption that 10:34–43 represents, in some measure, not only the primitive kerygma, but the kerygma as preached by Peter.

In view of this kind of evidence, one cannot avoid noticing the similarities between Peter's speech and the outline of the Markan story. Most significant is the opening of the story. It locates the beginning of Jesus'

<sup>161</sup> For arguments, see Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 164–165. Differently however, Lüdemann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 137.

<sup>162</sup> 10:1–8, 9–16, 17–23a, 23b–29, 30–33, 34–43, 44–48; 11:1–18. See Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, I, pp. 330–331.

<sup>163</sup> 10:5–6, 17, 23b, 32; 11:5, 13. See further Dietrich, *Das Petrusbild*, pp. 256–258.

<sup>164</sup> Bruce calls the section 9:32–11:18 "an excerpt from what may be called the *Acts of Peter*" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 42).

<sup>165</sup> The last episode, in 11:1–18, betrays perhaps the strongest Lukan characteristics. But cf. Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, I, p. 334. – Plümacher has an interesting discussion of some historiographical considerations (Dion. Hal. and Liv.) that indirectly might have influenced the Lukan composition of the speeches in Acts 10 and 13 ("Die Missionsreden", pp. 161–177). As far as I can judge, Plümacher's view does not exclude the possibility that some of the material is pre-Lukan, though he claims himself to follow and develop the view of Wilckens.

ministry within the context of Isaiah's prophecy and characterizes it as "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1–3), as "God's gospel" (1:14). Acts 10:36 alludes to Isaiah 52:7 and likewise speaks of the events seen in Jesus' ministry in terms of God preaching the gospel of peace (εὐαγγελιζόμενος εἰρήνην) through Jesus Christ.<sup>166</sup> Both times Isaiah plays a significant role; both times the message is characterized as God's gospel; both times Jesus is the Messiah. The Markan story continues with a reference to John the Baptist and his preaching (1:4–8), thus explicitly placing John's activity before Jesus enters the scene; the Galilean activity of Jesus starts only after that John has been arrested (1:14). Acts 10:37 similarly says that the spreading of the word began in Galilee after the baptism which John announced. Next in Mark Jesus is baptized and bestowed with the Spirit (1:9–11), just as Acts 10:38a describes how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, interpreting the anointing in light of Isaiah 61:1. Furthermore, the Markan story opens Jesus' public ministry with a number of mighty acts,<sup>167</sup> the first one being an outright exorcism, and Acts 10:38b significantly summarizes Jesus' activity with the statement that he was doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil. Although the Markan narrative depicts Jesus as an authoritative teacher, the initial impression it conveys is that the actual teaching material plays only a minor role.<sup>168</sup> Instead, in accordance with Acts 10:38–39a, his deeds are in focus.

Acts 10:39b–41 moves on immediately to the passion and the Easter appearances. In Mark, as is well-known, the passion of Jesus occupies a disproportionately large section, dominating the story from Jesus' first prediction of his death and resurrection in 8:31. Perhaps the small notice in Mark 15:42–43, that Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body when evening had come, reveals an awareness of the reference in Acts 10:39b that they hang Jesus on a tree. The parallel in Luke 23:50–52 pays no attention to the Markan remark, which might indicate that Acts 10:39b is part of a pre-Lukan tradition.<sup>169</sup> Although the Markan narrative does not explicitly quote Deuteronomy 21:22–23, it assumes, in line with later

<sup>166</sup> Cf. also Acts 15:7.

<sup>167</sup> 1:21–28, 29–34, 40–45; 2:1–12.

<sup>168</sup> France argues that the content of Jesus' teaching plays a significant role in Mark as a whole ("Mark and the Teaching of Jesus", pp. 101–136). This is possible, but France neglects the narrative function of the opening of a story and plays down the observation that διδάσκειν is used without either direct object or a ὅτι-clause to specify the content in 1:21–22; 2:13; 4:1; 6:2, 6; 10:1; and 14:49. For further literature on Jesus as teacher in Mark, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, p. 202 n. 4.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 76.



Jewish conviction,<sup>170</sup> that the corpses of those hung on a tree should be taken down and buried before sundown.<sup>171</sup> Since Mark 15:42–43 probably is part of the pre-Markan passion narrative, we will here have to assume a possible influence of Peter during an early stage of the development, as we discussed above.<sup>172</sup> The same notion of the tree as equivalent for the cross is associated with Peter in Acts 5:30 and 1 Peter 2:24.<sup>173</sup>

The evidence is certainly indirect and circumstantial, but it seems to suggest that the Markan author was familiar with the fundamental core elements of God's gospel about Jesus Christ as preached by Peter according to Acts 10:34–43. If such a core of the gospel story seems natural to us, one should compare with the so-called sayings gospel – if such a “gospel” ever existed<sup>174</sup> – or later apocryphal gospels.<sup>175</sup>

## 8. Papias, Mark and the Petrine Chreiai

Papias probably indicates that Peter taught in the form of chreiai,<sup>176</sup> that he told anecdotes which Mark wrote down from memory as faithfully as possible. Are there traces of such chreiai in the Markan story?

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<sup>170</sup> Cf. m. Sanh. 6:5–6.

<sup>171</sup> The notion of the three days in Acts 10:40 constitutes, in addition, a standard formula in all the three Markan predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:34). Some temporal items in the passion narrative (14:58; 15:42; 16:1–2) reinforce it. The formula seems to stem from a Semitic phrase (Bayer, *Jesus Predictions*, pp. 206–207). It was part of an early Christian tradition (1 Cor 15:4). Are we to see the reference in Acts 10:40 as a redactional addition based on Luke 9:22; 24:7, 46 (suggested by the repeated use of τῆ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ), or is it reflective of Peter's preaching (suggested by the early Palestinian provenance of the expression)? Perhaps the Lukan author moulded an early expression of Peter, which Mark rendered μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας, into his own diction.

<sup>172</sup> Chap. 6, B:3.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. also Acts 13:29; Gal 3:13. Wilcox argues the view that these texts reflect the use of Deut 21:22–23 and that the “tree”-motif in the New Testament formed part of an early Jewish-Christian midrashic exposition of the Akedah (“Upon the Tree”, pp. 85–99).

<sup>174</sup> This is the label attached to Q by, e.g., Kloppenborg, “‘Easter Faith’ and the Sayings Gospel Q”, pp. 71–99; Robinson, “Sayings Gospel”, pp. 361–388, especially pp. 371–372.

<sup>175</sup> So Guelich, “The Gospel Genre”, p. 212.

<sup>176</sup> I follow Kürzinger, “Die Aussage des Papias”, pp. 255–258. Kürzinger's article shows that Papias is throughout concerned with literary form, so that the usual rendering “as necessity demanded” becomes strange. On this point Black has only some minor criticism against Kürzinger (“The Use of Rhetorical Terminology”, pp. 34, 38).

While Aelius Theon of Alexandria (c. 50–100 CE) defines *chreia* as “a concise statement or action which is well aimed, attributed to a specified character or something analogous to a character” (*Prog.* 5),<sup>177</sup> it is evident that a *chreia* could be of different kinds and that its use did not require advanced rhetorical training. It could be unprompted or prompted by a specific situation, a statement or a response of varying character, single or double, active or passive (for the “action” *chreia*); it could be presented in various rhetorical patterns; it could be expanded or elaborated to function in a variety of discourses and argumentative contexts. Papias had of course never heard Peter speaking, but evidently the character of Mark’s narrative was such that he found no reason to question the presbyter’s suggestion that it depended upon a *chreia*-like teaching. That Mark contains such *chreiai* is likely.<sup>178</sup> Do they have anything to do with the influence of Peter?

Vincent Taylor presented a reserved and yet bold discussion of what he called “the Petrine *chreiai*”. While he certainly expressed due caution in the introduction of his commentary,<sup>179</sup> he selected five or six groups of narratives that are based on personal testimony, probably that of Peter.<sup>180</sup> These are 1:21–39; 4:35–5:43; 6:30–56; 7:24–37; 8:27–9:29 and parts of the passion narrative in 14:1–16:8.

Peter does not, however, play a role in all of these narratives, which means that one must grant equal possibility to the idea that some of this information was conveyed to the Markan author via other channels. The same may be said of other attempts based on different criteria to isolate passages which go back to Petrine eyewitness reminiscences.<sup>181</sup> Peter does figure, however, in 1:21–39; 8:27–9:29 and 14:32–42, 54, 66–72. Do these passages reflect Petrine *chreiai*?

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<sup>177</sup> σύντομος ἀπόφασις ἢ πρῶξις μετ’ εὐστοχίας ἀναφερομένη εἰς τι ὀρισμένον πρόσωπον ἢ ἀναλογοῦν προσώπῳ (Spengel, II, p. 96 lines 19–21). Literature in Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, p. 214 n. 3.

<sup>178</sup> See Beavis, “Women as Models of Faith”, pp. 3–9; Mack/Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion*, pp. 93–100, 123–129, 143–160, 171–177. Cf. also Berger, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments*, pp. 80–81.

<sup>179</sup> Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, pp. 84–85. Taylor expressed this caution in a section dealing with what he calls the “*Chriae*” (*ibid.*, p. 82); but depending upon Dibelius, he thought only of sayings *chreiai*.

<sup>180</sup> Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 102.

<sup>181</sup> Manson refers to C. H. Turner, who included passages in which the third person plural can easily be changed into the first person plural. To these passages Manson adds others which exhibit connections to those isolated by Turner, ending up with a rather long list of the “extent of the Petrine matter” (*Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, pp. 40–42).

The first narrative, in 1:21–39, contains two small chreiai which mention Peter. The kernel element of the episode concerning Jesus' healing at Simon's house is found in 1:30–31. Notwithstanding the veiled theological implications,<sup>182</sup> the brief and unpretentious character of this action chreia is striking. The name of Jesus is not even mentioned, as if it is taken for granted. It is instead specified that it was not just any woman but Peter's mother-in-law who was in bed with a fever. The few details thus given, and perhaps the somewhat awkward addition "with James and John" in the preceding verse,<sup>183</sup> give the impression of an episode told from Peter's point of view.<sup>184</sup> The setting in Capernaum strengthens this impression.<sup>185</sup>

The other chreia appears in 1:36–38, the center of the summarizing account of Jesus' preaching tour in Galilee.<sup>186</sup> Simon is again mentioned explicitly in 1:36, and again there appears a somewhat awkward addition, "and those with him". Why specifying Simon at this point of the story? Perhaps he was the one who transmitted a sayings chreia in which he and his companions were part of the situational context of a pointed Jesus-saying.<sup>187</sup>

In 8:27–9:29 Peter has become a somewhat stylized character in the story, serving as the spokesman of all the disciples. This makes it difficult

<sup>182</sup> Lamarche accurately states: "La naïveté et la vivacité de son récit font penser à quelque chapiteau roman, où le réalisme et la verve d'aucune façon ne s'opposent aux valeurs religieuses universelles" ("La guérison de la belle-mère de Pierre", p. 521). Favouring a symbolic reading of the gospel narratives, Lamarche neglects, however, the diachronic dimension inherent within "la réalité signifiée" (*ibid.*, p. 515).

<sup>183</sup> The addition could either be interpreted as the author's attempt to relate the episode to the mention of the four disciples in 1:16–20 (so, e.g., Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, p. 61) or as indicative of "an old Petrine tradition formulated in the first person" (Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, p. 53; cf. already Zahn, *Einleitung*, II, p. 246; Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 178).

<sup>184</sup> Guelich comments: "As the briefest healing narrative in the Gospels, this pericope may well be one of our oldest traditional units with its roots in Peter's experience" (*Mark 1–8:26*, p. 63).

<sup>185</sup> The episode is placed within the larger section of a day in Capernaum (1:21–34). Reicke points out that Mark's topographical concentration of the Galilean material to Capernaum indicates that recollections of Peter from that place and its neighbourhood were available to the second evangelist (*The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels*, p. 163).

<sup>186</sup> Bultmann evidently regarded 1:35–39 as entirely redactional (*Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, p. 167). But terms and expressions such as κατεδιώξεν, Σίμων, ἀλλαχού and τὰς ἐχομένας κωμοπόλεις indicate its pre-Markan character.

<sup>187</sup> Zahn claimed that the phrase Σίμων καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ goes back to a "we-account" of Peter (*Einleitung*, II, p. 246); but here Zahn merely stipulates his point, giving no arguments.

to isolate any Petrine tradition on the basis of his appearance in certain pericopes, though indeed, as we noticed above, the consistent and strategic use of his name may be due to Mark's special acquaintance with him. Perhaps, however, Jesus' pointed utterance in 8:33 originally was part of Peter's recollections. There is no evidence of any such sharp opposition to and actual rejection of Peter in the church of the first century; the saying was therefore hardly introduced at a secondary stage of transmission but has firm roots in the tradition.<sup>188</sup> And who else but Peter himself would transmit such a drastic criticism of the leading apostle? For the Lukan author it seems to have been utterly embarrassing; he omits it altogether. For Peter, on the other hand, the episode must have made a profound impression, notwithstanding its extreme harshness.<sup>189</sup> It is likely also that this kind of sharp rebuttal was located in some kind of situational context, and it may well be that such a context had to do with misconceived messianic expectations (cf. 8:29) and attempts to prevent Jesus from accepting the fate of suffering and defeat.

As we move on to the other passages isolated by Taylor (14:32–42, 54, 66–72), we are likely to find the basis of these Petrine features in the origin of the passion narrative. We dealt with that issue above. Primarily by distinguishing between items with Semitic and non-Semitic flavour, Taylor himself argued the hypothesis that Mark found an account of the passion in Rome (stage A) and expanded it by the aid of Petrine tradition (stage B).<sup>190</sup> Taylor's hypothesis concerning Mark's use of two various sources does not, however, hold for closer scrutiny.<sup>191</sup> If Pesch is correct in his delimitation of the pre-Markan source, several of the references to Peter in passages which Taylor attributed to Petrine influence (8:32–33; 9:2, 5; 14:32–42, 54, 66–72) were actually part of a written account of Jesus' passion. What remains are the two small chreiai in 1:21–39.

Generally speaking, therefore, we must conclude that only a minority of the Markan chreiai actually go back directly to Peter. Mark did not

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<sup>188</sup> So Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, p. 165.

<sup>189</sup> Brown and Meier argue that Mark could not have been an interpreter of Peter since the Markan picture of Peter is the least favourable of all the gospels (*Antioch and Rome*, p. 196). Do Brown and Meier then assume that Peter would have enhanced the picture of himself had he been the authority behind the gospel narrative? Is it not as likely that he painfully but faithfully remembered his own failures?

<sup>190</sup> Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, pp. 653–664. The items included in this so-called stage B of the passion and resurrection narrative are 14:3–9, 22–25, 32–42, 47–52, 54, 65, 66–72; 15:2, 6–14, 16–20, 25, 27, 31–32, 33, 38, 40–41, 47. With the exception of 15:33, 38, 47, they all carry Semitic flavour, according to Taylor.

<sup>191</sup> For some critique, see Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 159–160.

employ only his own notes or the memories of another's teaching; and even where he may have done so, one has to expect that some chreiai will stand at a short remove from Peter's testimony while others will stand at a greater remove. Mark was an "interpreter". Moreover, the story indicates indeed the presence of multiple traditional milieus and stages in the development of traditional units. But to think of a purely collective form of pre-Markan tradition and transmission not only neglects the individuality of the act of remembering and recalling, as I pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, but also side-steps the broad currencies of ancient oral history.<sup>192</sup> While a Petrine influence behind the Markan narrative is likely, in my view, *the evangelist, in accordance with the ancient practice, incorporated Peter's oral history into his story by means of a subtle interchange between the eyewitness testimony and other traditional material available to him, on the one hand, and his personal, selective and interpretative perspective, on the other hand, at the end thus narrativizing his own existence by presenting history as story.*<sup>193</sup>

## 9. Peter, the Markan Story and the Matthean Story

### a. *A Cumulative Argument*

The Markan author is himself silent concerning his manner of collecting material and composing a story. Perhaps we would never have realized the influence of Peter had it not been for the note of Papias preserved by Eusebius. It constitutes an invaluable, though fragmentary, indication of a practice among the early Christians that is in accordance with broad seg-

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<sup>192</sup> It is thus necessary to supplement Breytenbach's collectivistic view of the early Christian tradition and transmission behind the logia of the Markan narrative, as he states, for instance, in reliance on Jan Assmann's studies on the memory of cultures, the following: "Die Tradenten – einschließlich des Verfassers des Mk.-Ev. – der Jesuslogien waren die Träger eines kollektiv geteilten Wissens, einer Art 'kulturellen Gedächtnisses' mit Worten Jesu als Kern" ("Vormarkinische Logientradition", p. 729). Cf. similarly Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte*, pp. 462–466. Who were these "Tradenten"?

<sup>193</sup> Orchard argues mainly from stylistic features that the gospel of Mark is the unedited version of the words of Peter which Mark recorded *viva voce* and *verbatim* through the agency of professional Greek shorthand writers ("Mark and the Fusion of Traditions", pp. 779–800). He translates the Papias note in the sense that Mark was a "recorder" who wrote down what Peter remembered. I do not find that to be the most natural way to render the Greek. Mark was, according to the Papias note, an "interpreter" who wrote down what he *himself* remembered. I thus differ from Orchard mainly in estimating the narrativizing features of the Markan story significantly higher.

ments of the ancient way of searching out and relating to things of the past. There is nothing strange or artificial about it, once we learn to appreciate the wider socio-cultural setting of that phenomenon. The Lukan author and the Johannine author and redactor have integrated their own view of the role of the eyewitnesses into their respective stories, as we saw,<sup>194</sup> and in this way they pointed to, at least, that the wide-spread notions and practices of ancient oral history were not foreign to their own conception of what they had done.

The Matthean author is as silent as the Markan one in this regard; and we have no statement comparable to the one of Papias' on Mark. The closest we get is Papias' difficult statement as he related Matthew to Mark, asserting that each interpreted certain logia as best he could (*Hist. Eccl.* III 39:16), but the comparison with Mark does not include the mention of Peter. Yet, considering all we are now in a position to know about the vital importance of oral history and oral tradition in antiquity, including early Christianity, we can indeed, at this point of our inquiry, ask somewhat programatically whether it is not likely, after all, that the stories of an eyewitness played some role also as the Matthean author collected information and composed his narrative. There is a cumulative probability that such was, as a matter of fact, the case.

#### *b. Matthew 16:13–20*

Although the author of the first gospel did not encode into his story the role of eyewitnesses in a way comparable to what we find in the Lukan and Johannine narratives, he does give a significant picture of the confessing Peter as an authorized tradition carrier. In a previous study, I argued at some length that Matthew 16:13–20 depicts the extension of a foundational didactic authority from Jesus to Peter.<sup>195</sup> The handing over of the keys is a figurative expression for the formal bestowal of authority; the image of binding and loosing suggests that the authority bestowed on Peter has an inherent didactic aspect; and that didactic authority is the decisive bridge between the past and the present, because it signifies not that Peter is invested as the guarantor and bearer of revelation nor that he is the supreme rabbi of the church, but that he is the foundational link between the continuing didactic activity of the disciples/members of the Matthean community, on the one hand (cf. Matt 28:19–20), and the teaching that Jesus himself gave in the past, on the other hand. There is an

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<sup>194</sup> Chap. 5, B:2 and B:3.

<sup>195</sup> For arguments and further literature, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 245–253, 278–279.

important element of a dynamic interaction of past and present in the depiction of Peter. He is both a representative of the disciples and an important individual of the past in Matthew, and in 16:13–20 both these characteristics come into play. The “gates of Hades” will not, after all, hinder the future realization of the church. Rather, as Jesus is now moving towards his suffering and death, which he starts explaining in 16:21, he secures the transmission of his teaching in word and deed by appointing the confessing Peter as the authoritative tradition carrier to serve as the bridge between the past and the present.

One must certainly admit the hypothetical character of any attempt to define what exactly Peter's teaching authority depicted in the story corresponded to in the Matthean community; in my previous study I avoided it.<sup>196</sup> The problem at hand in this study challenges us, however, to go one step further. It is very likely, on a general level, that such a prolific and accentuated addition to the Markan narrative, which otherwise was essential to the Matthean author,<sup>197</sup> had some reason beyond the mere pleasure of embellishing a fiction.

The traditional character of the material confirms this. Not only did the author elaborate Mark 8:27–30 by extending Peter's confession and focusing on the christological aspect of the command of silence to the disciples, but Matthew 16:17–19 probably reflects his incorporation of material that he himself received from tradition, that is, material that was imported into the narrativizing process from sources originally external to his own interpretative frame of mind. To be sure, the precise character and life setting of that material is an open matter,<sup>198</sup> which in the end might be impossible to determine, but there are sufficient features in these three verses, such as the semitisms,<sup>199</sup> to suggest that the nucleus of the notion of Peter's authorization as tradition carrier was known in the Matthean community already before the gospel story took shape;<sup>200</sup> it had

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. the remarks in Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, p. 261 n. 4.

<sup>197</sup> Cf., e.g., Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, I, pp. 56–59; Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, pp. 2–5.

<sup>198</sup> The most influential proposals are listed by, e.g., Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, II, pp. 50–54.

<sup>199</sup> I have elsewhere given some arguments for regarding 16:19 as reflecting an earlier tradition than 18:18 (Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 359–360).

<sup>200</sup> 1 Cor 1:12 and 3:22 might give reason to suppose that the tradition was known also in other communities. Are we to understand 1 Cor 3:10–17 and 10:4 as Paul's attempt to counteract the authority which the Corinthian Cephass party attributed to Peter on the basis of the tradition behind Matt 16:17–19? So, with some varying emphases, Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, p. 194; Barrett, “Cephas and Corinth”, pp. 6–7;

an extrafictional function before becoming part of a dynamic narrativizing process.

### c. Peter After Antioch

Lothar Wehr has recently brought attention to this characterization of Peter and argued the hypothesis, which is not new,<sup>201</sup> that the Matthean narrative – especially in its presentation of Jesus' attitude to the Law – reflects some prolific Petrine traditions as they had developed in Antioch after the incident between Peter and Paul.<sup>202</sup> He rejects rightly the idea brought out by Christian Kähler and developed by Wolfgang Schenk, that the first gospel originally was attributed to Peter,<sup>203</sup> but maintains that Peter was held in high esteem in the Matthean community, that historically he was the guarantor for the reliability of the Jesus tradition, which he originally had transmitted to the community. That tradition is in several respects, according to Wehr, closer to Jesus himself than the material in the Markan narrative.

Although Wehr links the Matthean Peter primarily to halachic issues of the Law,<sup>204</sup> failing to see that in the narrative structure of the story he is a round character exhibiting a variety of traits that relate to extended parts of Jesus' teaching in word and deed,<sup>205</sup> his hypothesis accords well with what we know of Peter's reaction in Antioch and with the general possibility that the Matthean narrative was composed there. Perhaps even the special Matthean material associated with Peter, that is, in addition to 16:17–19, his walking on the water (14:28–31) and his discussion of the temple tax (17:24–27), was given special care in the community of Antioch. Origen, in the third century, knew to report, in passing, that Ignatius was the second bishop after Peter in Antioch (*Hom. in Luc.* 6 [Rauer, p. 34 lines 25–27]); Eusebius takes over the same notion (*Hist. Eccl.* III

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Vielhauer, "Paulus und die Kephaspartei", pp. 348–352; Pesch, *Simon-Petrus*, pp. 100, 106–107.

<sup>201</sup> As Pesch states, for instance: "Die Wirkung des Petrus im antiochenischen Raum könnte sich über das Matthäus-Evangelium und die Didache hinaus auch im Petrus-evangelium und der Petrusapokalypse spiegeln" (*Simon-Petrus*, p. 105).

<sup>202</sup> Wehr, *Petrus und Paulus*, pp. 251–290.

<sup>203</sup> Kähler, "Zur Form- und Traditionsgeschichte von Matth. XVI. 17–19", pp. 56–57; Schenk, "Das 'Matthäusevangelium' als Petrus-evangelium", pp. 58–80. Kähler does not, however, explicitly say that it was ever actually attributed to Peter. For critique, see Wehr, *Petrus und Paulus*, pp. 264–265. Cf. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 253, 279 n. 3.

<sup>204</sup> Wehr, *Petrus und Paulus*, p. 267.

<sup>205</sup> See Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, pp. 250–251.



36:2). Whatever the worth of this information, there is, in any event, a cumulative likelihood that *the oral history of the primary eyewitness of Jesus' active ministry, as he is pictured in the New Testament,*<sup>206</sup> *had developed into an oral and re-oralized tradition of decisive importance in the Matthean community.*<sup>207</sup>

Bo Reicke was one of the few scholars who took seriously the possibility that Peter influenced both the Markan and the Matthean narratives, even to the point that he saw no reason to assume that the latter used the former.<sup>208</sup> Discussing the differences between the two, he refers to the didactic interest of Matthew as contrasted to Mark's occupation with narrative material, but he fails to discuss an essential point that is central to the two evangelists as well as to Peter, that is, the attitude to the Law of Moses. As is well-known, Mark exhibits a more radical rejection of the validity of the Law than Matthew does. If our previous discussion of Peter in this chapter is correct, we have to assume either that Peter's view of the Law was altered by the Markan author or by the Matthean author, or that Peter had entertained different views of the matter and that each author adhered to one of the different attitudes of Peter.<sup>209</sup>

The latter alternative is more plausible. The available information indicates that Peter struggled restlessly to find his own way on how to think and act in matters of the Law. Although we cannot enter into the complex debate of the Antioch incident and its ramifications as reported in Galatians and Acts,<sup>210</sup> for all we know Peter first adhered to the Jewish standpoint that "it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile" (Acts 10:28a), then became convinced "not to call anyone profane or unclean" (10:28b), eventually out of fear to revert back to the Jacobean view (Gal 2:11–13). The Matthean perspective is conceivable as a late reminiscence of Peter's withdrawal from table fellowship with the Gentiles in Antioch and of the ensuing council at Jerusalem with the letter sent from there to the Gentile brothers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (Acts

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<sup>206</sup> See above Chap. 2, B:4.

<sup>207</sup> For the methodological justification to link oral history and oral tradition, see above Chap. 1, B:2.

<sup>208</sup> Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 182–183.

<sup>209</sup> Another possibility is that Matthew links with a Jacobean mission (Ellis, "New Directions", pp. 87–88). But besides leaving the extraordinary didactic importance of Peter unexplained, this view cannot be supported by much independent evidence. The Jesus tradition in the letter of James resembles material in Matthew as well as in Luke and indicates rather a Jacobean relation to the emergence of common pre-synoptic material (cf. above Chap. 4, A:6c).

<sup>210</sup> See now Schwemer, "Paulus in Antiochien", pp. 161–180.

15:6–29; 21:25). As it seems, much of the discussion during the council and in the letter was deliberately aimed towards the problems arising in Antioch.<sup>211</sup> If Mark was present with his cousin Barnabas at the incident in Antioch, and if he followed his relative in siding with Peter, he must at a later point have returned to the Peter he knew from previous times in Jerusalem. Peter's preaching there breathes the unreserved acceptance of the Gentiles (Acts 10:34–36), being put within a situational context where neither food nor people can be called profane or unclean (Acts 10:15, 28; 11:9); and it might have been this preaching, as we saw above, that the Markan author chose as the skeleton outline of his narrative. To simplify somewhat, what we have in Mark reflects Peter before Antioch; what we have in Matthew reflects Peter after Antioch.

#### 10. Conclusion: Story as History – History as Story

Dennis Nineham arrived at a negative conclusion as to what extent eyewitness testimony continued to control the gospel tradition in the later stages of its development. The development was, in his view, controlled by the impersonal needs and forces of the community. To him there were no compelling *a priori* reasons for thinking that eyewitness testimony entered into the gospel narratives, and, even if there were, we have no absolutely watertight criteria for establishing where it was so.<sup>212</sup>

We have brought attention to several aspects of Nineham's view, trying to point out their weaknesses and limited value. On a general level, I both agree and disagree. I agree that *we have no absolutely watertight criteria for identifying precisely the influence of eyewitness testimony in the later development of the gospel tradition*. There were oral histories that never made it, having been neglected or intermingled with other sorts of material as the gospel tradition developed. A search through the Markan narrative, which is most likely to include items of eyewitnesses, brings rather meagre results. It is impossible to verify any large amount of Petrine chreiai; and, I should add, Nineham is correct that the detailed character of a narrative is no sign of eyewitness testimony. Not only are later legendary narratives about Jesus full of details, but even historians accuse

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<sup>211</sup> Pesch suggests that the tradition behind Matt 16:17–19 was formulated when Peter stayed in Jerusalem after the letter had been sent. It served to retain Peter's foundational authority in Antioch (*Simon-Petrus*, pp. 96–104). The idea is attractive, but difficult to verify.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. the summary of his view above Chap. 1, C:3.

each others for lying precisely on account of the rich details included in some of their works. Polybius, in III 33:17, calls them "plausible liars" (ἀξιοπιστῶς ψευδόμενοι).

I disagree, however, that we have no *a priori* reasons to assume that eyewitness testimony played some role after all. No one, it seems, can deny the extreme importance attached to it among ancient people who were eager to find out and communicate things of the past. Although some might have used the notion of autopsy without really having practised it themselves directly or indirectly, by interrogating others, the very fact that it served as a means to establish one's own *ethos* and the veracity of one's own account shows clearly the widespread significance attached to it. It takes strong evidence to say that the later development of the gospel tradition was totally void of any such influence! And the pieces of "evidence" that Nineham brings out are not *a priori* reasons, whatever we mean by that, but reflections deduced from a powerful form-critical paradigm. If we, in addition, have explicit statements that some ancient people regarded the production of the gospel narratives as closely associated with the activity of eyewitnesses, if we, in addition, have reason to think that certain of Peter's recollection had influenced a written account of the passion, and if we also are justified in thinking that this account together with a nucleus of Peter's preaching in Jerusalem was available to the Markan author, and that the Matthean author was familiar with Peter's later attitude, then it becomes more likely that eyewitness testimony did play some role during the later stages of the development of the gospel tradition than that there are no "*a priori* reasons" for thinking so.

Once this cumulative argument is fully recognized, *Nineham's first point concerning the difficulty of identifying the eyewitness testimony becomes a challenge to understand the interpretative and narrativizing procedures inherent in any such account.* Here we are back to Werner H. Kelber and his view of the Markan narrative as some kind of new synthesis. He once posed an intriguing question related to this challenge:

"But if we conceive of Mark's function not as primarily preservative, fortifying memory against forgetfulness, but as primarily interpretive, redirecting a course of transmission, do we not have to acknowledge the gospel as a new synthesis?"<sup>213</sup>

The present study suggests that while Kelber raises a fundamental hermeneutical issue, he poses false alternatives. As we noticed in chapter three, the written word did often have the function of securing information which might otherwise have been forgotten. Although writing might

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<sup>213</sup> Kelber, "Biblical Hermeneutics", p. 101.

weaken the faculty of memory, it presented a helpful, permanent record of things to be remembered.<sup>214</sup> Why would the writing down of the pre-synoptic Jesus tradition be totally void of any such preservative function? And if eyewitness testimony played some part as a source of information, the preservative aspect of Mark is further accentuated. Yet, it is true that *Mark presents a new synthesis*. It is a synthesis, however, of an entirely different kind than the one envisioned by Kelber, *not indeed a synthesis disrupting a pre-synoptic oral legacy, but, on the contrary, a synthesis of history and story, of the oral history of an eyewitness and the interpretative and narrativizing procedures of an author*.

As I have tried to point out in several chapters of the present study, these procedures are an integral part of the practice of autopsy by direct observation and by interrogation as well as in the communicative narrativization of the past, finding its climax as the conceptual framework of an author is exhibited as a coherent story. That the interpretative and narrative procedures on the part of the author are dominant enough to often conceal and darken the multifaceted history behind the story is a lesson we have learned from the reader-oriented branch of narrative criticism. But in addition, as the present chapter has stressed, and as Kelber indeed acknowledges,<sup>215</sup> these stories are mirrors as well as windows, reflecting not only the intratextual notions of the history of a “realistic narrative”, but also the author’s struggle to comprehend his own situation in view of the past. The past is not gone for ever, nor is it entirely swallowed up by the present. It participates in the present, the present recapitulates it, and the future finds itself determined by it.<sup>216</sup> *The character of the ancient texts thus prompts us to hold on to both, story as history and history as story*. As we learn from the oral history approach, that is the synthesis we confront in the gospel narrative.

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<sup>214</sup> See above Chap. 3, B:2 and B:3.

<sup>215</sup> See Kelber, “Narrative as Interpretation”, pp. 107–133.

<sup>216</sup> For the prominence of this notion of time in rabbinic literature, see Neusner, *The Presence of the Past*.

## Summary and Conclusions

We are at the end of our journey, having travelled from the past to the present, from story as history to history as story. Each chapter has contained conclusions which draw out the implications of the various sections. My major theses are to be found there. Here I will merely give a condensed summary of the main analytical steps that we have taken and discuss briefly some corollaries which emerge from the study as a whole in view of how it was framed in the introduction and chapter one.

As a first step, after presenting the subject matter and the oral history approach, we travelled back to the eyewitnesses themselves. Chapter two – “Story as History” – sought to identify possible observers and informants of the Jesus event. Just as the ancient historians valued the testimony of the eyes higher than the testimony of the ears, regularly employing eyewitness testimony by direct observation and/or interrogation, the early Christians in Jerusalem had eyewitnesses and informants in their midst – the local people, Peter as the most prominent representative of the group of disciples, the women with Mary Magdalene, and the family of Jesus with James and Mary, Jesus’ mother. And while the historians gave their writings an inherent diachronic dimension by including references to eyewitnesses and eyewitness testimony into their writings, the gospel writers encoded the eyewitnesses and informants as characters of the story, implying that what is told was for the ancient authors history rooted in the life experiences of these persons. The synchronous structures of the narrative fictions are regularly intersected with a profound diachronic dimension.

In chapter three – “Between the Past and the Present” – we abandoned the eyewitnesses for a moment and commenced our journey back to the present time of the ancient historians and evangelists by discussing the media of information and communication that were employed in the ancient Mediterranean world. We investigated the relationship between autopsy and orality as well as between orality and literacy, assuming that as soon as an observation is verbalized, it partly leaves the domain of past history and employs various forms of communication, oral and written.

With some variegating emphases, the historians illustrated that an ancient person eager to search out the past needed oral testimony as supplementary to autopsy, sometimes, as in speeches, being prompted by the inherent oral character of the event itself to employ the oral medium. The early form-critics realized and acknowledged indeed the oral dimension of communication and tradition, but their distinction between the word of Jesus and the deeds of Jesus was coupled with a serious depreciation of the elements of aurality and autopsy during the origin and development of the gospel tradition. Transmission, we concluded, was performed in the matrix of discipleship, where the mimesis, including verbal and behavioural tradition, constituted the central mode of living between the past and the present.

As we moved on to the relationship between orality and literacy, we noticed the historians' restrictive use of the written medium. It arouse out of a concern not to be caught in abstract and distorted notions of past reality. In line with broad spectra of antiquity, the written text constituted for them essentially an aid to memory. This perspective places much weight on the interaction of orality and literacy in early Christianity, where texts on all levels presuppose and return to the oral medium in a constant process of re-oralization. This kind of process, I believe, accords best with what we know of the ancient interaction between the information technologies. Accordingly, when written texts were employed as sources, they were never regarded as textual, semantic entities unto themselves, but were part of a broader spectrum of oral performance and communication. Meaning depends on the medium and a consistent neglect of the wider spectrum of orality misleads therefore the interpreter of the written text. In that matrix of constant interchange and feedback between the media, it was assumed, eyewitness testimony played some part.

Chapter four – “The Present in the Past” – returned to the people involved in ancient forms of communication and transmission and focused on how the present interpretative features of eyewitnesses and inquirers influenced the perception of the past during the process of research. Each form of autopsy and interrogation is much more than a passive registration of information; it is always bracketed, we said, with subjective constructions informed by conscious and unconscious ideological factors, because eyewitnesses and inquirers are all, in the end, social beings of the present time.

The interpretative dimension on the level of the ancient eyewitness comes through as we notice how the act of observation intrinsically always involves an act of the understanding mind. That broader dimension of autopsy is evident as the eyewitness often was identified in relation to a lar-

ger social setting, as the ideal eyewitness and informer was a participant in the events of interest, as even the seemingly detached traditionalist exhibited a certain amount of involvement and as the dynamic interplay of memory and recall involved the search for the visual images of the past that continued to live as vivid, interpretative images in the memory of the observer.

Although all these phenomena cannot be studied directly as the gospel tradition originated and developed, the letter of James, going back to the Lord's brother, illustrates how an ideal eyewitness and informant, according to ancient standards, related to the emerging notions about Jesus. He observed certain matters of uttermost interest, he was socially involved in the most intimate way, he participated actively in the event after its decisive break-through, he had visual imprints on his memory that could be recalled. Yet, his influence on the development of the gospel tradition did not, it seems, mean the free incorporation of various scattered and personal memories of his. It is essential to realize, as far as the gospel tradition is concerned, that the historical reliability of an eyewitness has little or nothing to do with passive transmission or detachment from the event. The interpretative dimension of a prominent eyewitness did not cause conflict and disruption, but was in harmony with the items of the emerging gospel tradition.

The letter of James indicates a positive relationship between the present concern and engagement of an eyewitness and the historical reliability of the gospel tradition. But the historians as well as the early Christians never relied blindly on eyewitness testimony; they had their own scrutinizing attitude and interpretative frames. The historians' preference for the involved and participating eyewitness, coupled with their sensitivity to the biased character of the eyewitness accounts, challenged them sometimes to insist emphatically on the importance of truth. Factual truth and interpretative truth were equally important, to the extent that the investigative procedures became inseparable from the interpretative procedures and generalizations during the course of research.

The neat picture emerging from the letter of James should thus be compared with the more complex relationship between the eyewitness testimony and the gospel tradition that comes to the fore through a study of how the women and their testimony of Jesus' death and the empty tomb were treated in the course of transmission. While the nucleus of their message was felt to be exceedingly important, they were mistrusted in view of their social identity and position as women. The subtle move from historical truth to the accepted, interpreted truth involved therefore a process of legitimation. One took measures to ensure and accentuate the

reliability of their accounts through a subtle combination of investigative and interpretative procedures. Autopsy was interpreted; it went through a process of legitimation of those eyewitnesses who were regarded as unreliable.

In chapter five – “History Entering Into Story” – we approached the present time of the story. Moving from the interplay between the investigative and interpretative procedures during the course of inquiry to the interplay between interpretative and narrativizing procedures, we focused on how the notion of autopsy became a signal as to how history entered into the narrative world of the story.

Since the historians always were involved in more or less complex narrativizing processes, their use of persuasive rhetorical techniques in preparing as well as composing their writings is not to be underestimated. The references to autopsy belonged to the cross-section of history and story, often being used as a means to establish one’s own *ethos* and defend the reliability of one’s account of the past. Yet, the historians were not all liars. Persuasion and factual credibility were supplementary rhetorical virtues, not least in historical narratives. Generally speaking, therefore, the historians employed a core of factual truth, enabling them to adhere to “the laws of history” throughout an extensive narrativizing process.

By the same token, the early Christians, up to at least the second century CE, employed the notion of autopsy in various ways and in various forms of narrativizing processes. Eyewitness testimony was important to them as a means to legitimize their own kerygmatic activity (Paul) or writing, whether they did that through tradition (Luke) or by authorial attribution to an individual (the gospel of John) or a group (1 John) or pseudonymously (2 Peter) or by directly tracing one’s own information back to eyewitnesses (Papias). Yet, as with the historians, the most persuasive story is, after all, the one that truthfully interacts with factual history. The narrativized and intratextual use of autopsy is therefore not to be set over against its extratextual and extrafictional significance, but provides, in addition to its intratextual function, the traces of how history in its pastness entered into story, how history became story.

Finally, in chapter six – “History as Story” – we arrived at the present time of the story. The interplay between the interpretative and the narrativizing procedures concerns much more than literary and argumentative techniques, reaching its climax as history is narrativized into a coherent story that exhibits the author’s own conceptual framework.

As the historians illustrate well, selectivity, explanation, interpretation, etc., were means by which one made sense of one’s own existence in producing stories about matters of the past. The story of the historian, I ar-



gued, was indeed “his” story. While the past history mostly was available as a hard core of facts, the narratives inevitably contain stories about the past history as well as the present existence. The historians’ grand patterns of interpretation functioned as a bridge between the two worlds, bringing history and story together.

At the same time, the early Christian stories express the opinions and interpretative patterns of their authors by means of a subtle process of selection and explanation. The integration of certain eyewitness testimony into other supplementary items of the Jesus tradition shows that the early Christians never built merely on the subjective recollection of what certain people happened to remember about the past. The oral histories of the local people, of some women, of Jesus’ relatives, never became stories. The people in charge of the gospel tradition, including the authors of the gospels, were eager to decisively secure what they considered to be the proper enlargement as well as selection of fluctuating oral histories and rumours.

The positive but complex appreciation of an eyewitness on the level of a gospel story is to be detected in the case of one eyewitness only, Peter. The author of the Markan gospel narrative found the living voice of the apostle partly in a textualized and re-oralized form, including a tradition of the passion which already exhibited narrativizing features. But Papias’ statement concerning Mark and Peter indicates that the prominent eyewitness of Jesus was more than a textualized and re-oralized voice. It fits well within the perspective reflected in the methodological conviction and practical reality of many ancient historians and is supported by circumstantial evidence from the New Testament and elsewhere.

However, Papias’ view should not legitimize a neglect of various sophisticated interpretative elaborations. The difficulty of identifying the eyewitness testimony in Mark and elsewhere is a challenge to understand the interpretative and narrativizing procedures inherent in any such account. Mark was indeed an “interpreter” of Peter. He did not record Peter’s teaching passively. Rather, in accordance with the ancient practice, he incorporated Peter’s oral history into his story by means of an interchange between the eyewitness testimony and other traditional material available to him, on the one hand, and his personal selective and interpretative perspective, on the other hand. He thus, in a sense, narrativized his very own existence by presenting history as story. That process was continued in the Matthean community. The author of Matthew not only cherished the Markan version of the gospel tradition, but, independently of Mark, identified the history of his own community partly through the oral and re-oralized Petrine traditions at his disposal. The gospel narrati-

ves, for all we know, are thus the syntheses of history and story, of the oral history of an eyewitness and the interpretative and narrativizing procedures of an author.

We are back where we started: story as history – history as story, the search for a synthesis between the two. The oral history approach holds promise to give a conceptual viewpoint that takes seriously the ancient way of relating to the past, because its theories do not emerge merely out of our recent concern for methodological sophistication but revives and elaborates ancient practices and convictions. There are differences, to be sure, between the ancient art of oral history and the modern practice and theory of the discipline. Today's concern with the "low people", with the microhistory of the marginalized and silenced voices of societies, stands in contrast to the ancient historian's search for the best informers in regard to a particular historical event, be that a leading and important person of the society or a quiet worker in a small village. While the modern oral historians look very much to the person, the ancient historians looked more to the event. Furthermore, although the oral historians of today take a critical distance to the professionalization of history, their involvement in and use of the past is more modest than the engagement and pragmatic tendency of ancient historians, even the strictest of them. Their interpretative drive was stronger than the patterns of explanation which modern oral historians carefully employ. Yet, the modern oral history approach alerts us to the ancient merging of the two horizons of the past history and the present story,<sup>1</sup> without any of them losing itself entirely in the other. The story of the eyewitness has a retrospective dimension which is inherent to the story, without being determined by the story, because the eyewitness is a participant in history as well as an interpreter of it, both in one. To put it in theological terms, the Christian kerygma was history and history was kerygma in a synthesis which intertwined the two entities in their own right.

The gospel tradition, I have argued, originated and developed in a constant process of re-oralization. The early Christians tested and supp-

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<sup>1</sup> I am of course aware that the expression "the two horizons" opens up the vast field of biblical hermeneutics as it has been influenced by Hans-Georg Gadamer's discussion of the process of understanding, especially in his book *Wahrheit und Methode*. A helpful exposition of Gadamer's work for the non-specialist reader is provided by Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics*. The ramifications and potentials of Gadamer's label are illustrated by Thiselton, in his two books *The Two Horizons* and *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. It accords well, I believe, with the results and implications of the present study.

mented that synthesis, creating and elaborating oral and written forms of discourse through a subtle interaction between the unique historic event of the past and the shifting circumstances of the present. Terms and labels such as “reliability”, “historicity”, “tradition”, “transmission”, etc., can be fully appreciated only in a situation which takes seriously this dynamic, interactive matrix. Just as we need to move away from a one-sided attention to the influences of the enthusiastic interpretative and narrativizing forces of the early Christians, we also need to avoid stripping history from a serious appreciation of the strong engagement and the vivid memories of those who were there, who saw it happening and communicated their observations and experiences to others. The truth of the matter, even historical truth, resides nowhere else but in that dialectical synthesis between history and story.

Moreover, the gospel narratives are themselves witnesses not of disruption and discontinuity, but of the same synthesis between history and story. Reading them as isolated semantic entities unto themselves seriously diminishes their significance as texts with two (or more) inherent horizons, that of the extrafictional past, mostly communicated orally, and that of the present. Recent literary criticism is, it appears, closely allied with typography, and in particular with the kind of typography that is dominated by printing. The printed word tends to objectify the written text, which leads, on occasion, to the apotheosis of the text as a closed system. In “high-context” societies, however, with the strong oral/aural currencies of communication such as those we find in the ancient Mediterranean world, the semantic codes of understanding are to a large extent to be found outside of the written text; they are taken for granted, encoded in the culture, but not necessarily in the text. The gospel narratives contain traces of those “absent others”, whose echoing voices the modern scholar seeks to recover. These are horizons which the ancient hearers/readers probably took seriously as they participated in the ongoing discourse of tradition; they did so not indeed through a conscious, sophisticated hermeneutical effort, but as persons involved in various communities of interpretation where the gospel narrative functioned as a living and re-oralized text helping them to find meaning and cohesion through a continual retelling and reconfiguration of the historical and, as it turned out, historic Jesus event.

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