

the relevance of Jousse's work. Even on the seemingly esoteric topic of the gospel's targumic legacy, Jousse proved himself to be astoundingly prescient. To be sure, it is clearly understood that nobody will claim today that the targumim provide the key to the gospel traditions. The plurality model will look with skepticism on single-tradition solutions, including on the targumic tradition as a single solution. But on one point Jousse was quite correct: Once we concede Jesus' Aramaic vernacular and free ourselves from the notion that he was using the so-called Old Testament as his Bible, we are bound to ask deeper questions, and are inescapably confronted with the targumic issue. Irrespective of the particularities of Jousse's targumic thesis, to have made the targumim a major issue must rank among his most remarkable achievements.

Epilogue

The purpose of this book has been to provide a general introduction to the oeuvre of Marcel Jousse by explicating, critically assessing, and further developing his major ideas. It is entirely in Jousse's spirit that his thinking is making uncommon demands on its readers. Likewise, inasmuch as his theses received much criticism, *The Forgotten Compass* is likely to provoke its share of critical responses. A principal point of criticism could well be that Jousse's work represents one of the earliest and most conspicuous articulations of what came to be called by its critics the Great Divide.⁸⁹ Critics saw Jousse as placing a wedge—a great divide—between orality and textuality.

When beginning in the 1970s biblical scholarship was taking the first tentative steps toward an ethnographically and media-based recognition of oral style and oral dynamics, the single most pronounced reaction was lament over the flawed conception of the Great Divide. The argument that the notion of the Great Divide was flawed asserted that a clean differentiation between the oral medium and the scribal medium missed the point that in linguistic actuality the two media operated synergistically and in coexistence. Pitting orality against textuality, it was objected, failed to come to terms with the media realities on the ground. Was it not one of the lessons of the media history of antiquity (as well as of many other periods) that oral and scribal dynamics were overlapping

89. Rodriguez, "Great Divide."

and interfacing realities? Do we not time and again observe media locked in conflict over claims to cultural supremacy?

A major problem with this objection to the Great Divide is that it falls short of a full understanding of the discipline of media studies, and in turn reflects a limited grasp of communications history. How realistic is the charge that orality theorists, in an exclusive focus on the Great Divide, were ignorant of or uninterested in coming to terms with the interconnectedness of communications media? I would suggest that the notion of orality studies privileging an absolute media dichotomy to the exclusion of media interactions represents a reductionist perspective on recent work on the theory and practice of media ecology. In a sense, the critics' single-minded attention to what they choose to call the Great Divide has magnified the media gap.

Consider the work of the experts who have spearheaded the fields of orality, scribality and media ecology. Such distinguished scholars as McLuhan and Ong, Parry and Lord, and Havelock and Foley, have greatly enriched the discipline of cultural history by illuminating in unprecedented fashion media interactions, fusions, and conflicts. All six of them can justly be called experts in comparative media ecology. But they were able to accomplish their work precisely by developing and operating with a conceptual model of distinctive media identities. The same can be said of Jousse. He illustrated how oral processes and bookish algebrois were locked in a dialectical but in the end conflictual relationship, which showed again and again how the literary civilization came to override, suppress, and eclipse oral attributes and values.

To be sure, conflict is by no means the only relation that orality and scribality are involved in. But it is a defining relationship. How else can one grasp intermediality unless one has a developed sense of the noetics and psychodynamics of orality vis-à-vis that of the technology of writing and textuality? Without critically discerning which media are at work, and without precisely defining separate media, it is nearly impossible to detect media interdependencies, to explain media interactions, and, in short, to know the life of media activities. This was one of the main problems confronting the form critics: Displaying no interest in classifying differences between oral processes and scribal processes, they proceeded to derive what they called the forms of speech straight out of textuality. I suggest that Jousse's oeuvre in its integrated totality demonstrates that oral culture and the interaction of oral with chirographic/typographic media are part and parcel of a single communications paradigm. Theoretically

and in media actuality, one does not exist without the other. By refusing to acknowledge specific media attributes, however, objectors to the Great Divide run the risk of taking us back to Bultmann's assumption that differentiating between the oral and the textual is irrelevant.

Jousse's thesis challenges the conventions of biblical scholarship. Readers of this volume are given ample opportunity to observe his relentless polemic vis-à-vis a scholarly approach in which written and by extension printed textuality serve as the paradigm for exegesis, hermeneutics, and biblical theology. The language Jousse employed to castigate biblical scholarship's overconfidence in words-in-space is harshly critical and so cannot escape readers' attention. Obviously, more is involved in meeting this challenge than merely modifying or correcting the conventional textual model. Matters that biblical exegetes have long assumed to be settled (therefore requiring no more critical reflection) become unsettled and are open to question when Jousse's work is taken seriously. Authorship and editorship, tradition and composition, reading and writing, memory and imagination, cognition and logic—central tropes of the Western intellectual history—are all affected by the Joussean model. Implicated also are more specific linguistic terms, such as *edition* and *recension*, *variants* and the *original* version, *publication* and *literary sources*. Whether one takes the implications of Jousse's work as broadly theoretical or more narrowly technical, on Joussean terms a whole apparatus of nomenclature appears misapplied and ill-suited to dealing with the communications realities of ancient Near Eastern cultures.

Jousse was fully cognizant that the success of his novel paradigm depended in no small measure on a pertinent nomenclature—hence his dissatisfaction with the time-honored terminology, and his preoccupation with a conceptualization of neologisms. It could be argued that even the concepts of text and textuality, foundational tropes of scholarship in the wake of Gutenberg, are problematic in light of Jousse's criticism, since they are loaded with assumptions derived from modern literary criticism and print technology. Jousse's own designation of *les textes fluids*, while insightful and inventive, is not entirely satisfactory either, because it refers to the oral disposition of scribal materials while holding on to their textual designation. Perhaps when dealing with the pre-Gutenberg history we should relinquish the designation of text altogether and instead become accustomed to using terms such as *manuscript* and *scribality*, *chirography* and *scriptography*, *scriptum* and *scripta*—all designations that denote the craft of handwriting.

Given the single-minded, driving purpose of Jousse's mode of argumentation, one may well call his paradigm *a strong thesis*. There are drawbacks to strong theses because they are susceptible to potential blind spots. They are particularly prone to screening out what is deemed unsuitable for sustaining the master thesis. And yet, strong theses are often necessary because they break new theoretical ground and create thinking space. There is no getting around the fact that Jousse has presented us with a strong alternative model that encourages us to rethink the hermeneutical landscape of biblical studies and to reset media priorities.

One cannot do full justice to Jousse's work without acknowledging his central interest in recovering lost sensibilities. The combination of a strong thesis with sensitivity to dimensions of communication that have often been overlooked or suppressed makes his work exceptionally worthy of attention. Indifference to the vast range of sensory modalities has become the norm in academic biblical scholarship to such an extent that their absence is hardly even palpable. We have lost consciousness of how reductionist and narrowly text bound the hermeneutical framework has become in which exegesis is conducted and thinking takes place. In making the human sensorium a central issue of his paradigm, Jousse reclaimed sense perceptions that had been gradually but persistently marginalized over the course of Western intellectual history. Once again, *algebrization* or *algebrosis*, the categories Jousse had singled out for special criticism, provide the necessary explanatory context. From Jousse's point of view, the invention of the alphabet, accelerated by the expansion of writing systems, and reaching a culmination with the spread of print technologies, exacted the heavy price of sensory deprivation by effecting a growing disconnect from the oral-memorial-sensory matrix of human culture.

Once the print Bible was established, interpreters were destined to derive meaning from its technologically constructed textuality, increasingly discounting the copious realm of sensibilities. Over and against a major proportion of ancient and medieval communication theories and practices, the influence of the Reformers resulted, gradually, and notwithstanding their concern for the living Word of Scripture, in reducing the threefold or fourfold sense of Scripture to the one: the literal or historical sense. In the wake of the Reformation, a large part of the human sensorium, along with memory, was marginalized and virtually eliminated from Protestant biblical exegesis, while by the twentieth century Catholic exegesis was well on the way toward very similar developments.

Indeed, the collective amnesia of biblical scholarship with respect to the work of Marcel Jousse is itself a measure of the reductionist hermeneutics in biblical interpretation. Increasingly, and dramatically so after Gutenberg, texts came to conjure up the systematically organized printed page, private-silent reading, and literary competence. Although not a media critic in the modern sense, Jousse was acutely sensitive to these cultural developments. Unlike very few in his lifetime, he succeeded in articulating the media *algebrosis*, and unlike anyone at the time, he managed to forge a substantial alternative model.

Against the backdrop of a millennial chirographic media history and five centuries of typographically enforced thinking processes, Jousse's paradigm is comprehensible as the recovery of lost sensibilities. In the face of a dominant scholarly propensity to treat texts as the one medium through which other senses must be interpreted, Jousse argued that voice and recitation, rhythm and gesture, memory and performance, sound and verbomotoric style were characteristic of the biblical traditions and provided the appropriate means for reactivating them. All these operations of verbalization and remembering were, in his view, somatically rooted, and collectively represented a whole set of sensory values. It was his lifelong conviction that there was no cognitive perception without a grounding in sensory perception. Last and not least, Jousse's sensory rehabilitation of biblical exegesis closely attached itself to the sacred. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is his oral-memorial-sensory interpretation of the ritual of Mass as an oral-memorial repristination of an ancient Palestinian mimodrama. All in all, Jousse's rediscovery of lost sensibilities is in urgent need of a theological appropriation.

If it is objected that Jousse's interests were single-mindedly focused on the oral and oral-style medium while for us biblical traditions are primarily accessible in the textual medium, I wish to alert readers to the fact that the contributors to this volume have amply demonstrated the applicability of Joussean principles to biblical and other ancient texts. But we need be mindful that in the wake of Jousse, oral-scribal priorities are being reversed. Whereas by the long-standing conventions of biblical hermeneutics, orality tends to be antecedent and subordinate to texts, in Joussean thinking, biblical texts were derived from, dependent on, and operating in the service of oral sensibilities.

Let me, at the end, return to the beginning, and bring this volume to a close by framing it with one of Jousse's favorite designs: the clamp-word mechanism. I conclude with his aphorism that is placed at the head

of the book's first chapter: "I am teaching you to find what I have found myself to be unable to find." Accordingly, it was not Jousse's intention to create an academic school of faithful followers. Rather, his intention (and ultimately the purpose of this book) is to allow Jousse's model to impact our thinking about gospels and biblical traditions in the interest of becoming more deeply reflective about the biblical discipline, and to extend his insights, in whatever revised or modified form, to our work in the current digital media revolution.

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