

**Deconstruction and the concept Logos
in the Gospel of John and the binary opposition
between the Oral and the Written Text, with special
reference to primarily oral cultures in South Africa**

By

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of Doctor of Philosophy in Orality-Literacy Studies,
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Declaration of Originality

I **Gavin Peter Hendricks** declare that the whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work and that it has not been submitted for any degree in any other University.

.....
Gavin Peter Hendricks

Dedication:

This thesis is dedicated to my loving wife Martha and our two wonderful sons Seth and Ethan. This is further in memory of my late mother (Susan Caroline) and a wonderful father (Peter) both of whom nurtured and raised me in the ways of God.

“ Your Logos is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path ”

(Ps.119-105)

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Historical Critical method and its opponent Deconstruction in relation to the Logos tradition from the perspective of Orality-Literacy Studies. The resultant paradigm seeks to revise the logical procedures underlying the Historical Critical method and Deconstruction, so as to approximate the media realities that underlie the Logos tradition and its power for resistance.

The first part of the thesis undertakes a detailed historical critical analysis of the Logos tradition and the proposed religious influences in the Gospel of John. The Historical Critical Method of the *Logos* has focused exclusively on written text, i.e. Words committed to chirographic space. This analysis is followed by a critical analysis of the *Logos*-Hymn, which is followed by an indepth exegetical study of John's Prologue (1:1-18) in locating the form and character of the *Logos*-Hymn. The *Logos* tradition will serve as bedrock in understanding the polemic in Chapters five and six and its relationship to John's Prologue (1:1-18) in the Gospel of John and that of primarily¹ oral communities prior the 1994 democratic era in South Africa.

The second part of the study will focus on Derrida's Deconstruction critique of the metaphysics of presence against the *Logos* which presents as a leading case for Logocentrism. Deconstruction should be seen as a series of recent displacements among philosophy, literary criticism and Biblical studies. Current reaction to Derrida in philosophy and literary criticism :

¹. 'Primarily' is used to denote those communities which do have contact with literacy, but prefer to use the oral mode as primary mode of communication

includes enthusiastic acceptance but also hostility and rejection from academic humanists who perceive him as a threat to their metaphysical assumptions. Reaction from Biblical scholars could be similarly negative, although most of Derrida's writings should stimulate them to a healthy rethinking of their positions. Derrida's insistence that meaning is an affair of language's systems of difference "without positive terms" and his proposition that writing is prior to speech are two main elements in his attack on the foundations of Western metaphysics and its 'logocentric' convictions that we can experience meaning in 'presences' removed from the play of differential systems (Schneidau 1982:5).

Derrida repudiates the classical *logos* behind this assumption but also the Christian *Logos*, yet the Biblical insistence on our understanding of ourselves in relation to a historical past, rather than in terms of a static cosmic system, breaks with the tendencies of logocentrism and allows us to align Derrida and the Bible. This radical way of appropriating history, without the possibility of reifications of various sorts, should lead Biblical scholars further into kerygmatic reflection. Derrida's deconstruction demonstrates the dubious status of ordinary language, literal meaning, and common sense thinking and invites us to see the illusory metaphysics behind the written text, a metaphysics that some Biblical structuralists seem to accept uncritically. It is these metaphysical analyses of the Word that unravel the binary opposition between the spoken *Logos* and that of the written text and its relation to meaning and representation in the reality of primarily oral cultures.

The third part of the thesis will focus the attention on tradition perceived as transmissional processes towards a means of communication in primarily oral cultures. In the place of the

Historical Critical Method and Deconstruction hermeneutics of the Logos tradition, an oral thesis is developed which will focus on an Anthropology of Liberation. The Logos can be seen as a liberating force for primarily oral communities against the falsely constructed realities of the written text in our South African context. The written text has played a major role in the social engineering of segregation and social boundaries by the Apartheid government in South Africa.

It is suggested that Orality-Literacy research is an appropriately inclusive metaphor in understanding the *Logos* as a collective memory for primarily oral cultures shared by hearer and speaker alike. Orality-literacy helps us to understand the literary dynamics between speech and writing and to dialogue with the history of the 'Other' or those from the 'otherside,' the marginalized and the dispossessed. Finally this thesis suggest that the discourse of the 'Other' is able to produce meaning and representation in the construction of knowledge, and is a discourse that is shared by hearer and speaker alike.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction:

I have to a large degree undertaken this study because of my interest in working with marginalised communities and many years' service as a parish minister in the Church of the Nazarene. I believe the *Logos* in the Gospel of John provides us with profound insight into the oral discourse of the Galilean peasant community of First century Palestine, and that this has implications for understanding the discourse of the 'Other' in primarily oral communities of South Africa today.

In this thesis I will examine the significance of the *Logos* philosophically and theologically as it is used in the Gospel of John to articulate the oral formulae of the spoken Word by Jesus. The Galilean peasant community praises God for the manifestation of the Word in human flesh (*sarx*) which spells a hermeneutical turning point, separating the time of concealment from the time of remembrance. Remembrance is more fully accomplished with the production of the written text for literate communities, unlike oral communities where remembrance is through the microscopic geste of memory. The written text sets a norm that is henceforth to be remembered: as is the Jesus oral tradition recorded in writing by John the Evangelist and sanctioned by the Spirit (Bultmann 1971: 576). Hopefully this will lead the reader into a fuller appreciation of the *modus operandi* of the oral Word and its relation to the discourse of the 'Other. It is also my hope that the dialectic method of approach used in relation to literary critical analyses to the *Logos* tradition will provide a tool for inquiry into other biblical metaphors that explicate the discourse of the 'Other.'

In *The Oral and the Written Tradition*, Werner Kelber (1983) ably begins to work out the psychodynamics of primary orality and the written text in the Gospel tradition. He explores the implications of contemporary media research for the interpretation of the oral tradition. Kelber achieved a definite breakthrough in breaching the oral and written divide in the biblical tradition of the Word. The Biblical tradition is essentially seen as the product of the primary oral mentality described by Ong (1967, 1971, 1977, 1982a), Havelock (1963, 1978, 1982), Lord (1960) and others. Karl Barth in effect also identifies the Bible with primary orality when he says, "And so the Bible is not an philosophical book, but the book of God's mighty acts in a community of faith" (1959:38).

Recent investigation of existing oral cultures and the patterns associated with media transmissions have shown that the change in the dominant mode of communication within a culture, particularly the transition from speech to writing, involves a major transformation of communication styles, patterns of community, and ways of thinking. In classical Form Criticism, the relationship between the oral and the written Gospel was understood as a linear relationship of substantial continuity. Kelber further argues that, in the light of this more recent research, a more appropriate picture of the Gospel tradition would emphasize the chasm that separates the gospel in the world of writing from its original oral matrix. For Kelber in his central thesis, "the written gospel is ill accounted for, and in fact misunderstood, as the total sum of oral rules and drives", as it generates a new picture of the history of the oral tradition (1983.214).

It is generally conceded that the material of the Gospel of John was transmitted orally, that is by word of mouth. With oral communication comes some form of oral tradition. However oral

communication did not die with the writing of the Gospels. Oral tradition is part of the fabric of primarily oral communities. Few people would deny the fact that the introduction of writing into a previously oral culture would bring about changes in lifestyle, worldview and perception of knowledge. A primary oral culture is one in which writing has never been used, or possibly even conceived and is very different from literate or chirographic cultures. What many people do not realise, is not only do members of primarily oral communities live differently from those of literate cultures but also that they perceived their social reality different. In oral cultures communication requires face-to-face interaction in which both speaker and hearer must be intimately involved in the communication process. In a literate society, however, written communication encourages 'linear thought,' and the separation of the 'knower from the known.' Before the word is written it has to exist in an oral form.

Underneath the written construction of the Johannine tradition lies an oral tradition which encapsulates the power relations of the spoken Logos of the Galilean peasant community. It is a history of a community that supercedes the written authority of the Great Tradition or the tradition of the Enlightenment. From 1805, the Logos in the Prologue of John may be described as obsessional. Coleridge in his Logosophic system agreed with Joseph Priestly that the spoken Word can be seen as an expression of an attribute of God, the divine power and the intelligence which was God. Logos is much more than a philosophical and theological system but can be reconciled with the concrete experiences of human beings as an eternal neutral sign in the formation of meaning (Perkins 1994:19).

The Logos as unifying system provides an intersubjectivity of communication without the loss

of an objective reality, because the Logos is interpersonal. Both the essence and the ideal existence of humanity is the Logos principle. Logos is both logocentric and anthropocentric. It is the key principle through which life and reality and mind could be communicated about the external world in which humanity finds itself (Perkins 1994:22-23).

In reading Logos in the Prologue of John's Gospel from the perspective of Orality-Literacy a new dimension for oral and written hermeneutics unfolds. Orality in the Gospel of John has been taken for granted, as the written text has 'exiled' or 'caged' the spoken authority of the Word and transformed it into traces of more written text. 'In the beginning was the Word' provides us with a key principle in understanding the authority of the Word in relation to primarily oral communities in the Johannine tradition. The *Logos*, the Creator and Communicator of God to man, is the most perfect expression of the Divine Word which is light and life. The Word as written does not diminish the importance of its audible presence (Graham 1987: 123). The Word remains logocentric in essence.

In the Johannine tradition there is a paradigmatic shift where the *logoi* (written words) in the narrative text moves to the single authority of Logos as it becomes the determiner of the written text where as the spoken word brings meaning into existence. The spoken Word becomes a new authority for the Johannine peasant community. Logos gives meaning to their reality. The spoken authority of the Word becomes a mechanism of resistance against the authority of the written Law which creates boundaries and falsely constructs the worldview for the poor and oppressed Galilean community.

The work of Jacques Derrida should be seen as the most extreme in a series of recent

displacements among philosophy, literary criticism and Biblical studies. In the work of Deconstruction, Jacques Derrida launched an attack on the logocentric tradition of the West which privileges speech over writing. For Derrida, an Algerian Jew who was raised in a textcentric Jewish tradition, where the sign (written marks) does not point beyond itself or to other signs but rather to each other, there is nothing outside the written text, and the construction of meaning and representation can be seen as traces of more written text. What is clearly noticeable is not just Derrida's appeal to the academic community not to sustain the power of the written text but to affirm ideology versus ideology (Enlightenment tradition of the Word against Deconstructive anti-Logocentrism). Deconstruction can be seen as the culmination of an elite academic tradition which is rooted in the ideology of the written text. It perpetuates Western interpretive interest and beliefs against the discourse of 'Other or oral communities.'

Derrida strengthens what the Enlightenment failed to achieve, and that is to free the written text from its traditional or classical axis of Western interpretive interest and to affirm authentic humanism which is grounded and rooted in the power of Romanticism and Western Idealism. For Derrida the written text has been marginalised because of the spoken authority of the Word in Western culture and philosophy. Derrida's binary opposition between the oral and written text has several consequences for primarily oral cultures, where the spoken word is the primary means of constructing social reality.

Although this is not generally accepted by oral theorist's (e.g. Tannen, Finnegan), Ong maintains

A deeper understanding of primary orality enables us to better understand what functionally literate human beings really are: beings whose thought processes grow out of powers as structured, directly or indirectly, through writing. Without writing, the literate mind would not and could not think as it does, not only when it engaged in writing but normally even when it is composing its thoughts in oral form. More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness (1982:78).

The Deconstructivist attack on the Logos as a transcendental signifier, can be seen as Derrida's refusal to accept that there is anything outside the construction of the written text. For Derrida, the metaphysics of presence and Logos is inextricably linked up with the construction of meaning and representation of the written text which is rooted in the Western tradition of Reason or Logic. Metaphysics of presence is synonymous to ontology and its reality is ultimately reduced to a single underlying substance. This results in a schism of thought between the material and non-material tradition of metaphysics. The modern attack on metaphysics began with the skeptical empiricism of David Hume who argued that substance, reality, mind and causality are unexplainable. This can be seen as the bedrock of the work of Immanuel Kant who questioned metaphysical knowledge: "in his view the ultimate nature of reality is unknowable. It is impossible for *homosapiens* or man (generically) to understand the world, and reality"(Grolier Encyclopedia 1998:1-2).

This diametrically opposes the reasoning of Derrida who believes that the world is a written construction of reality, an idea not only stemming from the work of Nietzsche, but is also supported by postmodern theorists. Derrida's Logocentric critique of the Logos which is closely linked to John (1.1), 'In the beginning was the Word', holds several effects for primarily oral communities in relation to the South African setting, where we have been colonised through the medium of the written text *inter alia*. The written text was a major tool used by the Apartheid government to sustain their ideology and oppressive policies through the power of writing. Writing was used to enforce the policies, and jurisdiction, and racial boundaries (in terms of race, colour and cultural identity) of the British Imperialist and the Dutch. Terrible atrocities have been committed and inscribed and legislated in the name of God through the power of the written text, in order to destroy people of race and colour socially and

economically, who were 'Other' than white or of European descent. An anthropological myth was constructed by the written text, that the dominant class was a 'Chosen people' of a modern day Israel and that their mission was to conscientise the 'Other' with the Western power of the written *logos*. The primary function of the written text can be seen as a means of social control to serve in the interest of the ruling literate class.

There is no end in sight to writing the lives of the historical Jesus. A phenomenon unknown to ancient and medieval Christian piety, the life of Jesus historically comprehended, is a product of the rise of Western Logic, and historical consciousness in Western intellectual history. The critical investigation into the life of Jesus in Western intellectual history has continued unabated. During the past quarter of century a large, and growing, number of studies on Jesus have appeared in the English-speaking world. These writers have confronted us with the stunning plurality of the traits of Jesus, because each author's written account given of the historical Jesus was nothing short of "an academic embarrassment": Jesus is a product of the Enlightenment tradition. What is symptomatic is that the work of the Enlightenment cast Jesus as an historic proponent of the most attractive humanism imaginable (Kelber 1994:145).

The Logos in John's Gospel was not just a metaphysical construction of reality but the very re-enactment of the spoken authority of the words of Jesus. The sayings and words of Jesus as oral performer have been perceived by primarily oral culture as a mechanism of resistance in order to denounce the oppressive policies and beliefs of the ruling literate oppressor. The spoken Word of primarily oral cultures cannot be separated from a primordial reality or the essence of the Spirit (*pneuma*). The appearance of the Word in human flesh (*sarx*) can be seen as an anthropological breakthrough in affirming the power of speech, where reality is metaphysical

and primordial in essence.

Primarily oral communities remain different in the construction of meaning and representation from that of literate societies. Primarily oral cultures in South Africa survived through the oppressive policies and enforced laws of segregation in re-enacting the very Spirit of the Word in the name of Jesus through the power of rituals, singings, hymns, poetry, music, storytelling and verbal arts. There are key parallels in the political resistance of the Johannine community during the period of Roman occupation and that of the oppressive Apartheid era.

1.1. Concerns that generated this study:

The motivation to conduct this study came as a result of my involvement in ministry as a Pastor for the last twelve years in the Church of the Nazarene. I was born in a traditional Christian home of a Wesleyan-Arminian persuasion where the Bible and prayer were a norm that shaped my beliefs about the world, people and society. My mother was more oral than literate and she had a profound insight into the Word, which impacted on my life as a boy and that of my entire family. She was forced to leave school at the end of standard four due to the difficult Apartheid times. She was a woman with remarkable qualities. Her disposition was that of a true Christian. I used to hear my mother sing hymns to herself, and when she was all alone, I would find her on her knees praying. In later years, this resulted in my call to full-time ministry in the Church of the Nazarene.

At a very young age I came to understand Wesleyan-Arminianism based on the teaching of John and Charles Wesley which deeply touched my life. Being born in a traditionally coloured family

(as legislated by *Law-de Jure*) and raised in a political and social environment where oppression was seen as a norm, moved me closer to the understanding of the power of the spoken Word.

Because of the Group Areas Act of 1960s, our family was removed from our home in the beautiful suburban settlement of Wynberg, Cape Town, to a traditionally coloured community. Forced removals had devastating consequences for individuals, families and communities. Residential segregation was important to the ideological objectives of the apartheid government. The uprooting of millions of people was necessary to achieve segregated cities and ethnic homelands (Wilson and Ramphela 1989:216).

These oppressive social conditions forced me to critically review my understanding of the power and authority of the Word, which phenomenologically constructed my worldview. It was in these social circumstances that I developed a passion and a desire to search in me for answers in the Word of God to interpret the struggle of the poor and the oppressed; a struggle that was not just political in essence but very religious and spiritual; a struggle in search for identity and authentic humanism in the face of oppressive social structures; a cry to release the soul from social, political and economical bondage; an identity that was constructed for me based on the norms and perceptions of the Apartheid government which was inherently a false construction of my social reality. There was a call inside of me to move beyond the spiritual interpretation of the Word that was handed down to me by the former missionaries as a means of brainwashing oral communities with Western norms and beliefs, and to seek the Word not as orthodoxy (right way of teaching) but the Word as ortho-praxis that can be seen as a mechanism of resistance that was used by marginalised communities to resist oppressive social structures. The Word is never static but remains dynamic and full of power.

In 1995, while working on the Gospel of John, I came across a reading of Werner Kelber on 'Words in time, and Words in Space' and 'The Oral Style and the Anthropology of Geste' by Edgard Sienaert which unfolded a new dimension in the understanding and interpreting the authority of the Word in relation to the interpretive interest of the Other. These readings challenged my traditional chirographic understanding of the Word and its socio-political implications for a local community of faith. During this time I was a parish minister of a traditionally Zulu Church in Howick, Pietermaritzburg. The question that arose in me was : "How do these communities remain so pro-active and positive in the midst of their socio-economic plight of poverty and oppression?" One morning I decided to exchange my vestments for a pair of jeans and walk and talk with the people so that I could feel what it was like to be part of such a community, a community torn apart by an ethical triad of pain and social division. I wanted to experience what it was like to relate, albeit in minute measure, to extreme poverty in these local communities. Being trained chirographically (in writing) for many years as a priest in the Word I realized that there was a mental divide or oral and written schism in my interpretive interest of the Word.

As I interacted with the community, the concept of *Logos* in John 1:1 became a reality to me. The incarnate presence of the spoken Word that came to dwell among a community, and behold we have seen Him full of grace and mercy. This stimulated a change in me concerning the power of the spoken Word and its role in creating meaning and representation in the face of socio-economic oppression. These communities spiritually and physically re-enacted the living Word in their oppressed situation and this resulted in the re-ordering of their oppressive social universe where they had accepted that one day they would overcome their plight. I came to realise that the success of the Jesus movement in Galilee was based on the spoken authority of

the words of Jesus. The new authority in the face of the written Law was the spoken *Logos* that was administered and harbored by the living Lord, orally.

This new understanding brought me into conflict with my historical or literary understanding of the Word. The interpretive interest was different from the historical paradigm of the Western interpretive interest of the Word to which I was used, which imprisoned the spoken authority of the Word and turned it into traces of more written text. The spoken authority of the Word had unravelled the unknown of my soul as I came to perceive the 'oral power' of the Word by Jesus the Galilean peasant which spelt a new source of authority for the Galilean peasant community. The Jesus ministry was dominated by the oppression of the Roman Empire, but His words (*logia*) spelt life and death to the hearer in the Johannine community whereas the scribal community (Pharisees-rulers of the Law) associated His words with that of Satan (*diabolos*). The oral power of *Logos* confronted the ideology of the written text as it called for the restoration of the *Imago Dei* (image of God in humankind) in the life of the poor and the oppressed. Although the dominant literate class wanted to associate the wisdom (*sophia*) of Jesus' words (*ipsissima vox Jesu*) with that of the power of literate sages in Jerusalem, Jesus refuted such claims as He called into account the spiritual and ethical blindness of these literate sages who had used the written Law to shape the oppression of the poor. "In the beginning was the Word" was not just another trace in the discourse of the dominant tradition but a ray of hope in relation to the poor Galilean community, which lacked social and economic mobility: *Logos* became the liberating power against the ideology of the written text. I came to understand that the poor and oppressed of Apartheid South Africa were similar in many ways to the Galilean community of 2000 years ago, and were operating the Word as a self liberating mechanism. This insight and understanding has inspired the thesis that follows.

1.2. The Aim and Focus of the study:

In this theses, I aim to analyse and interpret John 1:1-18 from a number of academic and scholarly perspectives e.g. the Historical and Form Critical analysis of the Logos Tradition, Deconstruction, anti-logocentric critique of the Logos; Hermeneutics of Liberation-(focus on the oral discourse of the Other) in revealing the hidden assumptions of the written text and its social and political implication for those from the 'Otherside' of history.

I have done this in order to create a multi-disciplinary context in which the binary opposition of speech and writing proposed by Derrida can be critically read and analysed from a range of revealing perspectives. The research will examine the parallels between the oral power of Logos in the Johannine community and that of the South African oppressive situation that was legislated by law (*de Jure*), inscribed in the written text in order to create a binary opposition between oral and written, white and black, literate and illiterate which shaped social boundaries and which empowered racial segregation.

For the purpose of this study, the contextual sample was drawn from the South Africa socio-political situation prior to the 1994 South African democratic social context: A country where the power of the written text disempowered the lives of poor and the oppressed or people that was from non-European descent. This left the poor and the oppressed with no economic and social power but rather with the metaphysical empowerment of the *Logos*. The very *Logos* (Word of God) that was given as a drug (*opium*) to conscientise marginalised communities in their oppression became the hope of liberation and resistance. The paradox is clear: but the poor and oppressed had no economic and political power but their re-enactment of the spiritual

power of the Word enabled their physical, intellectual and spiritual survival in the face of the vile atrocities and deeds committed against them by the oppressive Apartheid government.

This research aims to investigate the parallels between the *Logos* tradition of Western interpretive interest and that of the South African primarily oral community. I hope to focus on the social phenomenon of the Word and critically assess the binary opposition between speech and writing and the social effects the written text had on the lives of primarily oral communities in South Africa prior to the 1994 democratically elected government. The research was conducted dialectically (thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis) from a literary critical analyses, where *Logos* was seen as bedrock in affirming the metaphysics of presence in relation to the discourse of the 'Other.'

Deconstruction, which is an anti-logocentric approach to the Word, launches a critique against the Western understanding of speech which is rooted in the *Logos* as privileged over writing. Speech (speaker and hearer alike) in the discourse of the 'Other' affirms meaning and representation for the poor and oppressed. The aims of the research are:

- To examine the theological and philosophical foundations of the concept *Logos* that became flesh (*sarx*) in order to empower the Galilean community against the ideology of the written Law. The written Law played an important role in the re-ordering of the social universe of the poor in First century Galilee.
- To determine the oral power of the *Logos* through Historical and Form Criticism which will be followed by an indepth exegesis of the Prologue of John 1:1-18. I hope to show Jesus as an oral performer in the opening verses of the Prologue of John (1:1-18) who takes command over the narrative text so that his Word becomes a mechanism of resistance for the poor and oppressed

Galilean community.

- ❑ To determine the logocentric nature of the Logos, in relation to Jacques Derrida's anti-Logocentrism of the Word. Derrida's theory of Deconstruction claims that speech is privileged over writing. This results in a binary opposition between speech and writing.
- ❑ I hope to demonstrate that the binary opposition between speech and writing can be seen as ideological, in the South African socio-political situation.
- ❑ To demonstrate some of the socio-economic effects the written text has on the South African socio-political situation and how orality has created a new form of resistance through the power of spoken Word against the oppressive social structures of the dominant literate class.

1.3. The Scope of the Study:

This thesis seeks to critically analyse the metaphysical nature of the **Logos tradition in the Gospel of John and the binary opposition between the oral and written text with special reference to primarily oral cultures in South Africa.**

For this purpose I would like to propose a diachronic (words in time) and a synchronic (words in space) method:

- ❑ The diachronic approach of historical-critical analyses focus at the elucidation of the genesis of the written text, and how it came to have its present form. Questions concerning the 'author' or the author's environment (*Sitz im Leben*) have played a central role in such studies (Jeanrond 1988:8). The failure of *diachronic* historical method led to a new school of ;

- ❑ *Synchronic* interpreters, who refused to go behind the present form of the written text: structuralist, deconstructionist, narratologist and rhetorical analysis. This move, from the 'author' to the written text has been hailed by some as a paradigm shift in biblical interpretation (Draper 1987:237), but it seems to be a wider process of questioning and re-definition.

The scope of the thesis includes the oral and written hermeneutics of the Logos tradition in the Gospel of John, in respect:

- ❑ The historical re-construction around the *Logos* tradition.
- ❑ The historical interpretation of the proposed religious influences around the Logos tradition in focussing on Gnosticism, Hellenistic thought and Qumran in order to establish the religious influences on the narrative text.
- ❑ The historical interpretation of Logos in etymologically establishing its *Sitz im Leben* and its relation to the Johannine peasant community from the Greek, Hellenistic Judaic and Palestinian tradition. Logos is interpreted from a Historical and Form critical perspective which serves as bedrock against Derrida's Logocentric critique of the Word. This strengthens the polemic between the binary opposition of oral and written hermeneutics in the work of Jacques Derrida's.
- ❑ Derrida's critique on Logocentrism against the Logos tradition and its implications for primarily indigenous oral communities in South Africa.
- ❑ An Anthropology of Liberation is proposed which interprets the binary opposition between speech and writing from the perspective of the 'Other' in relation to the South African context.
- ❑ The Anthropology of Liberation as a contextually read discourse of the 'Other' in the liberation of the poor and oppressed in South Africa: the extent to which the power of the written text has contributed to social and economic oppression of the poor.

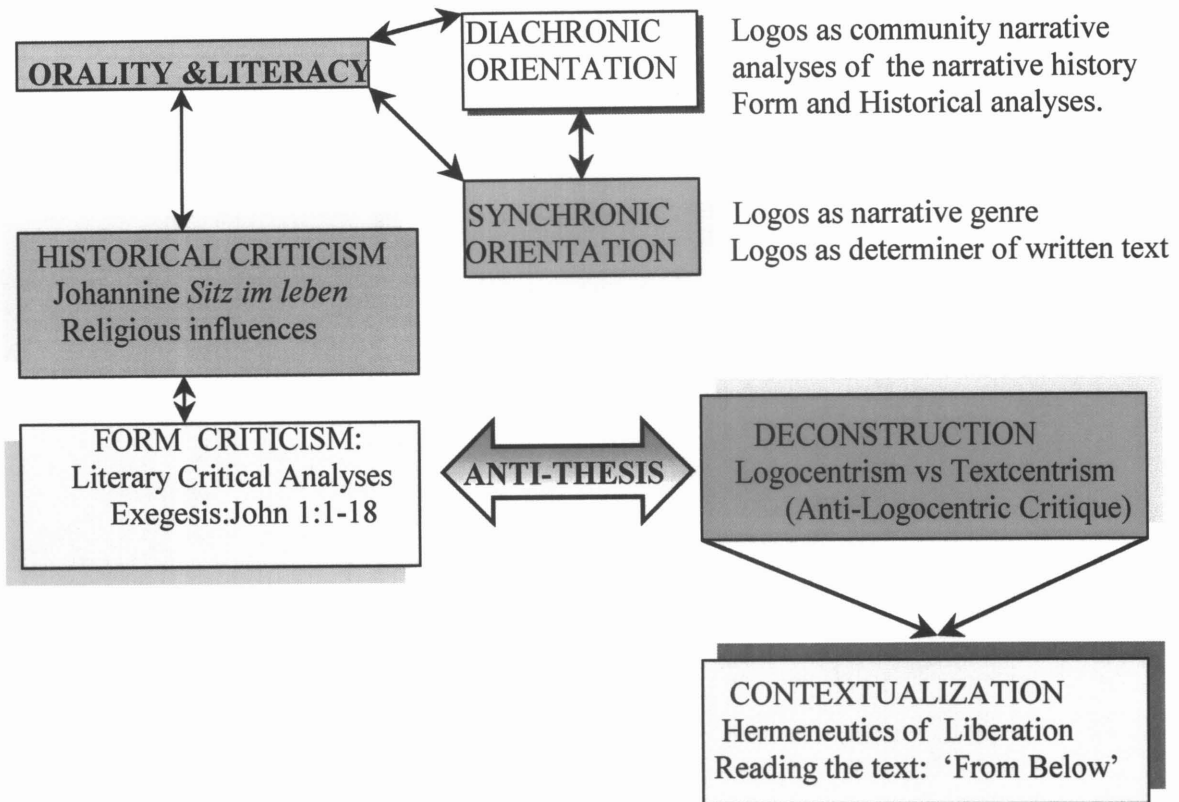
1.3.1. The Limitations of the Study:

- ❑ The study addresses only the first 18 verses of the Prologue of John. No attempt has been made to apply the thesis to the whole of the Gospel John.
- ❑ No attempt has been made to compare the Johannine Gospel with the Synoptic tradition (Matthew, Mark, Luke).
- ❑ No attempt has been made to trace the Johannine text to the Torah or the Talmud, and therefore the Judaic community (as opposed to the Aramaic oral community of Ancient Galilee).
- ❑ No attempt has been made to analyse the Law in the latter chapters of John.
- ❑ Derrida's polemic of speech versus writing needs to be interpreted and read from the perspective of the hermeneutics of Orality-Literacy Studies.
- ❑ Logos as 'metaphysics of presence' spells meaning and representation in the construction of knowledge for those from the 'otherside' of history.
- ❑ The contextualisation of the Johannine oral tradition is focused and therefore limited and the social critical analyses concentrate specifically on orality as resistance during the time of Apartheid of which the Logos in the Gospel of John holds the key to the discourse of the 'Other' as well as to the Derrida's logocentric critique of the Word.

1.3.2. The Products of the Study:

A product of this study is the proposal of a hermeneutics of Liberation which will enable me to draw a critical social analyses of the logocentric nature of the Word with that of the Johannine peasant community and that of the South African oppressive Apartheid situation. Orality and the Liberation struggle cannot be separated from the ideology of the written text. The proposed multi-disciplinary method in the light of the *Logos* tradition can be regarded as useful for this study, because it unfolds the dialogue with the history of the 'Other' or that of primarily oral

culture in the South African context. My integrated narrative hermeneutic method is presented in diagrammatic form below:



1.3.3. Literature Review:

It is usual for students to have to write a literature review as part of their thesis. This normally a chapter appearing early in the thesis, but in some styles of thesis, may appear throughout the work. (Bruce 1994: 144)

Because of the nature of this study, I have adopted the latter approach to review the literature, identified by Bruce above.

As the bibliography will confirm, I have read eclectically across a wide spectrum in the areas that a study of the *Logos* tradition in the Prologue of John and the current philosophical debate of Jacques Derrida's Logocentrism critique of metaphysics of presence of the Word

encompasses and implies. I considered this necessary to contextualise the *Logos*, in reading it from the discourse of the 'Other' in the current debate. I felt this particularly pertinent in the light of the role the spoken *Logos* played during the years of Apartheid. *Logos* in the life primarily oral cultures can be seen as a mechanism of resistance during the years of oppression in the social construction of their social universe. The dialogue between textcentrism versus logocentrism unfolds other binaries like 'white and black' as well as the deep hidden assumptions of the discourse of the 'Other' in relation to the oppressive literate ruling class.

Logos as power and authority of speech brings into dialogue a variety of disciplines such as communication, anthropology, historical studies, hermeneutics, analytical philosophy, Biblical studies and literary theory. In terms of research methodology I hope to set out to find others whose interdisciplinary perspective wove the same or similar web and to establish their position. To date, I have found no thinking that challenges with Derrida's logocentric debate of the Logos in relation with the discourse of the 'Other' other than that of An Anthropology of Liberation as this debate.

1.4. The Structure of the Study:

This thesis will be structured as follows.

Chapter One: Provides us with a general introduction about the historical background of the study; concerns that generated this study; the aim and focus of the study; the scope and limitations of the study; the structure or presentation of the study. It further intend to clarify and define: What is Orality?; Characteristics of Orality versus Literacy and the Myth of Oral and Literate societies.

Chapter Two: The purpose of this chapter is to describe and validate the methodology employed in the process of the research. It describes and validates how the research was conducted, from Logos tradition as transmission to the *Logos* as communication.

Chapter Three: will focus on the Historical Critical method in reconstructing the tradition around the *Logos* in the Gospel of John. Here I will focus on the authorship, place of composition, date and the purpose of the Gospel as well its relation to the Synoptic Gospels. I will further focus on an indepth study of proposed religious influences that surround the *Logos* tradition e.g. Gnosticism, Hellenistic thought, Qumran and its relation to the Gospel of John. This will be closely linked to the finding in chapter five where the Johannine tradition could be located in its traditional *Sitz im Leben*.

Chapter Four: will examine the concept *Logos* in its historical *Sitz im Leben* in looking at the Greek, Hellenistic Judaism, Palestinian Judaism tradition of the *Logos* and its relationship to the Old Testament Palestinian setting. The Historical Critical understanding of the *Logos* tradition is used to determine the etymology of the *Logos* tradition and how it relates to Derrida's Logocentric critique of the Word in Chapter Six. The Historical Critical interpretation of the *Logos* tradition focuses exclusively on written text. The Historical Critical Method takes into account both chirographic and speech in the written text (e.g. words transacted in space and time) and also the interface between the two. This will be followed by a critical analysis of the *Logos*-Hymn, which will be followed by an indepth exegetical study on the Prologue (1:1-18) in locating the form and character of the *Logos*-Hymn. This chapter will serve as the bedrock of my thesis in the understanding of the polemic in Chapters Five and Six and its relationship

to the Prologue (1:1-18) in the Gospel of John and that of primarily oral communities in the South African context prior the 1994 democratic era.

Chapter Five: There is a paradigmatic shift from the diachronic understanding of the Word to the narrative text where the *logoi* (*words of Jesus*) move towards status of the *Logos* which becomes the determiner of the written text. The Logos now takes command over the written text in the Johannine narrative and marks a new era for oral and written hermeneutics. The concern in this chapter is with a particular theological and philosophical view of language that entails the assumption for the metaphysical. Central to the hermeneutics of John is the notion of the pre-existence of the Logos. Being with God in the beginning, Logos is situated prior to the realm of history and outside the reality of the written text.

This chapter will focus on Jacques Derrida's anti-Logocentric critique of Western metaphysics of presence of the Logos tradition. Derrida launches an attack on the authority of the Logos in Western epistemological construction of Reason which privileges speech over writing. The spoken 'Word' spells presence whereas writing can be seen as dead and removed from social context.

Deconstruction's intention is to disclose the oppressive nature of the Western logocentric tradition and its claim that speech creates meaning and representation of reality. Derrida further argues that the spoken 'Word' in view of John 1:1 cannot be seen as 'presence' or a foundation for empirical scientific interpretive interest in order to verify 'truth'. Truth is never axiomatic or absolute but in a continual state of displacement of meaning and representation. In the spoken 'Word', both the hearer and the speaker create meaning, whereas in writing the author is absent,

and non-existent. Derrida's major objective in relation to his critique on the Logos tradition is to argue that writing possesses self-presence and that there is nothing outside of context. The sign does not point beyond itself but rather to traces of more written text.

Chapter Six: The purpose of this chapter is to draw contextual analysis on the historical critical interpretive interest of Logos and Derrida's anti-Logocentric critique of metaphysics of presence of the Logos in the light of the South African religious and socio-political context. I will propose a contextual analyses: a Anthropology of Liberation.

I hope to examine the extent to which the written text was ideologically loaded in the written construction of the history of primarily oral communities in the South African context. The written text has played a major role in silencing the 'voices' of oral cultures in South Africa: James Scott (1990) identifies "everyday forms of resistance" to systems of ideological and material dominance. My interest lies in exploring and unravelling the "hidden transcript" implicit in the voices of the poor and oppressed: the speech, the songs, the veiled, but sometimes overt and public, words and actions through which the primarily oral communities communicated their resistance.

I have found close parallels between the Johannine peasant community, which was an oral community, and that which existed and still exists in the South African oppressive social context. In both these contexts the written text created socio-political boundaries, cultural identity problems, racial segregation and social and economic oppression. In this context, the Logos or the spoken Word that existed, and still exists outside the realm of the written text became and becomes a new source of power for the poor and oppressed. Those who were and

are economically and socially impoverished drew strength from the eternal Logos in order to endure the different levels of oppression in the South African context. Writing in first century Palestine belonged to the elite or literate class associated with the temple in Jerusalem. In the Johannine community, Jesus as oral performer had the authority and power to affirm the metaphysical presence of the Logos, which was not controlled by the written text but by the power under the authority of the Spirit. In the South Africa community, traditional oral performers claim the authority and power to affirm the same metaphysical presence of the *Logos*.

This is the key to the hermeneutical dilemma that the literate world is struggling with: it views the world as a body of written texts and excludes the social embodiment of the Word in relation to the oral discourse of the 'Other'. At the most general level, I would like to rethink the idea of culture, and the attempt to understand the politics obscured by most historical and literary representation.

In reaction against the claims of Deconstruction, which can be seen as a 'new hierarchy' and ideologically loaded against the spoken Word, there is a need to suggest an Anthropology of Liberation where the spoken words in primarily oral cultures can be seen as meaning and representation in relation to the ideology of the written text. In South Africa the written text in the last 300 years has re-ordered the course of history for the poor and the oppressed. The written text has shaped new boundaries and it has strengthened racial segregation and has affirmed greater social and economic power at the expense of the poor and the oppressed. The spoken Word affirms a new authority in the light of meaning and representation of reality for primarily oral cultures in the face of the hidden transcript of the ruling literate class.

Chapter Seven: Constitutes the conclusion, and summing up of the research findings.

Bibliography: This is a systematic arranged sources used in the research.

1.5. Historical Background to the Study:

Literacy in South Africa was introduced in the 17th century by the European missionaries. The transformation of the African languages into standard literary languages was a joint project between the indigenous people of the land and the dominant class. This transition from orality to literacy was highly dependent on African informants and experts (Kruger 1992:225).

The introduction of both script and scripture through missionaries was so strongly connected that Coloured and Black communities in the Cape regarded the progress of the mission as 'progress of the Word.' This view was supported by the fact, that, nearly exclusively, the missions had been responsible for black and coloured education. They were in charge of a vast majority of black schools and institutions for higher education from the 18th century until the 1950s. Attending a school was not the only way to get access to the literate world. Chiefs who were unable to read and write used missionaries as secretaries and sent their dependents to school. Sometimes, chiefs even employed literate secretaries especially to control European correspondence (Kruger 1992:225).

From the beginning, literacy was not a white domain only. Moreover, to be white did not mean to be literate. Until the late 1920s, illiteracy was a serious problem among the white population in South Africa. About 35 % of the white children had never seen a school in their life. At the same time the Cape was looking at a history of 200 years of coloured education by Dutch, British and French missionaries (Kruger 1992:225-254). South Africa became a 'republic' in 1961 where the majority of indigenous people had few basic economic, social and political

rights. South Africa remained an oppressive society, where the white minority maintained political and economic control. Black people remained powerless, with no access to economic and social power. In the late 1960s the culture of resistance that the state had tried to decimate earlier in the decade, began to regenerate. The resistance took the form of local organisations which advanced the struggle of the political organizations that had been banned. In addition to challenging the existing social order, the resistance organizations tried to reconstruct South African society (Meer 1989:20).

In a highly politicised society, many black artists and poets did not allow themselves to be alienated from the key political struggle. Orality and resistance literature was not just seen as the expression of individuals or small groups but of an entire social movement to end oppression. Oral composers resisted the repression and the censorship of the state and the prescriptions of the conservative liberal critics. Literary and oral activists and poets developed tactics to deal with the silencing of the poor or the 'Other' (Merod 1987:10).

The core reference of the term the 'Other' is designated to that sector of the population most oppressed by the apartheid regime, who had been named and misnamed during the apartheid history and who had been referred to as 'black' in the social sciences. Owing to the hegemonic forces of colonialism, apartheid and neo-colonialism, the construct of the 'Other' did not function as a marker of inclusive belonging, locatedness and identity, as occasioned by the index of geography or social boundaries. Instead, the term signalled the 'Other' of 'Apartheid', consigned to geographic, social and psychological distance, as well as to deprivation and underdevelopment. As with all oppressed groups the abjection and enforced silence of the 'Other' or those that were traditionally from non-European background was

evident in the inappropriate names that were imposed on them (Miller 1990:35).

By constituting and ranking 'racial groups' in a self-serving hierarchy, the dominant minority group established exclusive boundaries and secured enormous power. The term 'black' stood as the binary opposite of 'white' and signified its 'Other,' at least historically. Like other oppressed groups across the world, black people responded by embracing the concept 'black' and using it as a cornerstone of their attempts to reconstruct their identity. The oppressive Apartheid regime's second-ranking construct of 'coloured,' into which any other person could fit, shows up the fictiveness of its racial classification.

While in the broader sense, the term 'black' affirms the unity of all oppressed South Africans, it masks the fact that while black people as a whole were systematically marginalized and subjugated in social, economic, political and cultural terms, Apartheid oppression was not uniform. Racial minorities, such as Coloureds and Indians were given more rights than African people, while the African majority was subjected to the most serious atrocities of the Apartheid regime.

According to Franz Fanon, where the colonial order had rendered 'oral traditions' 'inert' and reduced pre-colonial cultural forms to a state of petrification, these new practices operated in accordance with, and offered to redeem, the vibrant and communitarian cultural practices of the pre-colonial era:

the oral tradition- stories, epics, and songs of the people were filed away as set pieces are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental. There is a tendency to bring conflict up to date and modernize the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke, together with the names of heroes and the types of weapons. The method of allusion is more and more widely used.... The contact of the people with the new movement gives rise to a new rhythm of life and to forgotten muscular tensions, and develops the

imagination. Every time the storyteller relates a fresh episode to his public, he presides over a real invocation. The existence of a new type of man is revealed to the public. The present is no longer turned in upon itself but spread out for all to see. The storyteller once more gives free rein to his imagination. (Alessandrini 1999:171)

Orality can be regarded as a major tool of resistance that has been used by primarily oral communities in order to oppose the oppressive colonial regime. This can be seen in the way the storyteller conscientises his audience and then reverberates this allusion through storytelling which enkindles a new hope which gives rise to a new rhythm of life in the midst of their struggle. Orality throughout post-colonial South Africa will continue to survive, because of the primordial essence of the 'Word' that creates and shapes new social universes for the poor and oppressed.

It was against the background of these socio-political events that 'orality' or the power of speech became a mechanism of resistance for primarily oral cultures. Voices of resistance echoed through their expression of verbal arts and gestes through poetry, spiritual hymns and freedom songs which opposed the oppressive policies of the apartheid regime. In the face of the public transcripts the hidden transcripts of the poor and oppressed manifested the oral power of the Word.

1.6. What is Orality?

Finnegan asked the question 'What is orality-if anything?' She concludes that it is nothing more than an academic slogan (1990:131). Graham agrees that the term 'orality' itself is loaded, or at least an ambiguous term and when it is treated as a functional dimension of the written text it can be seen as problematic (1987:7). There is a need to focus on a broad understanding of how the term has been perceived.

The concept 'orality' discloses new ways and hermeneutical benefits in relation to the meaning and representation of the written text. This has helped us to broaden our perceptions of the works of human literary imagination (Finnegan 1990:130). Orality has helped us to appreciate human culture especially from the 'other side' of history with narratives of different kinds, poems and traditional songs. The term 'oral' is preferable to 'illiterate.' Illiterate refers to persons in a literate culture who have not learned to read or write scribally. 'Illiterate' is a term that marginalises people in a literate society (Ong 1987:174).

The term 'orality' identifies non-written material and turns the attention to voices that were often unheard, the colonised and those that have been marginalised by the literate world. In the South African context these 'oral texts' are real, and were always there but have been subjugated by the written text. In the South Africa context, this was seen in oral arts that reflected the struggles of marginalised communities, eg in the form of political protest songs and satires (Scott 1990:246) of those that oppose the public transcript of domination.

If one looks at the anatomy of orality, one finds that the word connects with the body directly.

Argyle describes five types of bodily communication,

- Expressing emotions**, mainly by face, mime, body and voice
- Communicative interpersonal attitude:** We establish and maintain friendship and other relationships mainly by non-verbal signals, such as proximity, tone of voice, touch, gaze and facial expression.
- Accompanying and supporting speech:** Speakers and listeners engage in a complex sequence of glances, non-verbal vocalizations which are closely synchronized with speech, play and dance.
- Rituals:** non-verbal signs play a prominent role in greeting and other rituals.

- **Self presentation** is mainly achieved by appearance and to a lesser extent by voice.
(Argyle 1988:4-5)

In an oral society (and in literate more secretively), the individual perceives the speech (an oral biography) of another as a physical and interior organ that makes language possible. This figure is a sort of *totem* (sign). Since the voice can increase in volume, voiced discourse aloud has its roots in the human body. Orality always bears a human face and always has a human body. Any transmittance of human knowledge has physicality because the memory cannot recall information without the voice that speaks it. Knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly reverberated or it would be lost (Ong 1982:24). The oral poet thinks of speech as 'breath,' a possession that others can steal, and take ceaselessly. One can even steal from ones own speech and compositions. As the Old English imply; " since speech is stolen from language, it is thus stolen from itself " (Waugh 1995:364).

Orality also brings into question the meaning of the word 'text' as a product, as well as the processes that underly it. For Ong the condition of words in a written text is different from their condition in a spoken discourse. The word in its natural, oral form is part of a real, existential context where both the hearer and the speaker create the meaning of the written text (1982:101).

Primary oral cultures have no significant form of written communication of oral 'text.' Can one speak of literature in the case of oral 'text'? This can be seen as anachronistic in relation to primary oral cultures, because in primary oral cultures memory serves as a means of storing information, whereas in literate communities the written text is a fixed artifact and serves as a vehicle to support the loss of memory.

The Latin noun *textus* and the verb *texere* refers to the act of weaving. As the sum of threads woven into a carpet transcends the individual threads and creates a new identity, so our sentences are woven into a new written identity (Jeanrond 1994:85). Again the interpretation of the word 'text' according to Western scholarship move along the lines and thought of chirographic interpretation, which is totally different from that of primarily oral communities.

Schipper observes that oral 'text' does not exist without the performance itself: the very presence of the performer, storyteller, singer, without whom 'oral text' cannot exist which is a fundamental characteristic in the past has often been overlooked. Oral text has often been left to scholars of literature as a stepchild of anthropologists and folklorists who lack in the hermeneutical understanding of the word 'text'(1989:66). In an oral 'text,' the body is viewed as a social system of communication, and this includes the oral and aural phenomena of the Word.

Oral utterances do not have originals in the same way as written texts do. Written text provide what has been called autonomous discourse, or context free. Although written utterances grow out of social settings and may refer to social settings, the written text carries with it no social setting as does oral utterance. Written texts consist only of words inscribed on a surface. Written words can derive directly from other written words , but oral utterances cannot derive simply from other oral words (Silberman 1987:12).

Oral communities have many fixed artifacts. The spoken authority of the word shapes the oral transmission processes which creates meaning and representation between speaker and hearer. The spoken utterance is addressed to a real, living person, at a specific time in a real setting. For

Ong we have been addicted to think unreflectively of oral utterance not by examining oral cultures utterance as such, but by understanding them with written text (1995:9).

Tannen observes that oral cultures reflect formulaic expressions (sayings, cliches and proverbs). In oral cultures meaning is not contained in words themselves but words share a social community for 'meaning is in the context' in contrast to literate traditions where 'the meaning is in the written text'(1982:3).

Orality in the view of Finnegan (1990), Graham (1987) and Ong (1982) relates to the voice of the 'Other' from a literate perspective. For Finnegan 'orality' is nothing but rather a fashionable term and another academic slogan. However, for Graham and Ong, 'orality' reflects the subjugated culture or tradition of the poor and marginalised eg. poems, hymns, stories and folklore. These oral transmissions always operate with hidden assumptions.

This may not have fully satisfied our question about the meaning of 'orality,' but it opens new ways, of reflecting on the power of the Logos that has been exiled in the written text. Underneath the written construction which seemingly has imprisoned the Logos tradition lies a network of oral processes, a peasant community that has shaped the production processes and transmissions of the Logos hymn in the written text.

The Western literate understanding of 'orality' has been perceived chirographically of the interface between oral and written media (residual orality). It is an orality that is self constructed and totally removed from the real context of primarily oral communities who perceive the world through the power of spoken words, by their cultural and religious performance of the

oral socio-cultural archive of indigenous knowledge, eg. song, hymns, poetry and speeches.

In returning to our initial question 'What is orality-if anything?' Finnegan argues that in the one sense 'orality' is not anything but it is rather a fashionable term, and one which, as I have earlier indicated, carries a whole series of hidden assumptions. There is also something in this term that appeals to the "romantic and mystical in us, that calls from the far-away but treasured 'other,' the 'nostalgic' world we have lost, it poses a powerful and in its way valuable appeal (1990:146).

Literate societies have a widespread form of written communication. In order to understand the different characteristics between primarily oral societies and literate societies, there is a need to look at the myth of the 'Great Divide' between the oral and the literate.

1.7. Characteristics of Oral versus Literate:

Orality helps us to understand ourselves. Here we mean understanding our roots, as individuals, in our community and our culture. Primarily oral communities draw their thinking, their mode of life, their values and philosophy of life from their culture. These go back to their oral roots. Understanding the characteristics and values of these communities is essentially an understanding of ourselves. This understanding is of crucial importance for those from the 'otherside of history' who underwent a period of colonisation and oppression during which the cultures of our communities were suppressed, distorted and denied the opportunity to develop (Akivaga & Odaga 1982:2).

Ong (1982) and Havelock (1986) each look at some of the characteristics that oral cultures typically display. For Havelock, 'a general theory' of orality must build on a general theory of society. It requires that communication be understood as a social phenomenon, not a private transaction between individuals. Language of any kind acquires meaning for the individual only as that meaning is shared by a community, even though the individual is not addressing the community (1986:68). Orality must always be seen in relation to a community rather than to an individual. Havelock notes that 'in primary orality, relationships between human beings are governed exclusively by acoustics (supplement by visual perception of bodily behavior)' (1986:65).

This idea led Ong to his understanding that orality is "**evanescent rather than permanent**". Since sound disappears immediately after it is made, speech is inherently temporary. In oral cultures that have no means of recording except in memory, once something has been spoken, it cannot be retrieved. This causes oral cultures to view words as having some sort of magical power (1982:32). After the reverberations of the uttered sound has ceased, and nothing remains just a memory of the sound of the meaning is conveyed .

Primarily oral cultures store and retrieve knowledge with only the ephemeral sound of the human voice. Sound has a special relationship to time: sound exists only when it is going out of existence. There is no way to 'stop' or 'have' sound. This leads to the feeling that words are events, and as a result oral cultures tend to give words great power. The concept *Logos* embodies the meaning of word, power and spirit (Ong1982:32). Sound has a special relationship to interiority, to the inside of things and people, in contrast to vision's connection to exteriority.

The evanescence of speech causes evanescence of thought. For Ong

In the total absence of writing, there is nothing outside the thinker, no text, to enable him or her to produce the same line of thought again or even to verify whether he or she has done so or not
(1982: 34)

According to Havelock,

the answer would lie in ritualized utterance, a traditional language which somehow become formally repeatable like a ritual in which the words remain in fixed order. Such language has to be memorized. There is no other way to guarantee its survival (1986:70)

Primary oral speech tends to be very formulaic, that is why poetry and rhythmic speech is very non-literary. Writing on the other hand is a permanent record. Print seems unchanging and everlasting. Writing is open-ended and resists closure. With the intervention of the printing press during the time of the Reformation, notions of closure and completeness develop that are unthinkable in orality and difficult in manuscript culture (Ong 1982:31-32).

Another attribute of primary oral speech, is '**contextual versus empirical scientific thinking.**' Persons in oral cultures live in close, intimate connection with their environment and with each other. They tend not to think in linear ways about the world and their lives. "All thinking is concrete and operational. Learning is hands on, by apprenticeship or discipleship. They conceptualise in terms of immediacy, in terms of their world view, whereas spoken words are always in their own context" (Ong 1982: 42).

Speakers of an oral language rely more on the context for the communication of his message.

For Greenfield

Context-dependent speech is tied up with context dependent thought which in turn is the opposite of abstract thought (1972:169).

In comparing the oral and written cultures, Greenfield says,(....)

If the speaker of the oral language depends upon the surrounding context to communicate his message, then effective communication presupposes a common context and common point of view for both listener and speaker. He (speaker) is therefore egocentric; that is, he takes for granted, without being aware of doing so, that his point a view and frame of reference are the only possible ones. At times, this assumption may be valid, at other times, not so (Greenfield 1972:170).

For oral cultures, communication is invariably face to face. Oral languages do not spread as far as the written and are therefore shared by a smaller group.

On the other hand, the practice of writing presupposes distance in time and space between the author and reader. Writing lends itself to 'scientific fact'. Writing encourages the development of mental habits of distanciation and scientific objectification. Whereas sound envelopes the bonds of speaker and hearer, writing marks the separation of author and hearer (Ong 1982:42-43). Writing can be seen context-free or as an autonomous discourse, that can be written in one social context and can be read in another social context (Ong 1982:78). Whereas in an oral culture, the elders are respected and appreciated for their indispensable memories in order to transfer knowledge so the community could benefit from the acquired wisdom of their own culture.

Another trait of primary oral speech is that it is '**agonistic.**' Ong observes that primary oral cultures often evidence wars of words, such as a riddle or a song contest, name-calling or bragging. For them communication is always dialogue, there are always at least two people present. There is no single, fixed text as in writing. This fosters the sense that truth is an ongoing process, one that comes from the conflict between views. Oral societies tend to see truth as an dialectic and agonistic process (1982:45).

On the other hand writing separates us from each other. It fosters the perception that knowledge is static and that the knower is separated from the known. The structure of writing is monologic rather than dialogic (speaker and hearer).

According to Ong,

there is no way to refute a text, After absolutely and total and devastating refutation, it says exactly the same thing as before (...) text is inherently contumacious (stubborn, disobedient) (1982:79).

Ong's next attribute of primary oral speech that it is '**participatory**'. In oral cultures knowledge is produced through direct participation and an emotional connection. It comes from a connection either to the person passing on knowledge or to the concrete thing being studied, whereas writing separates the knower from the known. This leads directly to Western culture valuing of objectivity over subjectivity (1982: 46).

In literate societies knowledge is seen as something non-human, something we find or need to discover, not something we create in our interaction with each other. A classical example of this is found in the work of Plato, who believed that truth is to be found not in this world but in the realm of ideas (doctrine of forms) where eternal truths reside. According to Ong Plato's understanding of truth and knowledge can be seen as follows,

Platonic ideas are voiceless, immobile, devoid of all warmth not interactive but isolated, not part of human lifeworld at all but utterly above and beyond it (1982:80).

Such understanding of truth would be unclear to primary oral culture but well accepted in a culture dominated by writing.

Ong's next trait of oral discourse tends to be '**homeostatic versus multiple and historical meaning**'. Orality is present-orientated: words have single meaning determined by the context in which they are uttered. The meaning of a word is strongly influenced by their immediate existential context. This means that oral cultures tend to memorise past meaning, thereby stabilising the social context. Writing fosters layered meaning, because writing is read and re-read outside of the context in which it was produced. Also, writing gives us a record of past

usages of terms, it fosters a sense of multiple meaning (deconstruction) of a word rooted in various historical contexts (1982:46). Oral languages have multiple meanings to a much greater extent than literate languages.

The final attribute of primary oral speech, is that '**cultural versus individual identity**'. In primary oral cultures there is always an immediate audience. Communication always involved community. The encompassing aspects of sound serve to create a communion among speakers and listeners. There is a sense of participation in a common reality, and hence a more communal identity. In orality there must always be an 'other' present for communication to occur. Writing is isolating and fosters individualism. Writing is often created and read in isolation from others (Ong 1982:102). What can be observed is that there is no real audience present, the writer illusionary imagines or socially constructs the audience he is writing to. Here is a list of characteristics of oral and literate cultures,

Oral / Aural	Chirographic
Sound & Temporality	Sight & Space
Interiority	Exteriority
Incorporating / Unifying	Dissecting / isolating
Fleeting	Long lasting
Words as event	Words as labels
Processual	' Things' orientated
Mnemonics / recollection	Knowledge as stored : looked up
Attachment / Participatory	Detachment
Meaning / utterance always in context	Autonomous / Mobile discourse
Grounded in life world	Abstractions
Situational thinking	Deduction / logic (syllogisms)
Communal / Public	Individualistic / Private
Dialogue	Monologue
Open / dynamic (agonistic)	Closed / fix / static
Participation	Distance / objectivity

Communication is embodied	Communication is disembodied
Time	Space
Universal human attribute	Culturally specific technology

(Finnegan 1988:168)

Clearly, there are fundamental technical differences between the medium of writing and the medium of speech. Speech is often presented as 'warm' and 'writing' as cold. In this dichotomy between oral and written it can be concluded that speech is a cosmic and invisible architecture of the human dark, whereas writing was the visualisation of the acoustic space. Spoken words are more energised than the written word. They are not only oral in form but a combination of the human senses (mouth, ear, eye). The body becomes a social system of communication. We tend to react to each situation that occurs, even to our own act of speaking. Writing can rather be seen as a more specialist action in which there is little opportunity or call for reaction. The spoken word carries emotion as well as meaning.

Orality-Literacy studies called the 'Other' (fictively constructed) to dialogue with the power of the written text. The dominant discourse or the Great tradition of the West has turned the Word into traces of more written text. The spoken authority of the Word has been buried under a mound of historical data. The Word in the community where I come from was not a dead construction of physical signs that point to other signs, but the very essence of the spoken Word was a living force that put reality into motion. It was filled with emotion, rhythm and gesture as it brought meaning and representation into existence. It was the very sustenance of the soul and being, and the very power of reason and a genuine form of resistance against the falsely constructed reality of Western interpretive interest.

The Johannine *Logos* from the perspective of 'Orality-Literacy' helps the reader to understand the social dynamics of the poor and the oppressed. For years the written text was a construction of the literate class. The South African peasant community was socially and economically impoverished but was strengthened by the power and authority of the metaphysics of presence of the spoken Word. Although the *Logos* was inscribed in the written text, it will always be spoken in these primarily oral communities where hymns and poetry and spiritual songs, testimonies and charismatic preaching by poets and priests reflect the hidden transcript of a community. Their oral archive of indigenous knowledge echoed words of freedom and liberation against their oppressors and the power of the written text which creates social boundaries and racial division because of their illiteracy and ignorance to understand the dynamics of the power of written text.

According to Ong's statement that Orality-Literacy Studies, "are cross cultural studies which enrich the human spirit and open a greater understanding and love between diverse peoples especially those from the 'otherside' of written history. The more human, human beings are, the more there is in them the ability to be free from the illness of segregation and racial boundaries" (1987:181).

Orality-Literacy studies can open new depths in our understanding of the work of redemption as known to the Christian faith. Beneath the Biblical text lies a vast oral tradition, a tradition that is up till this very day untold because history had been monologically constructed by the ruling literate class for primarily oral communities. A mound of historically constructed data by the ruling literate class revealed that their victories and triumphs were textually constructed at the expense of the historically constructed myth of the white Jesus of Galilee. Oral thought

has been interpreted as literate in their expressions and interpretations. The radical primacy that the biblical text has in the Christian tradition is the Word of God, the eternal *Logos*.

Orality-Literacy Studies unfold a new understanding of the Word of God in relation to subjugated cultures that had been buried under a mound of falsely constructed historical data. *Logos* calls to be freed from the classical text of the Western interpretation, so that it can permeate the human soul which creates a dialogue between the I and the Thou.

1.8. The Myth of Oral and Literate Societies:

In the early 1960s several books were published on oral and literate cultures. These include *The Savage Mind* by the French Structuralist anthropologist Levi Strauss, the *Preface to Plato* by Eric Havelock (1963) and several articles by Jack Goody. In Werner Kelber's article on *Words in tradition, Words in Space*, Orality-Literacy or speech opposes writing he argues, 'that such a powerful thesis was needed to break ground, to fracture the well-established sinecure of textual or chirographic thinking that reflectively dominated earlier scholarship' (Foley 1994:150). These works and many others brought to prominence what came to be called 'orality and literacy'.

The claims of literacy need to be carefully understood. Havelock (1982) use the term 'literacy' to refer to both non-vowelized phonetic alphabetic writing and vowelized phonetic alphabetic writing. Havelock argues that the use of vowelized phonetic alphabetic writing was related to the development of abstract thinking in ancient Greece. Havelock claims the literacy is related to abstract thinking.

The perception of the interface of Orality-Literacy Studies represents a new field of study. Orality- Literacy studies contribute to a wide range of disciplines including: psycho-linguistics, socio-linguistics, anthropology, history, New age criticism, reader-response criticism, religious history and theology (Christian, Jewish, Islam and other comparative religions).

According to Ong, the multi-disciplinarity of Orality-Literacy Studies is beginning to revise the empirical history of the West, as it reveal the oral-agonistic nature of the different schools of thought which until recently were populated exclusively by males (especially white) who taught in chirographic controlled but orally targeted languages (1987:172). A classic example of this was the white missionaries that were sent to Africa to learn the language of the indigenous African communities and to colonise them with the hidden agenda of Western interpretive interest.

Those theorists involved in the comparative modes of communication frequently referred to a binary divide between different kinds of societies or human experience, eg. 'primitive versus civilized,' 'simple versus advanced' and 'pre-literate versus literate'. This binary account has been referred to as the 'Great Divide' or Western paradigm over against the Third World. Such theories suggest that radical, deep and basic differences exist between modes of thinking in literate and non-literate societies (Ong 1987:173).

Ong quotes Johannes Fabian, as he reported on the ways in which Western anthropologists have in the past regularly, if unconsciously and subtly, downgraded oral peoples who have been the subjects of their research (1987:173). Such research was ideologically driven and biased and questionable in terms of social scientific perspective.

Jack Goody denies any significant distinction between literate and non-literate societies as he adopts a widely criticised stance of cultural relativity. He further argues that 'general' rather than radical differences exist between the non-literate and literate (1968:67). Goody advanced Levi Strauss's "Great Divide theory" as he sheds light on the changes that were brought about by writing. The difference between purely oral communication and communication based on printed word is that the oral word is ephemeral whereas writing remains a fixed artifact.

Goody sees human communication as a basic requirement for social institutions and normative behaviour. The changes and modes of communication have implications on primarily oral cultures. In focusing on the medium of communication Goody echoes the well known dictum 'the medium is the message', with its focus on the form of communication as the written text (1977:9). Western literate culture has assigned particular importance to the written, especially the printed word.

The written text has enjoyed a special status in every literate society. The replacement of purely oral transmission by the use of the written word has been the repeated pattern of historical development across all geographical and cultural boundaries. There is something about the written word that bespeaks of authority and reliability in its very namelessness and independence of particular and individual memories. Writing as a fixed text has contributed to this authority from the time of its discovery and was further sustained by an elitist academic community which perceived the written text as autonomous. Only in literate societies can the written text be seen as autonomous and powerful, but people in primarily oral societies accord no authority to the written word. The oral word has not been replaced by the literate word. Ninety percent of what we express is expressed orally (Graham 1987:59).

Phonetic writing, marks a dividing line between the oral and the literate. Once we know basically what writing does to thought and to consciousness itself, it is a technology that restructures thought and consciousness. It is one of the most pervasive and radical tools across the centuries and across the surface of the globe (Ong 1987:174).

Primarily oral cultures are societies which do not have scribal writing to facilitate their day to day communications. It is a world of direct spoken communication, the simultaneous and immediate presence of the speaker and his audience. This makes up the very essence of communication. This aural-oral communication was characterized by the transmission of cultural tradition by means of a range of mnemonic faculties and mnemotechnical devices which were deeply rooted in the psycho-biology. They have great wisdom, but none of them have the extended analytic explanation of the world, that we call science today which not only includes the physical sciences but also the human sciences, such as the study of verbal utterances, written and oral (Ong 1987:178).

In primarily oral cultures, mimic and gestures together with memory, play a crucial role in affirming oral communities' traditions, customs, values, and ways and life which are ingrained through regular practice in daily activities, eg. religious festivals, ceremonies and rituals (initiation rites) are stored in the memories of people and passed on from generation to generation. This memory serves as an archive for stored information. Oral discourse builds up and repeats; it re-inforces the same themes, simply both the form and function of oral discourse maintains tradition by telling coherent, organized stories (Rubin 1995:15). Orality reaches beyond everyday life as primarily oral communities create songs about their origins as a

community, about their beliefs in supernatural powers and about things they value for holding them together over a long time.

For primarily oral cultures the spoken word and performance are important features of oral communities. Just as the sculptor uses wood or stone to create his piece of art, so does the oral artist use the spoken word to create his art e.g a story, song or performance. It is through the spoken word that oral communities have been kept alive. The spoken word is transmitted from one person to the next, and from one generation to the other (Akiyaga & Odaga 1982:1).

Chirographic cultures (cultures with writing) tend to think of words as labels for thing. Writing leads to visual metaphors: perspective, focus, trace, or point a view. Writings, with its reliance on vision, leads to an emphasis on things instead of events and processes (Ong 1982:31).

In literate cultures, the libraries are archives of printed text which contain stored information. This information can be referenced, assessed decontextually and reflected upon long after they are written. In an oral society, this cannot be done as one cannot look up for any information, for speech is ephemeral, because it dies the moment it is uttered, unless it is stored in someone's memory. According Jousse (1990) all human information can be stored in human memory, and is accessible until one no longer has contact with another person. Information for primarily oral cultures can be reference through the oral archive of human memory. For Jousse, memory constitutes the 'oral archive'

the capability to re-play a perceived reality in its absence, to re-present something past, is unique to man and it is memory that allows him to do so and thus makes him unique: Through memory he replays experienced reality stored in him, through memory he conserves and transmits consciously his past actions and reactions and so is enabled to shape his future according to the experience of the past (Jousse 1990:167).

Thus a density of memory was created as information and human experience was compressed and amplified. New information had to be edited for brevity and fit to conform with old knowledge in order to be remembered. In order for a culture to survive, its traditions must be transmitted through time. In primarily oral cultures, human beings communicate with each other through speech. How could they communicate with the future generations? Speech could not be used, because it is an acoustically based phenomenon, and sound exists only ephemerally, but the human mind and body could store the knowledge it received through hearing and understanding speech and action.

For Havelock the mind serves as storage container, and memory assumed a central role in cultural survival (1986:55). Jousse reminds us:

Memory! We no longer have any idea of its capabilities! When I simply strung together like beads the series of texts that make up this work on rhythmic and mnemonic oral style, the philologist cried out: 'But it is absolutely impossible that human memory should have such powers!' This is because they themselves were being totally devoid of memory, almost never having exercised it. This is how reactions to some fact that has been put into new relief can be dictated by a person's training. We judge on the basis, of what we are ...
(Jousse 1990:xx-xxi)

In oral societies, a premium is put on memory, on recollection. Oral societies develop sophisticated mnemo-technical devices to help them remember. The role of cultural communicator was filled by a respected member of a community, called a 'bard, priest, prophet (*nabi*) or seer.' These speakers could recite from memory stories, poems, hymns that last for hours, whereas some only needed to hear a lengthy story or a song once in order to commit it to memory (Havelock 1986:77).

Repetition is a vital method of fixing ideas in the mind. As Walter Ong wrote, "oral societies must invest great energy in saying words over and over again what have been learned arduously

over the ages” (1982:41). Later these ideas became fixed in the mind of the bard, poet or priest, and, they would repeat them in the minds of the community. Repetition or redundancy also assured the audience comprehension. In acoustically demanding situations, such as outdoors or in a room with or sound-conducting qualities, each word may not have been heard by each listener. Giving the audience more than one opportunity to hear important phrases, therefore, aided the spread of cultural knowledge (1982:40).

Basically a primarily oral society is one which does not have scientific skills of presenting communication in written form. There is instead a heavy reliance on memory and the traditions of such societies are kept alive by various institutions (churches, synagogues): beliefs, practices and ceremonies (eg. eucharist, marital rites, initiation rites, burial rites) which form an intricate part of the life of the oral people but deeply written cultural study of oral performance will always bear some marks of written habits of their investigators although intelligence and the mind is reflective, and can turn back on itself.

The ‘Great Divide’ between Orality-Literacy can be seen as the most profound of all revolutions in technology. The changes it brings are qualitative, placing oral societies on the one side and the literate ones on the other. The ability to transform the transient sounds of language into permanent spacial marks as writing also transforms social existence. Communication and memory are no longer necessarily dependent upon speech. Communication between human beings, no longer necessarily immediate and face to face, breaks its bonds and reaches into time and space. Memory no longer has to be borne by language and within the structure of speech. The status of those responsible for cultural and social memory is diminished, together with the forms of social memory with which they are associated (Guy 1991:396). The written text

becomes the repository of knowledge and scientific logic as the written word makes possible our science, history and literature. Literacy in an oral society changes not just the structures of the social life but the structures of language and the forms in which is expressed, and also the very structures of thought.

This leads me to focus my attention on the important question of theoretical frameworks methodology in the following chapter. Orality- Literacy research and Biblical Studies had been clouded in a majority of cases by unquestioned apologetic presuppositions and naive theories. There has been a deep seated method fault in Biblical studies which resulted in some areas of oral and written hermeneutics in the New Testament interpretation which has left oral community being left unresearched for a long time. When I consider the methodological problem: Orality-Literacy interpretive interest hope to dialogue in the following chapter with Form and Historical Critical method (*diachronic*) with Bultmann, the exponent of Form Critical method which ushered in a fascinating existential hermeneutic of the *Logos* tradition in the Johannine narrative.

This will follow by Structuralism (*synchronic* hermeneutics), which view the 'oral text' as networks of relationships which have to be understood by discovering the deeper structures and elements which transcend space and time in historical situations of a community of faith in the New Testament.

Deconstructive hermeneutics serves as anti-thesis in the work of French philosopher and literary theorist Jacques Derrida in proposing an anti-Logocentric critique of the *Logos* tradition. This

will follow by an Anthropology of Liberation which serve as an contextual component in the interpretation of the discourse of the 'Other' or the dispossessed and marginalised.

For my proposed thesis all these approaches are necessary, and should not be taken without the other. Biblical interpretation as the investigation of Orality-Literacy interpretive interest or linguistic communication need at least two sets of tools: one set of a linguistic hermeneutics: that deal with the text as texts and the historical interpretive interest: that deal with the past in some cross cultural activity. I believe that Orality-Literacy Studies in this thesis pave the way to a new era of oral and written hermeneutics in relation to the reading *Logos* tradition in the Gospel of John.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Theoretical frameworks and research methodologies:

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

(Smith 1999:19)

2.1. Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the theoretical frameworks and methodologies employed in this process of the research. It seeks to describe and validate the choice of the theoretical framework and the method employed. It is a general sum of the process of the research. This leaves us with a further question when it comes to the use of theoretical frameworks and research methodologies, what do we mean in the context of this thesis, when we talk about orality and empirical research? Research of methodology has always constituted a scientific and empirical construction of the written text, whereas spoken words evaporate at the moment of their utterance. They leave no trace to be analysed or recorded but remain in human memory.

2.2. Orality and Western Literate Research:

A major contribution of contemporary oral research is to call to the attention the distance that exists between the epistemological worlds of modern and ancient experience of the written text. The result of recent media research into the impact of media change has shown clearly that media changes constitute a revolution in consciousness. If the medium influences the meaning of the Biblical tradition, it is because the historical interpretation requires an effort to experience the tradition in its intended medium (Boomershire 1995:51).

The word 'research' is probably one of the problematic words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many primarily oral cultural contexts, it stirs up silence, conjures up bad memories and raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that primary oral people compose poetry and hymns about Western scientific research. The ways in which scientific research or empirical research is implicated in the worst excesses of European Colonialism and Imperialism remains a powerfully remembered history for many of the world's colonized people (Smith 1999:2).

This collective memory of primarily oral cultures about the ways in which knowledge about them was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and seen through the eyes of the West, and then back again to those that had been colonized, remains imperative in the discursive discourse of the 'Other.' Smith refers to this process as a Western discourse about the 'Other' which is supported by institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery (bewitchment of imperial language), doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. This process has worked partly because of the constant interchange between the scholarly and the imaginative (false consciousness-or sophistry) construction of ideas about primary oral cultures (Smith 1999:2). The whole idea of the 'Other' is linguistically and ideologically constituted by the West and can be seen as a social construct which is in need of deconstruction.

This thesis hopes to identify research as a significant struggle between the interest and knowing of the West of primarily oral cultures and the interest and ways of resisting of the 'Other.' In this example, the 'Other' has been constituted with a name, a face, a particular identity, namely indigenous people. According to Boemher, a post-colonial theorist who refers to the colonized

as the colonial 'Other', or simply the Other, the concept of the Other, is built on the thought of, *inter alia*, Hegel and Sartre who signify it as that which is unfamiliar to the dominant subjectivity or which is against the authority of the dominant class (Boemher 1995:21).

While it is more typical to write about research within the framing of a specific scientific or disciplinary approach, it is difficult to discuss research methodology and indigenous or primary oral cultures together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of Imperialism and sophistry of the West, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of literate, colonial and imperial practices.

In search of a historical framework and method I have looked at the work of several oral theorists namely, Havelock (1986), Foley (1994) and Graham (1987) in order to substantiate my critical analyses about the oral power of the *Logos* in John's Gospel and the binary opposition between the oral and written text and its relation to primary oral cultures. I have come to discover that most of these oral theorists perception of orality is rooted in a Western paradigm of textcentrism or secondary orality (residual-the interface between oral and literate) rather than primary orality or the voice of the 'Other' which is my concern in this thesis. The concept *Logos* in the Gospel of John serves as a forceful intellectual stimulus in language, theology, philosophy as well as Orality-Literacy studies. There is a need to move towards a genuine understanding of the concept *Logos* in John's Gospel in discovering its philosophical and historical background and its relation to Orality-Literacy studies.

The voice of the 'Other' in the light of the *Logos* tradition has been caged or imprisoned in the written text and has turned it into traces of more written text. *Logos* has been buried under a mound of historical evidence of Western Imperialism which has socially and historically constructed the Jesus of Galilee as a literate sage of First Century Galilee. What is clearly evident is that Jesus was an oral performer who turned the words of His Father into a mechanism of resistance against the ideology of the written Law for the poor and the oppressed. Their powerlessness has now become part of a new *communitas* which is built on the authority of the Word. With the dominance of written text of the Western interpretation there is a need to review the 'spoken' authority of the *Logos* in the light of primary oral cultures which was part of their liberation struggle over the forces of social oppression.

In sketching the history of the *Technologies of the Word*, Walter Ong (1982) hints at remarkable parallels between primary and secondary oral cultures. Primary oral cultures operate with the spoken word (words in space), because for them writing does not exist. Secondary or residual orality refers to cultures who are literate cultures (interface between orality-literacy) who socially construct reality chirographically (in writing).

The spoken authority of *Logos* (words in space) in the context of South Africa was unique in understanding the voice of the "Other" or hermeneutics 'from below'. Orality and the liberation struggle clearly disclosed the socio-cultural oral archive of indigenous knowledge eg. songs, and poetry of the colonized which remained untold in the face of the dominance of Western textuality. The voice of the 'Other' that has been marginalised or subjugated for over three hundred years in the literature, rituals, traditions, doctrines and stories of the dominant literate

discourse or Great Tradition of the Western literate tradition. The Logos (spoken words) rooted in pneumatological reality can be seen as a means of resistance for the colonised against the dominant influences and legislation (*de jure*) of the ideology of the dominant class which shaped the social and economic oppression of the poor in relation to the South African context.

Orality in the face of written text can be seen as a mechanism of resistance against the dominance of imperialism and sophistry of the West which invaded our culture and traditions. There is a unique parallel between the South Africa socio-political setting and that of the Johannine peasant community in John's Gospel which was marginalised under the power of the written Law. The Johannine community echoed praise in the coming of Logos in *sarx* (flesh) which became the new pneumatological authority for oral and written hermeneutics in the context of this peasant community.

Primarily oral cultures across the world have other stories to tell, of the history of Western research through the eyes of colonized people. These counter stories are powerful forms of resistance which are repeated and shared across diverse indigenous communities. Primary oral cultures do not differentiate between scientific research and that of verbal arts and gestes (Smith 1999:3). There is no dichotomy in relating to the world. There is almost no communal activity that is not accompanied by songs and dance. There are songs, war songs, initiation or circumcision songs; marriage, birth, and child naming songs; sacrificial, burial or funeral songs, praise songs and love songs. Songs, religious hymns and dance form an important part of the lives and thinking of primary oral communities. Through songs people learn, laugh, mourn,

console each other, inspire one another and at times pass secret messages (Akivaga and Odaga 1982:69).

Primarily oral communities dance with vigour and rhythm. Dancing and singing are an experience that possesses the participants. Oral 'text' is not only spoken but it is also acted and dramatized. The songs, like the stories and proverbs, are about people's condition of life, about their political, social and economic activities. They embody the history, philosophy, beliefs and wisdom of the people (Akivaga and Odaga 1982:69).

In illiterate societies songs are sung with a great deal of expression as they express resistance against the power of the written text which restructures and re-orders reality for marginalised communities. They view the world holistically and as real which is governed by the forces and influences of all the communicative power and authority of the supreme *Logos* as it gives meaning to reality. There is no distinction between the world of man (generically) and the supernatural power of the spirit, because the heroes and characters are animals, living and non-living things such as rocks, rivers, soil, lakes, mountains, and so forth.

The written text creates binary opposition between the literate and illiterate, the rich and poor, powerful and powerless, white and black. We can go on and on in affirming these binary oppositions but there is a need to methodologically place it in perspective of this thesis.

There are several concerns that led me to choose certain theories and methods of analysis over others. The examination of oral transmission and oral tradition has been appropriated by

numerous scholars in a variety of disciplines over the last century. Determining the method for analyzing orality in the South African context eventually comes down to choice, choice based on what one perceives as the defining characteristics of this tradition. At all times my guide has been the appropriate fit between theory and the living and the affective nature of the data in the context of a local community. For Cancel, oral tradition tends to be polysemic, viewed as art on broader cultural levels, so we cannot use just any approach to its structure and function. With no written history, an oral society fulfills many cultural needs with its store of traditional narrative imagery (Cancel 1984:5).

In this research I will employ a multi-disciplinary approach in reading the concept *Logos* logocentrically rather than graphocentrically from the perspective of orality-literacy which unfolds a new dimension for oral and written hermeneutics. To achieve the objective in this research project the methodologies that will be utilized will be diachronic¹ (the study of language from its historical evolution over a period of time) and synchronic² (the relationship of co-existing things from which the intervention of time is excluded) understanding of *Logos* in view of the following methodologies that will be employed. The Historical Critical method will focus on the theological and philosophical foundations of *Logos* whereas Deconstruction (anti-logocentrism) aspires to deconstruct *Logos* from the written text and Orality-Literacy studies which reveals the binary opposition between the oral and written text and demonstrates

¹.De Saussure defines diachronic linguistics as follows: **Diachronic linguistics**, on the contrary, will study relations that bind together successive terms not perceived by the collective mind but substituted for each other without forming a system (1959:100).

². De Saussure defines synchronic linguistics as follows: **Synchronic linguistics** will be concerned with the logical and psychological relations that bind together co-existing terms and form a system in the collective mind of speakers (1959:99).

how it relates to primary oral cultures.

The **first part** of the thesis undertakes a detailed analysis of the *modus operandi* in discovering the philosophical and historical analysis of Logos tradition in the Johannine Biblical tradition which exists outside the realm of the construction of the written text. The Historical Critical analyses of the Logos tradition focusses exclusively on written text. The Historical Critical method takes into account both the chirographic and speech (e.g. words transacted in space and time) and also the interface between the two (residual orality).

This chapter will examine the concept *Logos* in its historical and philosophical entirety from the perspective of the

- i) The Greek Tradition of *Logos*
- ii) The Hellenistic Judaism Tradition of *Logos*
- iii) The Palestinian Judaism Tradition of *Logos*

in affirming the *Sitz im leben* (setting) and the form of the *Logos* Tradition in relation to the Johannine oral community. In place of the Historical Critical method a singular originality of the *ipsissimum verbum* (saying of Jesus) of the Jesus tradition has been developed from the hypothesis of Werner Kelber that features the multi-originality of the oral *logia* (sayings) of *Logos* in the Johannine written text. This poses a paradigmatic in the written text, where there is a shift from plurality of *logia* (words) in the written text of the Gospel tradition to a single *Logos* at the beginning of the written text of John. The *Logos* now takes command over the written text which consists of a collective cultural memory which is comprised of spoken discourse and chirographs, by speaker and hearer alike. The *Logos*-Hymn in honour of the coming of the incarnate *Logos* in human flesh (*sarx*) marks a new era in hermeneutical

interpretive interest of the Gospel tradition. This will be followed by an indepth exegesis of the Prologue of John 1:1-18. This exegesis is in turn generated by a Form Critical method in which the *Logos* tradition is analysed from an oral perspective. This picture is thoroughly congruent with the primary orientation of contemporary biblical criticism and the media world within which it has operated. The impact of the media change, raises questions about the methodological paradigm of contemporary historical criticism.

The **second part** of the thesis will focus on the paradigmatic shift from the historical critical understanding of *Logos* to the status of *Logos* as the determiner of the written text. I will focus on the philosophical and theological view of language synchronically, both written and oral which entails a hermeneutics of metaphysical presence or phenomenology. This view is strongly opposed in the work of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who aims to Deconstruct *Logos* as a transcendental signifier from the written text. Deconstruction launches an attack on the Western metaphysics of presence which privileges speech over written text (Kelber 1990: 118). This results into a binary opposition between the oral and written text.

Synchronically, *Logos* in John's Gospel serves as a leading case for Logocentrism in the work of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. The term *Logos* refers to the Greco-Christian or Platonic-Johannine tradition according to which written language belongs to the realm of the contingent and imperfect, while true knowledge and being pertain to the pre-existent *Logos* (Kelber 1990:121).

Logocentrism is being obsessed with the Word as being phonocentric is the privileging of

speech (spoken) over the written (literacy) Word. Derrida defined Logocentrism as “the illusion that the meaning of the Word has its origin in the structure of reality itself and hence makes the truth about that structure seem deeply present to the mind” (Ellis 1989:36-37). Logocentrism has been widely displaced by non-metaphysical thought in linguistics and philosophy. When seen in this broader nature the Johannine Logos becomes a matter of great concern in the work of Jacques Derrida.

The **Third part** will focus on Contextualisation or critical social analyses of the oral Logos in the Johannine narrative and its implication for those from the ‘Other side’ of history. It refocusses attention from tradition perceived as transmissional processes towards a means of communication. Each utterance of the *Logos* in the context of the Johannine community remains time bound, renewable, alterable and freshly original.

Reading Logos **from below** or the underside of history in a community of faith and broader South African context helps us to understand the discourse of the ‘Other’. This reading ‘**from below**’ is reflected in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “There remains an experience of incomparable value. We have for once learnt to see the great events of world history ‘**from below**’, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled’ (Nolan 1988:192).

According to Draper, the academic community in South Africa has been influenced by the scholarship emanating from Western Europe, using in particular the Historical Critical Method in shifting attention away from the author to the written text itself (1996:1-2). Both these

approaches do not speak to the situation of the 'Other' because meaning and representation of reality is not a fictive construction of reality but a real life situation that reveals the life of the poor and the oppressed. This calls the research into a worldview that is diametrically opposite to that of Western literate interpretive interest. The world of the 'Other' is totally different when it comes to the construction of reality.

The 'Other' in the context of this thesis refers to the poor and the oppressed or those that are not yet conscientised by the dominant discourse of dominant literate discourse. Their struggle is for freedom against the lies and sophistry of the written discourse of reason. Orality (speech) serves as a mechanism of resistance for the poor and oppressed over and against the dominant influences and power of the written text.

There is a need to move from tradition perceived as transmissional processes towards the means of communication or dialogism. In the place of the Historical Critical method perceived as words in time, a model of orality-literacy has been proposed which is based on a hermeneutics of Logocentrism which will focus on the oral means of communication among marginalised communities and the independence of oral media and meaning for primarily oral cultures. This model challenges the existing historical and literary critical paradigm of the Logos in the view of the Great Tradition or Western interpretive interest. Orality-Literacy research unfolds a binary opposition between the oral and written text which can be seen as ideological sophistry and false consciousness of the written text. The written text is a product of Western Colonialism which sustains social boundaries and engages or imprisons the oral formulae of the spoken Word of primary oral cultures.

The liberation struggle in the context of South Africa takes seriously the incarnation of the Word in the life of the poor and the oppressed. The spoken authority of the Word serves as mechanism of resistance against the falsely constructed universe of the West. This leads me to focus on the Historical Critical method (words in time) and its implication for Orality-Literacy research.

2.3. Theoretical Frameworks:

2.3.1. Historical Critical Method:

The Historical-critical school are those writers who follow the method of biblical criticism initiated by Richard Simon in 1678, developed over the intervening years by Albert Eichorn, Hermann Gunkel, Martin Dibelius, Rudolf Bultmann (Vorster 1991:16-21).

Historical Criticism of the New Testament concerns two fields of interest: **First:** Historical interpretation and explanation of the individual writings and **Second:** the history of the people about the New Testament, Jesus and the early Christians. Historical Criticism is more than a method: but a way of thinking, an attitude and an approach to past phenomena. The interest in historical investigation of the Bible has resulted in important studies, such as written artifacts and the study of grammar of the 19th century quest for the historical Jesus, and the sources behind the Gospels. The beginning of the twentieth century marked a noticeable change in our understanding of the making of the Bible (Krentz 1975:33). Historical Criticism reminds us that there is a constant shifts in theories. These shifts include shifts in the theory of history, historical interpretation and historiography.

In my thesis the Historical Critical method (*diachronic*) will focus on understanding the concept *Logos*, in affirming philosophical and theological foundations of the concept *Logos* tradition which will serve as a bedrock thesis against the anti-logocentric models (eg. Rabbinic hermeneutics, New Age Criticism) of the Word. A genuine progress towards understanding John's *Logos*, hinges on discovering the historical and philosophical background of *Logos* as a neutral linguistic sign which exists outside the realm of the meaning of the written text.

Historical Criticism has focussed exclusively on the written text, e.g. words committed to chirographic space. The model offered here takes into account both the chirographic and speech, e.g. words transacted in space and time (words in oral tradition and words in written text) (Foley 1994:173). The Historical Critical paradigm seeks to revise the logical procedures underlying the written text so as to approximate more closely the media or communication realities of late antiquity of the *Logos* tradition.

Historical-Critical method is chosen in order to look at the written text itself in its historical entirety: the relationship of the individual works of literature of the past to the social and literary environments of the past, as it refers to the historical events that have shaped the written text. The written text does not have meaning in itself. Meaning is attributed to the written text by an active interplay between the written text and the interpreter (Vorster 1991:16-21).

The Historical Critical method started to develop during the 19th century. The first step in the development of the Historical Critical method was to devise a method by which the sources underlying a particular written text could be investigated. These sources underwent changes and

since they were transmitted orally, it was necessary to investigate the oral stage of tradition, the history of traditions, the transmitters of tradition, and the role of the setting which gave rise to particular forms in which the tradition was transmitted (Vorster 1991:16-21).

With this in mind, let us now turn to the development of Form Criticism which was mainly developed by German scholars for the development of narrative material, but nowadays is commonly accepted by scholars who are involved in the Historical Critical study of the New Testament.

2.3.2. The Historical development of Form Criticism:

Modern rationalism has well been defined as “the view that the human reason, or understanding is the sole source and final test of all truth,” Rationalism acquired its modern meaning in 1637 with the publication of the *Discourse on Method* of René Descarte (1596-1650), in which he declared that there are in man certain innate, self evident principles from which all true knowledge flows. In the winter of 1619-1620, Descartes conceived his method of “universal methodic doubt,” which he began to apply systematically to all branches of knowledge as a quasi-mathematical process which begins from natural human intuition and moves forward by deduction. Descartes’ exclusively deductive method sharply contrast with what is known today as the “scientific method” (Eybers 1974:294).

The Critical method was later modified by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), so as to admit sense-experience as a factor of rational knowledge, which was afterwards developed by Georg Winhelm Hegel (1770-1831). These rationalist methods of human reasoning have had an

enormous influence over modern thought and there is a need to consider how elements of their methods led to the introduction of Form Criticism. In the late 18th century, two prominent schools of “rationalism in religion” took form, one in England and the other in Germany. English ‘deism’ arose to proclaim a viewpoint which, while accepting the fact of the creation of the world by God, rejected on principle any subsequent intervention of God and allowed religious truths only if they could be understood and verified by reason. ‘Deism’ depends upon the notion of naturalism of Herbert of Cherbury (1581-1648), a contemporary of Descartes, and the empiricism of Isaac Newton (1642-1727). Herbert of Cherbury advocated the principle of naturalism: there is a universal natural religion whose principle tenet is “Believe in God and do your duty”(McCarthy 1998:6).

In opposition to the writing of the British naturalists, there arose the German school of rationalism in religion, originating from the philosophical system of Christian Wolff (1679-1754). Wolff produced arguments intended to provide rational proof for supernatural truths presented in the Bible, in opposition to the anti-supernaturalism of the naturalist. His method turned out to be strongly in favour of the naturalism that he wished to condemn, because he made natural human reason the ultimate judge of both natural and revealed religion. Thus as time went on, German rationalism mounted an ever growing offensive against the miracles and other extraordinary events recorded in the Bible. In the early 19th century there arose in Germany a ‘second wave’ of religious rationalism, spearheaded by G.W. Hegel, under whose influence David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), Friederich Christian Baur (1792-1860), and others developed the ‘Higher Criticism’ of Sacred Scripture, by the use of which “its supernatural elements were systematically explained away as products of mythology”. Then came forward

the theory that religion arises from a religious sense in man that is distinct from the faculty of reason, to the effect that revelation is not to be attributed to an exterior and objective speaking of God, but only to an interior and subjective personal experience. Thus, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) "explained the very idea of God as a projection of man's desire and need." And so early attempts by the German rationalist school to defend a consistent message of truth in the biblical accounts soon gave way to the acceptance of "undeniable errors," and to the admission that the outlook of even the New Testament biblical writers was simply "not up to the requirements of modern man." This development of the critical outlook in the German school of rationalism in religion was expressed over the span of a century and a half from about 1768 to 1914 in a long series of critical works, towards the end of which arose, on the basis of selected previous positions of the same school of thought, the method of Form-Criticism, which first attracted the positive interest of the Catholic exegete, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, in the early 1890s and has now become the dominant approach among Catholic Scriptural scholars (McCarthy 1998:5-6).

The method known as Form Criticism dates back to the work of Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932), with his commentary on Genesis, first published in 1901. Gunkel built upon the Documentary Theory of the origin of the Pentateuch elaborated by Julius Wellhausen in the 1870s, in which literary-criticism and source-criticism had been used in such a way that "the different sources (J, E, D, P) of the Pentateuch and the redactional material that now unites them were separated from each other on grounds of style, vocabulary, and the like, as well as the distinctive theological and religious outlook and interest that could be discovered in each source" but Gunkel added a new methodology (Nicolson 1997:4). In the final years of the nineteenth century, there had emerged

the History of Religions school, which directed its attention to the development of the traditions behind the biblical text. Hermann Gunkel "pioneered these new ideas" with the publication in 1895 of his *Creation and Chaos in the Beginning and at the End of Time*, which surveyed "the biblical creation myths from Genesis 1 to Revelation 12." In his book *Genesis*, Gunkel then concentrated his attention on the "literary forms" of Hebrew literature and on the 'literary history' behind them, on the assumption that each form belonged to "a quite definite setting in life" (*Sitz im Leben*); that is, that the particular literary form in which a subject matter found expression was itself dictated by the particular setting in life to which it was addressed." (Nicolson 1997:4-5).

The methodological presupposition of Form Criticism in the light of the *Logos* tradition was based on the communications theories during the nineteenth-century of Herman Gunkel (1901) and Rudolf Bultmann (1971). When Gunkel introduced research into literary forms (genres), he stimulated a change of method. What he writes in his introduction of *Genesis* (1901) illustrates the imaginative side of his model as he pictured for himself a storyteller surrounded by his listeners, retelling the old stories circulated in oral form in Israel. Gunkel looked at Genesis and saw something else other than mature writing: 'oral text' rooted in the tradition of Israel. It depended on oral tradition for its form and central content (Brodie 1994:5).

Gunkel hypothesized that the written traditions of Genesis have oral antecedents and that the process of writing stops the oral process. Gunkel's insights stimulated a change of method. Within a few years, this new idea appeared in New Testament Studies. Gunkel implied that his analysis could be applied to the life of Jesus. Oral tradition was steadily producing more sayings

of Jesus. Similarly, Rudolf Bultmann (1971) reiterated the emphasis on oral tradition in the understanding the content of the Gospels. He saw the history of the gospel tradition as dynamic, that its content and form are not really literature and not the work of literary people but rather as 'unliterary' (Brodie 1994:4). For Bultmann the process of transmission is one of uncontrolled oral tradition (Botha 1993:206). Bultmann further believed that before the Gospels were written there was a period of oral tradition, and that during this oral phase the various traditions circulated as separate units (Redlich 1939:34-37). The assumption was that oral and literate communications were a relatively neutral means for the transmission of tradition. The whole form of the written text is governed by oral communication. The writer thinks largely through the patterns of oral communication, and the writing is geared to oral communication (Ong 1971:1-22).

To some degree this form of dependence may be found in the writing of First Century Palestine, especially in the writing of hymns and speeches. In First Century Palestine writing was a relatively new medium. It lived completely in the shadow of oral communication, but was largely governed by rhetoric. Rhetoric was the art of speaking, but it became the art of writing, with the result that speaking was inextricably interwoven with writing (residual orality) (Brodie 1994:5). Rhetoric pervaded the educational system and influenced almost every kind of writing.

According to Ong, rhetoric....

encapsulated the most ancient, central, and pervasive tradition of verbalization and of thought known to mankind at least in the West... (Ong 1977:214)

In this sense the whole of the ancient literature is oral in origin, including the Greco-Roman classics and the Bible.

2.3.3. Form Criticism as Method:

Form Criticism is a systematic method of analyzing the genres of the basic oral units preserved in the literary works to clarify the history of their formation. The German term *Formgeschichte* refers to the fact that form critics are interested both in the *forms* of the material, and in their *pre-literary history*, that is, their oral growth and origin. During the time between the oral teaching of Jesus and the putting into writing of the first Gospel, the sayings of Jesus and the stories concerning his words and works were circulated orally. It is also maintained that even the written sources that the redactors of the Gospels have used to compile their narratives originally circulated in oral form (Vorster 1991:25).

The purpose of Form Criticism is twofold: **First** it describes the genres, forms and formulas that occur in the New Testament. **Second** it focusses on the pre-literary history and growth of traditions and smaller literary forms, such as parables, miracle stories, birth stories and hymns (Vorster 1991 25).

At the beginning of the 19th century that Biblical scholars began to pay attention to the oral form or units in the written text as relics of the earliest stages of the formation of Christianity. It took a work by Old Testament scholar Herman Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History* (1901), to prompt research on the oral formation. Gunkel formulated several basic principles that were later adopted by New Testament critics:

- oral forms follow set patterns; so, stylistic inconsistencies indicate later
- alteration of the original material.
- the forms of oral story-telling reflect the social situation (*Sitz im Leben*) for

- ❑ which they were originally composed;
- ❑ changes in social situation lead to changes in forms of communication;
- ❑ Biblical writers are not authors so much as collectors and editors;

(Tuckett 1987:95-97).

These principles allowed Gunkel to reconstruct the social history behind the written sources of the Hebrew Pentateuch. On the basis of careful formal analysis of the biblical narrative he traced the passages to early or later stages of the oral tradition.

Gunkel's achievement led Dibelius and other New Testament scholars to relate the oral forms preserved in the synoptic gospels to social setting in the earlier period when Christianity was taking form. Form Critics argued that the narrative framework of each gospel was composed by the writer and thus was not the original context in which the individual units took form. Since the oral Jesus tradition filtered through Christian preaching and worship in a Greek world, form critics concluded that the stories and sayings in the gospels reveal more about the early Christian community than about the historical Jesus (Eybers 1974:96).

The most influential form critic was Rudolf Bultmann, whose *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921) is still regarded by scholars as an essential tool for gospel research. The immediate historical effect of Bultmann's research was to put a stop on research on the life of Jesus for the next century. If the gospel stories and saying were moulded by early Christian preachers for situations after Jesus died and if the narrative framework of the gospels was created by even later writers, then writing a historically accurate biography of Jesus is virtually impossible (Lightfoot 1934: 57).

Some scholars criticize Bultmann and other form critics for excessive skepticism regarding the historical reliability of the gospel narratives. Yet form critical work on the synoptic sayings tradition laid the foundation for the resurgence of the Jesus research in the last quarter of the 20th century. Bultmann himself provided a criterion for identifying authentic Jesus sayings. He called it 'dissimilarity,' but later scholars prefer to call it 'distinctiveness'. The criterion works this way

- If a writer credits a saying to Jesus and the form and content differ from
- the author's own style and characteristic ideas;
- and that saying is not common opinion;
- and there is no close parallel in ancient Christian, Jewish or Greek literature;
- then that saying is not been formulated by anyone other than Jesus.

(Bultmann 1971:-5-6)

The **second anthropological, idea** was developed in the 18th century and 19th century in the studies of non-literate societies and in the collecting of stories which previously had been handed down orally, in the 20th century study of this phenomenon, especially in the work such as that of M.Parry (1971) and A.B. Lord (1960) (Ong 1988:19).

The basic presuppositions of communications research have been applied to the history of orality and literacy studies in the works of Marcel Jousse (1925-1957) later edited and translated from the French to English by Sienaert, Conolly and Whitaker (1990, 2000), Albert Lord (1960), Eric Havelock (1963,1968), Walter Ong (1967,1982), Milman Parry (1971). This 19th century picture of orality- literacy transition in antiquity was a basic presupposition of Form Criticism. The key to understanding the history of tradition (words committed to text) was the identification of the earlier oral forms of the sayings and stories of Jesus. Form Criticism

theoretically included the critical analyses of the difference between oral and written tradition of the Logos (Jesus) in the Johannine narrative. It primarily treated oral tradition as a causal factor in the formation of the written tradition (Boomershire 1995:9). This affects our picture of Jesus in view of tradition (words committed to text) and unfolds a new dimension in looking at words in time and space (speech).

In the work Werner Kelber (1990) he moves beyond the historical constructed understanding of the *logia* (sayings) of Jesus as the *Logos* (John 1:1), where *Logos* becomes the determiner of the written text, as it existed outside the realm of the constructed written text. The spoken words are pneumatological in essence and the spoken Word cannot be caged or imprisoned in the construction of the written text.

There are three schools of thought that are anti-thetical to the *Logos* metaphysics of presence, viz. Rabbinic hermeneutics, Anglo-American New Criticism and the grammatological philosophy of Deconstruction. Two schools of thought, Rabbinic hermeneutics and Deconstruction, are very important in relation to my proposed argument on the metaphysical reality of the *Logos*.

2.4. Rabbinical Hermeneutics:

The distinction between Orality-Literacy in Rabbinical hermeneutics has come to be seen as far more than mere choice between media of transmission of a message. It has profound epistemological implications for graphocentrism (Jackson.1996:65)

Rabbinic hermeneutics will unfold and manifest deeper truths of how and why Derrida intended to critique Western Logocentrism and why he is obsessed with the idea of deconstructing Logos from the written text. The binary opposition between speech and writing, in which writing has been assigned a scapegoat role akin to that of the wandering Jew (Derrida, himself an Algerian-Jew), was of special interest to Derrida (Moore 1994:146).

It is widely held that within the Torah there existed a single or privileged meaning that needed to be uncovered. There persists the idea that the text contained one true meaning. The true meaning is usually understood as what God or a divinely inspired author intended it to be. This idea that the Torah contains a 'true' reading as opposed to the ones incorrectly read into it, follows from long held Western metaphysical assumptions about language that asserts the possibilities of an immediate meaning that is prior and independent of writing (Broitman 1991: 1-9).

The Torah is *logocentric* in that it posits an origin and a foundation of all truth. This Logos is God. God is the "person beyond which we may not go" (Culler 1982:92). Everything begins and ends with God. God is both the transcendental signifier and the transcendently signified. God is the ultimate presence, combining traces of the past and the future.

The Jewish idea of tradition does not come from the Old Testament. According to the Old Testament, God gave the Law to Moses in one medium, writing, but there later developed the idea, what Neusner calls a myth, that God had given the Law through a second medium-oral tradition (Neusner 1985:1).

The Torah is also phonocentric in that it privileges God's voice as the most powerful and the direct transmission of truth. "The Voice of the Lord is Power; The Voice of the Lord is Majestic; The Voice of the Lord breaks cedars..." (Psalm 29:4-5). God's voice is so powerful because it is thought to carry God's will and God's presence.

Judaism maintains that when Moses received the Torah from God at Mount Sinai, it came in two mediums. One was the Torah in writing, the other was the oral Torah, meaning the memorized Torah. The Mishnah is the first document of that part of the Torah that in Jewish myth came to Israel in the medium of memory by way of the oral tradition (Brodie 1994:7).

Rabbinic and Midrashim share the Torah's phonocentrism, as they elaborate on the power of God's 'mighty voice,' because of their phonocentric assumption that God's presence is in His voice. The Rabbis describe God's voice on Sinai in a way that expressed their own idea of God's presence. For example, God's voice is awesome and terrifying. When God "began to speak both heavenly and earthly creatures were shaken, and Israel fainted away" (Agnon 1994:208).

Further, God's voice is also omnipotent. It can reach to the four corners of the world in all languages (Agnon 1994: 207). It can speak multiple things, such as the Ten Commandments, "all at once". Finally, God's voice, like God's self, is One. At Sinai, God's voice was the only sound, so that all "would know that there was none but Him". The voice had no echo because the Lord is pure oneness, His utterance too, is pure sound without reverberations (Agnon 1994:202-207). The revelation at Sinai is the time when the Torah affirms that the Israelites most clearly heard God's voice. According to Misdrashic interpretations, God's voice inspired the Israelites to

respond positively to the commandments “with one voice”. Yet God’s voice was so powerful and terrifying that the Israelites begged Moses for a less direct communication, fearing that they would die encountering the direct presence of God embodied in the voice. God agreed and the voice was replaced by Moses’ mediating voice and then further by writing (Broitman 1991:5).

Susan Handelman’s (1982) noted that Judaism once robbed of its central place in 70 C.E., cultivated the center of the book as a new center. The Rabbis became experts in reading and interpreting the written text. Their world of ‘Scripture’ was a continuous concentration on written words and their interrelations, even physical shapes of letters and even the text punctuations. Intertextuality and interpretation of the written text was the condition of the Exile of the text. There was no metaphysical escape from the text (transcendental signifier) or an exit towards a sacred place (metaphysics of presence) or a sacred person (eg. Jesus-as the Logos). Interpretation moved from one written text to another, shunting the temptation from the visible to an invisible realm. In Rabbinic hermeneutics one does not move as in the John narrative, from the plural *logia* of the text to a singular *Logos*. There is only one plural. Every written word in the text is potentially equal (Kelber 1990:121).

For the Rabbis, the saying of the sacred Word (Logos) directly by YAHWEH had come to an end. According to them only the words of the Torah were to be taken as “perfect symbols.” As perfect symbols, the Torah was an endlessly, vicious cycle of hermeneutics. For the rabbis; the true interpretation is the “Oral Torah,” which was revealed at Mount Sinai along with the written Torah (Schimmel 1971:20), for the rabbis did not have the authority to speak to YAHWEH (God). They were not prophets to whom God’s Word came directly. They were sages

whose wisdom lay in their hermeneutical relationship with the written words of the Torah. (Sculd 1998:167-168).

True to Derrida's observation, writing is presented as being further removed from the source, from God's presence, than speech. In fact, it is while God is writing on the tablets of the covenant that the Israelites experience not presence but absence, and in response create another god, the golden calf. Upon seeing the calf, Moses smashes the tablets. The smashing of the tablets is the ultimate phonocentric rejection of writing, even of divine writing. While God's voice inspired loyalty, God's writing gave birth to betrayal (Broitman 1991:5).

For Handelsman (1982) in classic linguistic or in theological terms, words in Rabbinic hermeneutics are never understood as signs pointing beyond themselves to a meta-principle like Logos in John which governs all language and interpretation as in Western hermeneutics. Words only point to other words. God's presence is inscribed or traced within written text, not a body (soma) -(*Logos* = sarx (flesh) or the word that became flesh. Divinity is located in language (meta-reality), not a person (Kelber 1990:121).

What is clearly noticeable about Rabbinic hermeneutics is the eternal desire to sustain the productivity of the written text in re-vising, re-creating it and in reversing it in interpretation after interpretation. For Rabbinic hermeneutics the displacement of meaning away from the written text (metaphysics of presence) suggested the end of signification and the suppression of the fertility of the written text. The Word (*Logos*) transcending the realm of textuality or intertextuality, nihilates or abolishes the space of difference (orality) and puts an end to what matters most in human life: interpretation or traces of more text.

Textcentrism found its philosophical self-justification in the work of Jacques Derrida. In 1976 Derrida delivered in *Of Grammatology*, an uncompromising critique of Logocentrism. The subject of discussion in *Of Grammatology* (1976) and his principle source of concern is the referential paradigm of language. Nowhere does Derrida find referentiality more subtle than in the linguistic and theological concept of the sign or *Logos*. For Derrida the Western tradition from Plato to Stoicism, and from Saint Augustine, to Ferdinand Saussure the linguistic sign is defined by the signifier and the signified. The signifier constitutes the written or visible words on paper whereas the signified refers to the meaning we attach to it (Kelber 1990: 123).

Jacques Derrida's *grammatological* critique of *Logocentrism* is strongly influenced by his Jewish background of the Word (*dabhar*) which resulted in contentions between Word as written text (signifier) and Word in speech (signified), metaphysics of presence (time and space) in the construction of meaning and representation of text. Logocentrism "In the beginning was the Word" is the belief that knowledge is rooted in a primeval language given by God to humans.

God (or the other transcendental signifier: the Idea, the Great Spirit, the Self etc) acts as a foundation for all of our thought, language and actions. He is the truth whose manifestation is in the world. He is the foundation for the binaries by which we think (eg. spirit and flesh) (Evans 1991:xx1). This binary opposition between the written word (chirographically constructed) and the spoken Word (*Logos*) in the critique of Derrida can be seen as the key relation in understanding his violent attack on Western metaphysics of presence which favoured speech over writing, as method and technique.

The Western metaphysics of presence reveals the assumption that the physical presence of a speaker authenticates meaning: 'What would be more natural than to privilege speech?' As I speak my words appear to be one with my thoughts. My meaning seems to be fully present both to me and to my hearer. At such moments the voice, the breath (*ruach-Spirit*), is to be the consciousness of the self, and is the presence in affirming meaning and representation. Speaking would then precede writing (the sign of a sign), since the writer is not present at the reading of his text to authenticate it. Spoken language is assumed to be directly related to thought and writing as a supplement to the spoken language, standing in for it (Moore 1994:122). This is the result of phonocentrism and the valorization of speech over writing.

For Derrida, the history of the sign in Western theology and philosophy, came to take on reality in its own right. For Derrida the written text manifests meaning and status in itself. According to him one falls into 'naive objectivism' in attaching transcendental significance and ontological status to the referent of language. In language the signified assumes to be imaginable and thinkable in the present of the divine Logos in its breath (words in space) (Derrida 1976: 61-73). The desire to ascribe transcendental significance to the signified can be called 'logocentric metaphysics'. To understand Derrida's logocentric critique there is a need to examine a general overview on Structuralist hermeneutics.

2.5. Structuralism:

The relationship between linguistics and literature has been one of the most widely discussed issues in modern literary theory. Its original impetus in French intellectual circles in the 1960s was provided by the work of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. France was the central

locus for the theory of Structuralism (Visser 1982:53) Structuralism is also found in the special character of the theory of language by Swiss philologist and professor in linguistics Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). With his concept of the linguistics sign Saussure created a basis for Structuralism. Saussure explain his concept of the sign in a series of lectures given in Geneva between 1906 and 1911 (Robey 1982:39).

Saussure's enormous influence on the twentieth-century thought is the result of a book he did not even write; his *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, published posthumously in 1915, and was compiled from students' notes of a course taught by Saussure three times between 1907 and 1911(Visser 1982:54).

In Structuralism, the individuality of the text disappears as it looks at systems, patterns and structures. In looking at stories, hymns and folklore, the author is canceled out, since the text is a function of a system, not an individual. The Romantic humanist model holds that the author is the origin of the text, its creator. Structuralism further argues that any piece of writing, or signifying system, has no origin, and that authors inhabit pre-existing language structures which enable them to make any story. Man in generic form inhabits a structure that enables him to speak (Hawkes.1977:123).

Structuralism has been influential in the study of oral tradition and verbal arts. Drawing on Saussurian literary and linguistic theory, structuralism focuses on the structure of the item being studied (Finnegan 1992:36). Structuralism appeals to some critics because it adds a certain objectivity, a scientific objectivity, to the realm of literary studies. The scientific objectivity is

achieved by subordinating '*parole*' to '*langue*' (Hawkes 1977:123). Barthes regards the former, *langue*, as the language which is both institution and system. In contrast to language, he defines *parole* or speech as "essentially an individual act of selection and actualization" (1977:14).

Saussure's two key ideas provide new answers to the questions of contemporary literary theory: 'What is the object of linguistic investigation?' and 'What is the relationship between words and things?' Saussure makes a fundamental distinction between *langue and parole*- between the language system, which pre-exists, and the individual utterance. *Langue* is the social aspect of language: it is a shared system which we draw upon as speakers. *Parole* is the individual realization of the system in actual instances in language (Widdowson 1993:104)

Parole refers to the actual act of speaking. For Güttegemanns, cited by Marshall, the speech of an individual is objectified in written forms, for only an individual can do the actual writing. On the other hand the written *paroles* (spoken words) reflect the oral tradition of the language in that community. For Güttegemanns language and *parole* (speech) need to be kept apart, for example: the written word or individual speech need to be separated from that of oral forms, which is the language of a social community (Marshall 1977:89).

For Saussure, the moment we consider the sign as a whole, we encounter something which is positive in its own domain. Although the signified and signifier are each, in isolation, purely differential and negative, their combination is in fact of a positive nature. The moment we compare one sign with another as positive combination, the term differences should be dropped. For Saussure the 'signified,' his term for 'concept,' shows that the 'signifier' (or-sound pattern)

is already sound as mentally processed, the hearer's psychological impression of a sound (Cahoone 1996: 66).

Structuralism further provides a methodological framework for the semantic representation of signs which constitute the signified of the literary work of art. Saussure further regarded the relationship between the signifier and signified as arbitrary. Hawkes explains the nature of the sign in the following way:

The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by the sign the whole that result from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say the linguistic sign is arbitrary (1977:67)

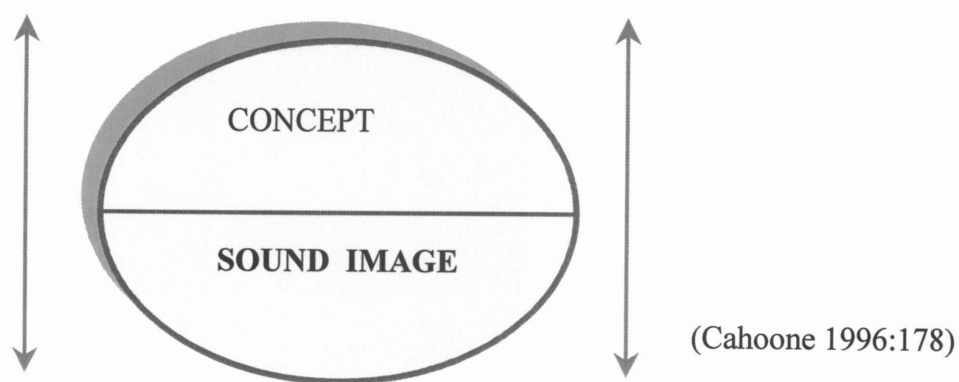
Culler shows that the theory proposed by Saussure clarifies the system or language that underlies the literary work of art and that makes the artifact a meaningful production which he called 'speaking' (1981:22).

Saussure rejected the idea that language is a word-heap gradually accumulated over time and that its primary function is to refer to things in this world. In his view, words are not symbols which correspond to referents, but rather are signs which are made up of two parts (like two sides of a sheet of paper: a mark either written or spoken, called a 'signifier', and a concept (what is 'thought' when the mark is made), called a 'signified' (Widdowson 1993:105).

Saussure insisted that language is a differential network of meaning. According to Saussure a linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern (a sound as processed by a hearer). Saussure replaces the terms 'sound pattern' and 'concept' with 'signifier' and 'signified,' and 'to keep in one's memory' the term 'sign' to

designate the two combined. The 'signifier' would be the material acoustic component of the 'sign' as it registers in the mind of the hearer eg. the sound-[dog], whereas the signified would be the sign's conceptual framework (the concept-dog) (Cahoone 1996: 65-67) .The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression it makes on our senses. The sound image is sensory.

The psychological character of our sound images becomes obvious when we observe our own speech. Without moving our lips or tongue, we can talk to ourselves or recite mentally a selection of verse: because we consider words in language as sound images, we must avoid speaking of the "phonemes "that make up the words. This term, which suggest vocal activity, is applicable to the spoken word only, to the awareness of the inner image in discourse (Cahoone 1996:178). The linguistic sign is then two-sided psychological entity that can be represented by the following visual,



Words for Saussure are not, of course, labels which have come to be attached to things already comprehended independently, but they supply the conceptual framework for man's analysis of reality. The two elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other. The linguistic sign

is a combination of a concept and a sound image. A clear example of this is the written word.

The written word is only a concept; written marks of a sound-image or speech.

For Saussure the structure of language is also a structure of thought separated from language thought is chaotic and unstructured. When we look at the opening verses of the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew Torah we see “ In the beginning the earth (....) was a formless void (....).Then **YHWH** said . and there was. Reality and existence came into being out of nothing (*ex-nihilo*). Structured thought cannot exist before language. For Saussure thought and language are co-extensive (Cahoone 1996:110).

The structure of language itself produces ‘reality’ and that we can only think through language, and therefore our perceptions of reality are all framed by and determined by the structure of language. For French structuralism the source of meaning is not in an individual’s experience or being, but in the sets of oppositions and operations, the signs and grammars that governs that language. Meaning does not come from the individual but from the system that governs what any individual can do within it. Rather than seeing the individual as the center of meaning, structuralism places the structure at the Center. It is the structure that originates and produces meaning and representation of reality not the individual self. (Klages 1997:1-3). For example, I can only say “I” because I inhabit a system of language in which the position of subject is marked by the first personal pronoun, hence my identity is the product of the linguistic system ‘I’ occupy.

For Saussure the real importance for French Structuralism lies in his implicit account of how

language relates to the mind and the world. First, the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. The word arbitrary does not imply that the choice of the signifier is left to the speaker (eg. the individual does not have power to change a sign in any way once it becomes, established in the linguistic community). The sign is arbitrary because it has no connection with the signified (Cahoone 1996:180).

There is no one to one link between the signifier and signified, the word as spoken or written and the concept it serves to evoke. Both the spoken and the written word are caught up in a play of distinctive features where differences of sound and sense are the only markers of meaning and representation. Language can thus be seen as diacritical or dependent on a structural economy (Norris 1982:25).

Saussure argues that linguistics could be placed on a scientific basis only by adopting the synchronic approach in treating language as a network of structural relations. Saussure found it necessary to make a distinction between the isolated speech act or utterance (*parole*) and the general system of articulate relationships from which it derived (*la langue*). This act of divorce is further sanctioned by the arbitrary nature of the 'sign.' For Saussure there cannot exist a natural relation between the 'signifier' and the 'signified', the word as material token of meaning and the concept it conveys (Norris 1982:25).

Each 'sign' contains a 'signifier' (e.g. oral or written word) and 'signified,' the meaning that word evokes for us. The distinction between language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*), is so important for Saussure. For Saussure 'language' must not be confused with 'speech' or actual speaking

(*parole*) (Marshall.1977:89). For Marshall,

Language is a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary formalities that have been adopted by a social body permit individuals to exercise that faculty (1977:88).

It is inherited within a community, and it is a sum of word images that is stored in the minds of all individuals. It is a storehouse filled by members of a given community. Language is not complete in any individual speaker, because it exists perfectly only within a collective (Marshall 1977:88).

Structuralists argue that the structure of language itself produces 'reality.' That *homo-sapiens* (humankind) can think only through language, and therefore our perceptions of reality are determined by the structure of language. The source of meaning is not an individual's experiences or being, but signs and grammars that govern language, rather than seeing the individual as the center of meaning, Structuralism places THE STRUCTURE at the center. It is the structure that originates or produces meaning, not the individual self. Meaning does not come from individuals, but from the system that governs what any individual can do within it (Klages 1997:2).

Structuralism has been criticized for de-emphasizing local meaning, performance, context or human interaction. Structure remains a socially constructed phenomenon and its existence of language is not an invisible social reality, but dialogism (interaction between humans) which shapes and constructs meaning and representation of reality. This is where deconstruction begins. Crucial to Derrida's philosophical and literary project on the sign lies a strategic recasting of the Structural linguistics of Saussure. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the leading

proponent of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, looks at philosophy and theology through the eyes of Western metaphysics. Derrida's objective is to see whether any system posits a CENTER, a point from which everything comes, and to which everything refers or returns. For Derrida this rested on the eternal Logos or God who is the beginning of creation. This process focuses Deconstruction as a method or technique.

2.6. Deconstruction:

“ The text is taken up in an open network which is the very infinity of language ”
(Degenaar.1992.187)

The term denotes a particular kind of practice in reading a method of criticism and a mode of analytical inquiry. Most of those who employ the Deconstructionist technique in the English-speaking world are literary critics. This technique, or climate of thought, generates free and indeterminate readings of literary text. It is imperative to note that Derrida is a philosopher and not a literary critic and that his work relates to the deliberate, careful and repetitious reading of philosophical text (Cuddon 1991:233).

Deconstruction owes much of its theories to French philosopher Jacques Derrida's essay *Structure, Sign, and Play in the discourse of the Human Sciences* (1966), which was followed by *Of Grammatology* (1976). Deconstruction has been the most influential feature of post-structuralism, because it defines a new kind of reading practice which is the key application of post-structuralism (Cuddon 1991:223). Deconstruction, a theory about language and literature, was developed in the 1970s, in large part as a reaction to the primacy of French Structuralism

and a repressive academic and intellectual system which rigidly administered a unique and definitive interpretation of literary text.

Deconstruction can be illuminated by considering two major intellectual influences on Derrida: the philosophy of Heidegger and Structuralism. Derrida's Deconstruction term alludes to Heidegger's project of deconstruction of the history of ontology. In this re-appraisal of Western philosophy, Heidegger argued that a particular tense- the present- had continually awarded priority in the accounts of the nature of Being (Honderich 1995:180).

To connect this prejudice, philosophy needed to reconsider the problem of time. Derrida's deconstruction is a response to the "metaphysics of presence" and is distinguished by a central concern with the treatment of language in Western thought. Derrida's deconstruction takes language as the theme from Plato-*Phaedrus*, (Hamilton 1961), Rousseau's essay on *The origin of Language* and Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*. Derrida suggests that the idea of presence lies behind the traditional ranking of speech above writing. This tradition holds speech to be the direct expression of thought or *Logos* with its contemporaneous meaning, while writing enters the scene subsequently. It is this strategy in the turning point of the written text against itself that has become the hallmark of deconstructive literary criticism (Honderich 1995:181).

'Deconstruction' designates the philosophy of Jacques Derrida which is a strict analysis of language in the philosophical and theological text. What most characterizes 'deconstruction' is its notion of textuality, a view of language as it exists not only in books, but in speech, in history and in culture, especially the written language (Ellis 1989:84). For Derrida there was "nothing

outside the written text” (1976:158). Derrida argued, not simply to reverse, but challenge from within, the centering of meaning offered by the binary opposition (speech versus writing) through which structuralist thinkers of the post-war period had claimed to uncover hidden meaning in language.

Derrida insisted that deconstruction is not a “method” or a technique or a species of critique. To him, deconstruction is a useful means of saying new things about the text. Derrida’s deconstructive moves are interested in dismantling abstract binary opposition: the taking apart of hierarchical systems of thought which can then be re-inscribed within different order of textual signification (Norris 1987:18).

Derrida is careful to add: “but undoing, decomposing and desedimenting of structures ...was not a negative operation.” Deconstruction was not *‘destruktion’* in other words, but rather it is the dismantling of cultural, philosophical, institutional structures which starts from textual interpretations. (1986: 85-87). This is in agreement with Barbara Johnson, who argues that deconstruction is not synonymous with ‘destruction,’ but it is however much closer to the original meaning of the word ‘analysis’ in the real sense, which etymologically means “to undo,” a virtual synonym for “to deconstruct” (1992:1-2).

Every system is a social construction, something that has been assembled, and construction entails exclusions. Deconstruction seeks out those points or cracks in the binary system, where it disguises the fact of its incompleteness, its failure to cohere as a self contained system. In locating these points and applying a kind of authority to them, one is able to deconstruct the

system (Derrida 1986:151). Deconstruction distrusts all systems (applies a hermeneutics of suspicion) to the written text.

Deconstruction views language as a play of differences and produces a strategy which enables one to discover the powerful role played by language in our thinking. Deconstruction's major objective is to take text apart, point out the behaviour of figurative language and put elements together in a totally different way. Deconstruction is indebted to Nietzsche for teaching the mind how to dance by acknowledging the metaphorical power of language and the joyful affirming play of the world, and the Word.

Deconstruction rejects the notion of deep structure in the written text as well as the early metaphysical view of Nietzsche that God that existed from the beginning. The death of God is important in Western culture for it liberates man (generically) from otherworldly fetters and leads to the discovery of the power of human imagination in giving meaning through art and aesthetics (Degenaar 1992:188).

Derrida agreed with Nietzsche (1968) that although God (*Logos*) is dead in Western culture, He is very much alive in language and the construction of the written text. Nietzsche laments: "I fear we are not getting rid of God (*Logos*) because we still believe in grammar" where grammar stands for the belief in a simple correspondence between language and the world it represents (1968:38). Language not only influences the way we understand the world but a clear expression of the primordial essence (the one that existed at the beginning) of *Logos* in relating to the *Imago Dei* (image of God) in humankind. Deconstruction takes elements of the text apart, points

out the behaviour and figurative language and interprets the 'sign' in another way.

Derrida's skeptical position shows the aporias and contradictions in the dyadic sign model of Structuralism. For Derrida, Structuralism was an empirical reaction to the interpretive projects of New Criticism, and it explained referent meaning as the **CENTER** of a symbolic system or structure. For Derrida the dyadic sign model of Saussure is responsible in generating the aporias of Structuralism. He further argued a tradition that presents a simplistic, deterministic view of human signification (Culler 1982:28).

Derrida's critique is governed by the metaphor of (*archē*) writing. Writing is the structure and the process which makes possible the dynamic character of language. For Derrida, translated by Spivak, writing is considered to be exterior to language. He further argues...

the exteriority of the signifier is the exteriority of writing
in general, and I shall try to show later that there is no
Linguistic sign before writing (no Logos) (Spivak 1976:14)

Derrida questions Saussure's two-faced sign, the maintenance of the rigorous distinction between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' (because it is God that gives meaning to the text in the Western tradition as it exists outside the construction of the text) (1981:19). This leaves open the possibility of thinking a concept 'signified' in and of itself, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to a system of signifiers. Derrida's term for such a concept is a 'transcendental signified,' which in essence refers to no 'signifier.' (1981:19). For him, the entire history of the West bespeaks the "powerful irrepressible desire" for such a 'signified,' an order of Being that would be fundamental and permanent, and places a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign (Derrida 1976:49).

For Derrida the 'transcendental signifier' (*Logos*), has always had a special relationship to 'presence' for the West. In "Structure, Sign, and Play" (1970) he claims that all the names that relate to fundamentals have always signified a changeless presence. This is carefully seen in a list of Greek terms with theological and philosophical reverberations, for example: *eidos* (Platonic essence), *arche* (beginning, origin-founding principle), *aletheia* (truth) and *Logos* (Word, reason) (1970: 279-280).

Saussure provides Derrida with a theory of language that enables him to contest this historical determination of Being (eternal *Logos*-Word) as presence. Derrida launches at this point an attack on Structuralism that attaches meaning of the 'sign' to the Western metaphysics of presence. The argument turns on Saussure's attitude to privilege spoken Word as opposed to written language.

Derrida finds a binary opposition between speech and writing in the Western tradition of "metaphysics of presence" which needs to be deconstructed. Writing is treated as secondary and always dependent on the primary reality of speech, because the speaker's presence lies behind his/her words (Derrida 1977:27-73). Derrida has metaphysics (any science of presence) as his target.

For Derrida, the ontological structure of Structuralism can be regarded as a CENTER, a fixed origin. The names given to this steadfast center, including 'essence,' 'existence,' 'being,' 'truth' and 'God' and 'man.' Derrida rejects the idea of a transcendental signifier or a CENTER in the construction of language, because it only substantiates false belief and sophistry of the

West in the propagation of the immediacy of presence in speech (Derrida 1976: 11-15; Berman 1988: 201).

Derrida who is influenced by Heidegger, insisted that Being is produced as history only through the power of the Eternal *Logos* and that there is nothing outside it which indicates that the difference between signifier and signified. For Heidegger, 'Being' the Eternal *Logos* emerges as knowable only in language and it is made present by words and hidden in the midst of them, a simultaneous revelation and a concealment (Derrida 1976:23). In Heidegger's discussion in *Speech and Phenomena* (1967) the whole idea of logocentrism emerges. *Logos* can be seen as a reality and existence and that homo-sapiens (humankind) can interface with an existential (experiential) immediacy and directness, which speech, presumed to be the expression in its own immediacy, captures and transmits (Berman 1988:202). Derrida cannot accept such belief, that there could never have been "a purity of sensory language," language construction that determines the construction of reality. There is no language that is alien to this history (Royle 1995:23). There is nothing outside the text or nothing outside context.

Derrida argues that the reading of the written text should free itself in its axis from the classical categories of history, from the history of ideas and literature of the West that has imprisoned the written text. Derrida considers that the history of 'truth' has always been a debasement of writing and its repression outside full speech. For Derrida writing opens the field of history (1976:1xxxix-4), and is a means of reconstructing the social universe. Derrida views this binary opposition between *parole* (speech) and *langue* (language) as a great tension. For the Structuralist (eg.Barthes) this can be seen as an unavoidable binary opposition between

speech and writing. For Barthes;

A language does not exist properly except in the speaking mass; One cannot handle speech except by drawing on language. But conversely, a language is possible only starting from speech; historically, speech phenomena always precede language phenomena (it is speech which makes language evolve), and genetically, a language is constituted in the individual through his learning from the environmental speech (Selden 1985:75).

For Barthes language is the product and instrument of speech and that relationship is always dialectical (hearer and speaker). That means that individual speech is privileged above the system of meaning. For Derrida, there is a fundamental blindness in the Saussurian text because it represses writing in the language system.

The distinction that Saussure makes between *parole* (speech) and *langue* (language) is similar to Eco's distinction between 'signification' and 'communication.' Eco defines signification as 'a theory of codes' and communication as 'a theory of sign production'. For him every act of communication to one between human beings presupposes a signification system as its necessary condition (1976:8).

There are two key points to the idea of Deconstruction. **First** is that we are still going to look at the systems or structures of language, rather than individual concrete practices, and that all systems and structures have a CENTER the point of origin, the thing that created the system in the very first place. **Second** is that all systems or structures are created of binary pairs or oppositions (oral and written) (Canfield 1993: 24).

Derrida states that such systems are always built upon the basic units of structuralist analyses, the binary opposition or pair, and in that system one part of the binary pair is always more important than the other, that one term is marked positive and the other as negative. Hence in the

binary pair (speech and writing), speech is what Western research or philosophy privileges whereas the written is subordinated to speech. Derrida further argues that all binary pairs work this way eg. light and darkness, white and black, and that in the Western culture or tradition the first term is always valued over the second (Canfield 1993:24). Speech gets privileged because speech is associated with presence. For there to be a spoken language, somebody had to be there to be speaking.

2.6.1. Signifiers and Signified:

The subject of Derrida's discussion in *Of Grammatology* (1976) and the principle source of his distress is the referential paradigm or centered linearity of language. He views it as the root cause of logocentrism. Nowhere does he find referentiality more subtle than the linguistic, theological concept of the sign (*semeion*). The linguistic sign is defined by the 'signifier' and the 'signified.' The 'signifier' constitutes the visible marks (written text) committed to stone, papyrus or paper whereas the 'signified' refers to the so-called meaning we attach to them (Derrida 1976:13).

For Derrida, centered linearity is the progress of the discourse of "the privilege of presence" in the immediacy of spoken or oral signifiers. Spoken words are the symbols of the mental experience and the written words are symbols of spoken words. *Logos* or speech, is closer to the signified and more present in the experience of signification. The distinction between the signifier and the signified is in itself an arbitrary one, because the signified already functions as a signifier, whereas structuralism does see a correspondence between the signifier and the

signified. The signifier and the signified are understood to be united in the sign.(Broitman 1991:2).

For Saussure, language is a system of differences without positive terms. Each element is able to signify only because of its relationship to something that it is not, from which it differs, and which itself cannot be present. Differences enable meaning. For Derrida “then meaning is present, and presence itself can mean what it meant for Western metaphysics, only as an effect of difference” (1982:13).

There are many reasons why Derrida denies the sign (signifier + signified) as a fixed meaning. First, words are not neatly divided into ‘signifiers’ and ‘signifieds.’ ‘Signifiers’ points to meaning as *differance*, the French word Derrida creates to indicate ‘difference’ and ‘deferral’: meaning is the product of difference and is deferred in time. Meaning also is created by the traces that the words carry of other words. Meaning can never be pinned down (Broitman 1991:3).

A text, therefore, according to deconstruction, does not convey fixed meaning but a continual defusal on meaning (Eagleton 1983:134). For Derrida all truth is relative and the meaning is complex, divided against itself, and cannot be traced to an original and simple source or foundation. The written word, therefore, is always implicated as twice removed from “constitutive meaning”: it is simply a phonetic representation of what has been spoken (Allison 1973:11). The privilege of speech or *Logos*, is, in fact, the very origin of the notion of the ‘signifier’.

The idea is that the spoken Word (*Logos*) guarantees the existence of somebody doing the speaking, like there is a real 'self' that is the origin of what is being said. Derrida calls this idea of the 'self' that has to be there to speak part, of the "metaphysics of presence." The idea of 'being,' or 'presence,' is central to all systems of Western reasoning and epistemological tradition from Plato to Descartes. Presence is part of the binary opposition of presence and absence, oral and written, which presence is always favoured over absence or written word. Speech is associated with presence, and both are favoured over writing and absence. This privilege of speech which is associated with presence is what Derrida calls **LOGOCENTRISM** (Canfield 1993:24).

2.6.2. Phonocentrism, Logocentrism, and the Metaphysics of Presence:

Derrida's deconstruction of Western thinkers from Plato to Martin Heidegger criticizes what he calls "logocentrism," the human habit of assigning truth to *Logos*-spoken language, the voice of reason, the Word of God (John 1:1). The Greek term *Logos* derives from the verb *legein*, a meaning first "to gather, pick up, lay together," and then to recount, tell, say, speak."In philosophical thought *logos* came to take on the meaning of reasonable speech. The word came to play a crucial role in Christian thought: "When all things began, the Word (*Logos*) already was" (Evans 1991:xxi).

Derrida finds that logocentrism generates and depends upon a framework of two term oppositions that are basic to Western thinking and tradition such as Being/ non-being; presence and absence, white and black, oral and written. In the logocentric epistemological system, the

first term of each pair is the stronger (eg. oral and written). Derrida is critical about these hierarchical polarities and seeks to take language apart by reversing their order and displacing, and thus transforming, each of these terms by putting them in slightly different position within a word group or in substituting words in other languages that look and sound alike (1976:11).

Derrida's method of deconstructive reading focused on the rhetorical operations of the text. In the process of uncovering the rhetorical operations of the philosophical text. Derrida noticed a curious pattern of belittling the written word while elevating the spoken Word. Derrida names this hierarchy of speech and writing, where speech is the prior and privileged term 'phonocentrism' (Culler 1982: 92).

Phonocentrism understands the ideal of language as representing pure thought transparently, with little or no effect on the thought itself. Oral representation, comes closest to that ideal. Written language, with its materially visible signs that can be repeated at a distance from the original author, threatens to distort the 'original meaning' (Culler 1982:92). Speech over against writing comes closest to the ideal of transparently presenting thought and reason.

Phonocentrism, which "treats writing as a representation of speech and puts speech in direct and natural relationship with meaning", is deeply entangled with Western metaphysics of presence (Derrida 1976: 3; Culler 1982:92). The objective of speech as the representation of pure thought depends upon the assumption that such pure thought exists in the first place in philosophical text. This assumption is called 'logocentrism', which is the orientation towards an order of meaning, thought, truth, reason, logic, and the Word, as it is conceived in existing in itself, as a

foundation for 'truth' (Culler 1982:93-94).

Logocentrism is connected to the "metaphysics of presence," Derrida's term for the idea that meaning can be immediately and simply present. This metaphysics dominates all of our thinking. concepts that we take for granted, including the immediacy of sensation, the presence of ultimate truths to a divine consciousness, the effective presence of an origin in a historical development, a spontaneous or unmediated tuition and an author's intentionality all depend on this idea of presence (Culler 1982:93-94).

Derrida proposes that such a project begins with the examination of the paradox of the immediacy of speech and nevertheless privileges the place of writing as "the first metaphor":

In reading and writing, the production or the interpretation of signs, the text in general as fabric of signs, allow themselves to be confined within secondariness. They are preceded by a truth, or a meaning already constituted by and with the element of the logos. Even when the thing, the "referent," is not immediately related to the Logos of a creator God where it began of being the spoken / thought sense, the signified has at any rate an immediate relationship with the Logos in general (finite or infinite), and a mediated one with the signifier, that is to say with the exteriority of writing. (1976.15).

As such, writing is both distanced from 'signification' and equaled with 'meaning' in the same stroke. What Derrida does, is to look at how the binary opposition between speech and writing exist, and how it functions within a binary system. Derrida points out that binary opposition is algebraic (eg. $a=b$, a equals not- b) and that two terms cannot exist without reference to the other. Speech or spoken *logos* as presence is defined as the absence of writing. Derrida does not seek to reverse the hierarchies implied in the binary pairs: writing favored over speech or the unconscious over the conscious, feminine over masculine. Rather deconstruction seeks to erase the boundaries (the slash) between the oppositions and to show that the values implied by the opposition are not fixed (Klages 1997:2-5).

2.6.3. What is deconstructive activity?

Deconstruction is both a philosophical approach and a way of reading philosophical text. As a philosophical approach, it denies the assumption that there is an original foundational truth that is independent of the construction of language. Meaning is not something that is put into words, meaning is the words. The source of meaning, according to deconstruction, is not the “original” or “pure” ideas and intentions of the author which are understood to be present in the written text. The source of meaning is rhetoric on the written text itself (Broitman 1991: 2).

Relocating the source of ‘meaning’ from the author to the text leads to a different way of reading. The conventional reader reads representationally, that is, with the belief that the book’s words re-present the author’s intention from his or her mind to the word on the page. The task of conventional reading is to find the author’s intention present in the words. When it is ‘found’ the discovery secures a sense of understanding (Broitman 1991:2).

A deconstructive reader, on the other hand, looks not to the author’s intentions but to the written text for meaning, and finds not certainty and clarity but uncertainty and undecidability. This undecidability comes from the way the written text subverts the most obvious meanings. To read the text is to show how the written text “undermines philosophy and theology .” It asserts the hierarchical oppositions of (e.g. speech against writing) on which it relies, by identifying in the written text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key concept or premise (Culler 1982:86).

Basic to the whole approach of deconstruction is that it is viewed as a strategy. In no sense is it

a method, but it adopts a specific approach to the understanding and the reading of the philosophical text. The 'Text' must not be thought of as a defined object. In other words the 'Text' is experienced only in the activity of production or traces of more written text (Barthes 1979:74-75). Every written text is the inter-textual interpretation of another written text. Deconstruction liberates the written text entirely from the hegemony of an author. For Derrida once a work has been written the text acquires an independent existence. The 'Text' is read without the father's signature (Barthes 1979:78).

Instead of uncovering the hidden meaning in the text, deconstruction seeks to show how the text disseminates. Meaning is not to be discovered in the written text. Meaning is deferred from one written text to another. Traces of meaning appear in the written text and the reader (trained academic) can see how these traces of meaning appear and disappear, and how meaning is ultimately 'deferred' (Taylor 1984:179).

Derrida's deconstruction remains a rigorous form of interrogation. Since the "speaking subject," when he or she speaks, must speak the language of 'Reason' or 'Logic,' the language of the Western logos exists in the mind and not in the mouth. Here the basic method of deconstruction is to find a binary opposition (eg. speech versus writing) and to show how each term, rather than being the opposite of its paired term, is actually part of it. Then the structure or opposition which kept them apart, collapses. Ultimately, you cannot tell which is which and the idea of binary opposition loses its meaning, or is put into a play (traces of written meaning). This method is called Deconstruction because it is a combination of construction of meaning and deconstructing metaphysics or presence from the text. The idea is that you do not simply

construct a new system of binaries, with the previously subordinated term on top, nor do you destroy the old system. Rather, you deconstruct the old system by showing how the basic units of structuration (the binary pairs and their rules for their combination) contradict their own logic (Klages 1997:5).

This leads me to propose a new paradigm in understanding the authority of the Word in synthesizing liberation hermeneutics to read Logos from the **world below**. This will unravel the histories and defeats of the poor in their struggle against the power of the written text which shaped their religious and social perceptions of the world around them.

2.7. Towards the Anthropology of Liberation:

The role of the reader comes into account when the context of the reader is taken into consideration. The study of the New Testament can never be undertaken in a vacuum: there is always some context which influences it. In recent years the context of South Africa has become an increasing referential and influential part in the studies conducted by South African scholars. South African New Testament studies are progressively orientating themselves towards the context and situation in which the scholar finds himself and to see the New Testament speaking to the reader, rather than viewing it as a document simply reflecting the world of its own time (Hartin and Petzer 1991:8-9).

According to Draper the academic community in South Africa has been largely influenced by the scholarship emanating from Western Europe, using in particular historical tradition, or in more recent times shifting attention away from the author to analyze the written text itself. For

Draper neither of these two approaches allows the Bible to have any meaning for the reader for it does not speak to their situation. Draper argues for an interpretation that involves a '**a reading from below.**' With this in mind Draper sets as his goal the working out of a methodology for a contextual interpretation whereby those who are involved in democracy and liberation of social and political freedom can draw meaning from the New Testament for their struggle. Studies on liberation hermeneutics have become more influential within the context of South Africa. This can be seen as a hermeneutic tool in order to assist their people in their struggle against social and economic oppression (Hartin and Petzer 1991:8-9).

Liberation hermeneutics and orality are closely related in the social context in South Africa. Liberation was not only for economic and social freedom but to free the poor and oppressed from the ideology of the written text which has imprisoned their minds and shaped their intellectual and social inferiority. To read Logos 'from below' there is a need to experience some sort of intellectual conversion. The whole purpose of reading '**from below**' is to deem the poor and the oppressed as the primary interlocutors of the liberation struggle. The poor, the illiterate and uneducated, and the despise cultures are the ones that have been shaped by the oral power of the Logos. They are the very envoys of the spoken Word.

West in his book 'Contextual Bible Study,' proposed the following contextualisation,

A commitment to read the Word (*Logos*) from the perspective of the South Africa context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed (1993:12).

The poor and oppressed are those who have been socially, politically, economically or culturally marginalised or exploited. Orality and literacy interpretive interest helps relive the voice of

poor and oppressed that had been silenced by the ideology of the written text. The binary opposition between the oral and written text can help us to expose the vile atrocities that the written text has committed against the poor and the oppressed. The voice of the 'Other' that has been subjugated for hundred years under a mound of falsely constructed historical data. This reveals the binary opposition in the text and breaks the silence of the poor and helps them to unravel their fears and victories through poetry, hymns traditional songs, rituals and prayer which are far removed from the dominant discourse of the dominant literate class, or the tradition of the Enlightenment.

Jesus himself was born among the poor and oppressed in Palestine. Jesus chose to remain and work among the poor and the oppressed. He died a death of the poor and the oppressed on the cross. There is a need to hear the cries and the voices of the poor and the oppressed that have been subjugated to the written text for 300 years in South Africa. Orality was very much part of the liberation struggle. It was the very essence of resistance against the demons of Colonialism and Apartheid. The *Logos* or the Word of God was the central force of authority that was used in mobilizing the poor and the oppressed to revolt against the ideology of the written text.

In an hermeneutics of Liberation, Orality-Literacy studies expose the binary opposition between speech and writing; white and black; literate and illiterate. These are the key elements in understanding the power relation of the Word in the midst of the oppression of the written text. The power of the oral Word can be seen as the hope for the poor and oppressed in their resistance against the forces and influences of social and cultural oppression .

This will lead me to examine in Chapter three, very briefly the Johannine community and the historical and religious setting of the text and its relationship to the *Logos* tradition. Chapter four will serve as bedrock in view of my polemic on the *Logos* tradition in the Johannine narrative. Given this deep caution in examining the individual historical position in relation to the authorship, place of composition, date, purpose, and John and the Synoptics and proposed religious influences around the *Logos* tradition can give us sharper reading eyes and ears for perceiving the coherence of the Gospel as a whole.

CHAPTER THREE

The Gospels are the first fruits of all writings.
and th Gospel of John is the first fruits of
the Gospels, and no one can receive its meaning
who has not himself lain back on Jesus' breast

From: Origen (Tasker 1960:8).

3. The Historical Background of the Gospel of John:

For Origen, the Gospel of John finds its truest expression and disclosure in relationship to the incarnate Jesus. The written text is an absence, unless it is filled with a presence beyond itself. The words must receive life from the eternal Word. In this brief introduction I will focus on a survey of the evidence, external and internal, for the authorship, date and purpose of the Gospel of John and its relationship to the Synoptic Gospels which will serve as a foundation in relating the historical data to that of the *Logos* tradition.

3.1. Authorship:

There is very little in the way of internal or external evidence concerning the authorship of John's Gospel.

3.1.1. External Evidence:

According to external evidence, the Christian tradition has associated the Fourth Gospel with the Apostle John since the second century. Irenaeus' letter to Florinus, a gnostic Roman elder, claims having direct contact with the Apostle John. He goes on to remind Florinus of the days when he and John were together and were instructed by Polycarp. In two passages Irenaeus

tells us that the elders, associated with John the disciple of the Lord in Asia, testify that John delivered the Gospel orally to them, and that the church in Ephesus ca-102-n be seen as a truthful witness to the apostolic tradition. In support of Irenaeus' claims, Eusebius a church historian confirms the witness of Irenaeus and Polycarp who orally received the truth from the apostle. Further information is given to us in his third book *Against Heresies*. Irenaeus says John, the disciple of the Lord, who at the last supper reclined on the bosom of Jesus, gave out orally the Gospel at Ephesus (Sanders 1968:34).

In the same period there were other witnesses to the authorship of John. Some of this evidence will be valuable in relation to the Johannine tradition. The question we need to ask is, how authentic is the authority of the tradition Irenaeus preserved concerning the authorship of the Fourth Gospel? There is some evidence that supports this tradition. Polycrates who was the Bishop of Ephesus (189-98), writing to Victor, Bishop of Rome, refers to John as both a witness and a teacher who laid on the bosom of the Lord, was a priest and had fallen asleep in Ephesus (Smalley.1978:69). Here again there is a connection between John, the author and the Beloved disciple and Ephesus. Another valuable external witness that seems to perpetuate this tradition, is Clement of Alexandria (AD.150-211) who says John wrote a 'spiritual gospel.' However a problem lies in relation to the content as it speaks of Papias as a disciple of John. It also mentions that the heretic Marcion was rejected by John. The Muratorian canon (ca.170-200) refers to the Gospel as the work of John, one of the disciples, and it goes on to describe the content of the Gospel as revealed to the apostles. The Gospel was written down by John under the supervision of Andrew. The evidence in the Muratorian Canon seems to be very ambiguous about John's connection to the Fourth Gospel (Smalley.1978:70; Brown.1966:LXXXIX).

Ptolemaeus, a mid-second century disciple of the Gnostic teacher Valentinus, accepted the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel (Smalley 1978:70).

Scholars like Sanders, Brown and Smalley question the validity of such evidence in the light of the Johannine tradition. There is a need to give a synopsis of such ambiguities and see how they correspond to the Biblical narrative. Brown tends to agree partially with the evidence given by Irenaeus. The Gospel itself speaks of the Beloved Disciple who rested on the Lord's bosom. This was not just a mere guess by Irenaeus that this unnamed disciple was John. There is a good indication he was not the son of Zebedee, according to Eusebius. Irenaeus and other early writers confused this John with the son of Zebedee (1966:LXXXV111). Irenaeus places John at Ephesus. There is some evidence that John the son of Zebedee was in Ephesus. Justin, at Ephesus (ca.135), speaks of John, one of the apostles of Christ, who stayed with Eusebius. The apocryphal *Acts of John*, written (ca.150) by Leucius Charinus, makes mention of John at Ephesus. Polycrates the Bishop of Ephesus, wrote to Pope Victor about 190, and claimed that John was buried in Ephesus (Brown 1966:LXXXIX).

Thus the external evidence reveals that the case for the apostolic authorship of the Gospel is not strong or unified. The external evidence that has been provided remains questionable. There is no conclusive proof John produced the Gospel in his life at Ephesus, as Irenaeus claimed he did.

3.1.2. Internal Evidence:

Before we conclude from these suggestions about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, there is a need to focus on some internal evidence in the Gospel in order to help us understand the

authorship. No one is named in the text as the redactor of the Gospel of John, although the beloved disciple is referred to in John 21:24 as the one who has written these things. This phrase is questioned by Smalley, who argues that the identity of the beloved disciple in John 21:24 cannot be appealed to as an unambiguous answer to the authorship question (1978:73). Later the beloved disciple was equated with John, the son of Zebedee and the brother of James, a member of the circle of the Twelve, and it was claimed that he died at an advanced age in Ephesus but none of this can be deduced from the text. The disciple whom Jesus loved is referred to five times in the Gospel of John,(13v23; 19v26; 20v2-10; 21v7,20-23; 21v24). For Bultmann the Gospel makes no claim that the Gospel have been written by an eye-witness nor does it assume that an eye-witness lies behind it. Rather it contradicts such an assumption and implies that the 'disciple whom Jesus loved,'was not an historical person. It is a symbol for the circle to which the Gospel belongs, the symbol of Gentile Christianity in contrast to Petrine Jewish Christianity (1971:11-12; Conzelmann, Lindemann:1988:257).

None of the internal evidence gives us a final answer as to who John was. Some suggest (Smalley, Schnackenberg, Brown) that the beloved disciple was John the apostle, and that he appears in the Gospel as an earlier eye-witness on whose testimony the Johannine tradition rests (Smalley 1978:81). This view is contested by Bultmann who said that the redactor in the Fourth Gospel remains unknown and the Gospel does not mention the identification of the author.(1971:71). Smalley and Brown agree that it is difficult to identify the Beloved Disciple as John son of Zebedee (Smalley 1978:81; Brown 1966:XCIX).

If one combines the internal and external evidence, associating the Beloved disciple with John

the son of Zebedee, there is the possibility, but not a certainty, that the disciple John really was associated with the composition of the Gospel. The assertion of Bultmann cannot be read out of the text, that John 21:23 takes a look at the death of the disciple which refers to an historical person. Without giving his name the author in John 21:24 identifies himself as a witness: "This is that disciple that testifieth of these things, and wrote them down." (Bultmann:1971:71).

3.2. The Place of Composition:

Early traditions about the composition of John mention Ephesus, which remains the primary candidate for identification as the place where John composed the Fourth Gospel. This evidence is further strengthened by parallels between John and Revelation though these are problematic, as the later work seems more clearly to belong to the area of Ephesus. If there is an argument against the disciples of John the Baptist, and the mentioning of disciples that baptized with John's baptism, that strengthens the case for Ephesus (Acts:20 v18-35). There are some parallels between John and Revelation, where the latter work belongs to the area of Ephesus. The anti synogogue argument may also relate to the region of Ephesus (Rev. 2v9; 3v9). John describes an argument, with the disciples of John the Baptist, and the New Testament mention disciples baptized with John the Baptist at only one place, and that outside Palestine, in Ephesus. There are parallels between John and the Qumran scrolls, clearly visible also in Colossians and Ephesians, and these epistles are addressed to the Ephesus region (Brown 1966:CIV).

This view is not readily accepted by Bultmann who argues that the Semitic style of the author

and the relationship of the Gospel of John to the Gnostic revelation discourses, and also in letters of Ignatius of Antioch and the Odes of Solomon strongly supports the supposition that the Gospel originated from the area of Syria. For Bultmann nothing in the Gospel points to an origin in Egypt or Asia Minor (1971:12). For Schnackenberg most of the evidence points in the direction of Syria, but a more nuanced hypothesis is suggested which has gained support recently. It is that the Johannine tradition originated in Palestine, but was subjected to Syrian influences before it reached Asia Minor (Ephesus) where it was written down. He further insists that there are no fundamental objections to the ancient traditions of the church which place the composition of John in Ephesus (Schnackenberg 1968:152).

The question of the place of the Gospel's composition remains difficult to determine because there is no internal evidence that 1QS was read outside of Palestine. For Brown and Schnackenberg there is no problem in locating the place in Ephesus. To us however this evidence seems to be contrary to Johannine tradition that shows closer affinity to Palestine and the Old Testament tradition. Next we will examine the date of composition or of putting into writing the Fourth Gospel.

3.3. Date:

According to Conzelmann the Gospel might not have been written down until the middle of the second century. Barrett also believes that the Gospel may only have been written down by A.D. 140. The most conclusive argument against the late dating of the writing down of John has been the discovery of several papyri text from the second century. However the discovery of the

Rylands Papyrus has guaranteed that John was already written down around the year 100 (Conzelmann, Lindemann 1988:253).

In 1935, C.H. Roberts published the Rylands Papyrus, an Egyptian codex fragment of John (18v31-33;37-38). The dating of this papyrus to A.D.135-150 has been widely accepted. In the late second century and beginning of the third century (175-225), witnesses to the Fourth Gospel had been published as Bodmer Papyri II and XV which give us substantial sections on John (Brown 1966:LXXXII; Sanday 1905:250-254). Some time must be allowed to have elapsed between the writing down of the original and the copies discovered in Egypt, so that a late first century date is likely.

It is clear that there must have been written copies of John in circulation in Egypt during 140-200 but the theory that holds that the Gospel of John was composed in Egypt has received little support. Thus the latest plausible date for the writing down of the Gospel would be 100-110 where the earlier date showed has received much consideration. The internal and external evidence seem to be consistent with the earlier date of the Gospel.

3.4. Purpose:

The purpose of the author is clearly stated: " But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may might have life in his name" (John. 20v30-31). According to Brown there is a need to distinguish whether this verse refers to those who have to come to believe or to those who are already believers. We need to remember that Christian preachers carried over to the Gentiles much religious terminology.

Gentiles who became interested in the message of Jesus soon had to learn some Old Testament background. Brown argues that the purpose of the Gospel is to strengthen the believers in their faith, so that the reader will continue to have faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (1966:LXXVIII).

For Conzelmann (1988:256) the Gospel of John was written down neither as a competitor nor as a supplement to the Synoptics. Some scholars hold that the purpose of the book was that it should be a missionary writing that addresses Israel or the Gentile world. Nothing in the text, however, indicates such specific intent. John should not be seen as a 'missionary writing' but as a oral text of faith for the Johannine Christian community. The author intends to clarify to the community its Christian confession, and that the community has the Spirit to lead them "into all truth" and then to "abide " despite the trials and persecution. The purpose of John writing down the Gospel is not to mission but witness exhortation to brotherly love by which this community is distinguished from the world, which reacts with hatred (1988:256).

The major purpose of the Gospel is to assure the believers (Jew or Gentile) that the Jesus in whom they believe means life. There is a universal purpose in John and that is 'Jesus came into the world as the light of all mankind (1v9), to take away the sins of the world (John.1v29), and to save the world (John 3v16). When Jesus is lifted up on the cross and resurrected, He will draw all humankind unto Himself (12:32) (Draper 1993:18-19).

3.5 The Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels:

The Gospel of John displays the same literary form as that of the Synoptic Gospels. It covers the period from the Baptist's appearance, includes the beginning of the activity of Jesus, and extends to His death and resurrection. Galilee and Jerusalem are the scenes of the work of Jesus. Most of the names, places and persons in John also appear in the Synoptic tradition. The material, as in the Synoptic Gospels, consists of miracle stories and traditions of sayings and narratives. A few elements of the Synoptic tradition also appear in John eg.the passion story,the account of John the Baptist (1v19-34), the individual Logia (2v19; 4:44; 12v25; 13v16,20; 15v20), miracle stories (4v46-54; 6v1-13) and narratives (2v13-22; 6v66-71) (Bultmann 1971:5).

In what follows, I will propose to focus on the proposed religious influences that surround the Logos Tradition of that time and region, with a view to reconstructing in some measure the background of thought which John the Beloved disciple presupposed for his readers.

3.6. The proposed influences on the religious thought of the Fourth Gospel:

The theological perspective of the Fourth Gospel is a unique perspective, which is quite different from the theological outlooks of the Synoptic Gospels. In particular, the figure of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is different from that of the Synoptic Gospels. The Johannine Jesus makes very pertinent and potent claims, as He presents Himself with the solemn "I AM" formula. He enters the world of darkness as the light in a world of falsehood in order to bring truth, and His presence divides men into two camps. They either come to the Light or they reject

it. They either believe in the 'truth' or refuse to hear and accept the 'truth'. Throughout the Gospel, these binary oppositions reveal the character and nature of Jesus in relation to the Johannine Community.

Comparing the Gospel of John with that of the Synoptic Gospels shows unfamiliar concepts. Statements about the Logos are only found in the Prologue (1:1) of John. Typical of John is the dualistic or binary framework e.g. light and darkness, Spirit and flesh, from above and from below. In order to explain these concepts, the History of Religion school searched for parallels in Jewish, Hellenistic, Qumran and Gnostic texts. The parallels of light and darkness find close affinity to that of Judaism and Qumran, whereas Philo makes use of the concept λόγος. There are also parallels in some pagan texts e.g. Hermetic and Mandaean writings, as well as the Letters of Ignatius or the Odes of Solomon (Conzelmann and Lindemann 1988:255). In the view of several scholars (ie. Brown, Lindars, Smalley, Bultmann), there are three religious influences that could have played a major role in the composition and unity of the Fourth Gospel. The distinctiveness of John's religious thought, including his language and images according to modern research, suggested three main religious influences:

- Gnosticism
- Greek Thought
- Qumran

This study of the religious influences can serve as a litmus test in order to establish the nature and origin that surrounds the Λόγος tradition. What we need to understand is that the Fourth Gospel was not born in a vacuum but its historicity, content and *kerygma* (proclamation of Word) was shaped by these religious influences that impacted on the presuppositions of the

Fourth Evangelist and his community. The essence of the *kerygma* (proclamation of the Word) of the Fourth Gospel remains a product of an oral tradition.

The purpose of this chapter is to give a synopsis of these religious influences which can serve as valuable information in relation to the Logos tradition. The first influence we need to examine in relation to the Fourth Gospel is Gnosticism.

3.7. John and Gnosticism:

The theory of Gnostic influence on the Gospel of John has been popularized in the History of Religions school such as Boussett:1907, Reitzenstein:1919 in the early decades of the century. The term Gnosticism has been used to describe a wide range of religious movements during the first Christian centuries (Smalley 1978:49). This includes the dualism of Qumran and other Jewish apocalyptic texts, Philo and even Neoplatonism (Hengel 1989:113). Although the term Gnostic or Gnosticism is used by modern scholars in a very confusing way; etymologically it should refer to a belief that salvation is by knowledge. According to Dodd, orthodox Christian theologians like Clement of Alexander, Philo and writers like the Hermetist should be called Gnostics, as well as the Gospel of John (1953:97). For Hengel, Gnosticism can be defined in terms of the anti-cosmic dualistic-ontological system from the second and the third centuries with a strong philosophical emphasis which interprets the creation of the material world as the work of inferior angels, and rejects the salvation history of Israel and the physical death of Christ (1989:113). The rest of the Gnostic material comes from the Christian world, and as a result we must always ask ourselves whether these similarities with John are not due to Gnostic

acquaintance with the Gospel, which they so quickly made their own.

3.7.1. John and Gnostic Dualism:

Gnosticism always shows a complete opposition between the world above, (the world of the Spirit) to that of the world below (the world of matter). This reflects a common human longing for transcendence, which is deeply rooted in human nature (Dodd 1953:103). Several examples appear in two complicated Gnostic systems, (ie. Basilides, Valentinian) which are difficult to explain. One such example can be found in the Gnostic Basilides system(...),

In the beginning there were light and darkness. When each came into recognition of the other, and the darkness contemplated the light, the darkness as if seized with desire of the better thing, pursued after it, and desired to be mingled with it and to participate in it. But while the darkness did this, the light by no means received anything of the darkness into itself, nor desired anything of it, albeit it too suffered the desire to behold.

(Dodd 1953:103)

According to the Basilides, sonship became immersed in the material world and no messenger came to redeem this sonship. In Basilides' Gnostic system the primal God must be called the Non-existent. He is the cause of all that exists and out of him proceeds a universal germ of a threefold sonship. One of the sonships is light and so flies upward to the Non-existent God, the second is only able to reach halfway, while the third remains tied to matter. It is this unprepared sonship which groans for liberation (Dodd.1953:103-108). Some modern scholars argue that Basilides and Valentinian Gnostic texts can provide a basis for comparison with the Gospel of John.

In the Fourth Gospel, the "Two Worlds" remain problematic, whereas in the Synoptic Gospels

this dualism refers to "this age and the age to come." The dualism in John is not horizontal but vertical, "the world above and the world below," (John.8:23).....

You are from below, and I am from above,
you are of this world, I am not of this world. (N.I.V.)

The world in John stands in contrast with the world above. The "world below" in the Johannine community is viewed as evil and the devil (*diabólos*) as its ruler, whereas Jesus has come to be the light of the world (John 1:5-11:9). The same dualism is clearly evident in the language of Jesus in His discourse with Nicodemus. In John 3:13;

No one has ascended into heaven except
the Son of Man, descended from heaven.

Jesus has come down from heaven in order to fulfill the mission that he received from God. He came down from heaven as the 'living bread,' to give humankind eternal life (6:33-58). There are several contrasts in this dualism, and these will be helpful to see whether John makes use of 'Classic Gnosticism'.

3.7.2. The binary opposition between Darkness and Light:

In the Gospel of John the "world below" refers to the realm of darkness but the "world above" refers to the world of light. For the Gnostics the world remain a product of evil and the "world above" refers to the realm of pure knowledge. In John the binary oppositions 'light and darkness' seem to be in conflict. In John 1:5 "the light shines and the darkness cannot overcome it..." (Ladd 1974:224). What is unique in the Johannine contrast of light and darkness is that Jesus makes a solemn claim, '**I am,**' that He is the light of the 'world below' (8:12), and that

light enables humankind not to stumble. For the Gnostics, there exists a buffer between these two realms, but Jesus (*Logos*) breaks through the realm of the "world below" regarded as evil and corrupt by the Gnostics, to be its eternal light. Despite the fact that the light came into the world, men still loved the darkness because of their evil deeds. What is clear is that the Johannine usage of light and darkness seems to be subtly different from to the Basilides and Valentinian Gnostic systems, especially in the assumption that the *Logos* took flesh (1:14).

3.7.3. The binary opposition between Spirit and Flesh:

For the Gnostics, the flesh or human bodies are viewed as evil, the products of an evil power (Brodie 1993:7). The flesh belongs to the 'world below' and the Spirit belongs to the 'world above,' the world of pure knowledge (Smalley 1978:50). 'Flesh' in the context of John refers to man's (generically) physical life on earth. That is what man is, his basis of existence. The flesh is a synonym for the human body or the outer man (generically) (Howard 1975:30). The "flesh" in itself is not sinful but it represents the weakness of the lower realm. If it is sinful then the nature and deity of Jesus become a problem in the context of John.

This perspective seems to be diametrically opposed to Gnostic thought and philosophy, whereas in the Gospel of John, he broke the dualism of "flesh and spirit." Apart from the "world below" as well as the "flesh" that was seen as evil by the Gnostics, John describes the truth about the Incarnation "that the *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among us".(John 1:14). *Logos* became a man, a human being, He became flesh. No longer is there a buffer between the "the world above" and "the world below" in the context of the Johannine community, but there is a synthesis of "Spirit and Flesh" by the *Logos* in order to create and institutionalize a new order of worship

and existence. Although John makes use of dualism in the broader context of the Gospel, this does not imply that he was Gnostic, because the Johannine usage remains distinctively in its emphasis on the incarnation.

Bultmann interprets Johannine dualism as Gnostic (1971:21), yet if John was Gnostic according to Dodd and Bultmann, how can we rationally justify the diametrically opposed positions displayed in the Gospel of John, especially in relation to the 'I am' claims of Jesus being the eternal "Light" of humankind in a world of evil and darkness. Where the flesh was regarded as evil by the Gnostics, the *Logos* came from the 'realm above' and enters 'realm below,' which was seen as evil by the Gnostics, in order to become flesh (1:14). This synthesis of "flesh and Spirit," the horizontal with the vertical remains distinctively Johannine. The Gnostic writers seem to elaborate on what they borrowed from the Fourth Gospel, rather than to be the source for John's Gospel.

3.7.4. The Gospel of John and Christian Gnosticism:

Gnosticism, according to the Church Fathers, was a movement that fully developed during the second century. If we date the Gospel of John to ca.90-100 it can scarcely have been influenced by Gnosticism per se (Brown.1966:LIII). Until recent times there was very little Gnostic literature extant from the early centuries and the field was transformed by the discovery at Chenoboskion, of a Gnostic library at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1947. This group of Gnostic documents has changed the whole picture in relation to the Gospel of John. Scholars are now able to compare the Gospel of John with Christian Gnosticism of the second century in the Gospel of Truth, the Gospel of Thomas and others (Smalley 1978:50). In these works, the

influence of the New Testament is very superficial. The Gospel of Truth is a Coptic translation of a Greek work from the school of Valentinian gnosticism and perhaps was written down by Valentinus himself (Brown 1966:LII).

Scholars like Barrett and Braun have compared the thought and vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel with the Gospel of Truth and conclude that the documents are far apart. There is also a considerable distance between John and The Gospel of Thomas. Although certain Johannine terms are found also in The Gospel of Thomas, they are used in a way that is different from John. According to Brown if there is any dependence of one or the other the dependence would be by Thomas on John (1966:LIII).

3.7.5. The Saviour Myth:

Gnosticism invaded the Christian Tradition in the second century and used mythology in order to express salvation in terms of secret knowledge by which humankind enters the divine realm (Lindars 1972:41). For Gnostics the world and human bodies are evil, and they are a product of an evil power. The key to salvation was *gnosis*. Such secret knowledge refers to an intimate relationship of the self to a transcendent source of all being and such knowledge was often conveyed by the revealer figure (Brodie 1993:7). For Marcus, the Valentinian, true salvation is simple knowledge of the unspeakable. The secret knowledge conveyed in Gnostic myths refers to knowledge of the nature and origin of heavenly beings, the nature and origin of this world and its rulers. This knowledge will strengthen a person against the powers that would hinder him, even when he meets them after death (Dodd 1953:113). There is a saying that knowledge means power, and for the Gnostics the one who brings knowledge is a Saviour. This Saviour is sent

from a divine realm (as in the Hermetica), so that one can speak of a 'Saviour Myth.'
(Lindars.1972.41).

In the Naassene hymn, Jesus is made to say,...

Behold, O Father! this quest of evil upon the earth is all astray from Thy spirit. But it seeks to escape bitter chaos, and knows not how it shall come through. Send me there, Father. Having the seals I will descend. I will traverse all aeons, and I will open all mysteries, and I will reveal the forms of gods. And having summoned 'Knowledge' I will communicate the secrets of the holy way. (Dodd.1953.113)

Thus, Jesus is introduced as a Gnostic redeemer. John speaks of knowledge which is eternal life through Jesus Christ for the world and definitely does not refer to the concept of 'knowledge' as perceived by the Gnostics which saves people out of and from a world perceived as evil. The Prologue deals with the world and humankind, but the concern of John is to introduce Jesus, being God himself, as 'the Saviour' of humankind, (John 3:16), so that they can receive eternal life by believing in Him. For Dodd both John and the Gnostics follow the same understanding in seeking redemption in 'knowledge'. Such 'knowledge' was given by Jesus so that humankind can 'believe' in Him (1953:114). What John meant by 'knowledge' in Jesus Christ remains difficult to understand in the context of the Johannine community, because the Gnostics' understanding of knowledge (*gnosis*) relates to the 'realm above,' whereas Jesus, being flesh (1:14), offers God's revelation to humankind inside the world (*kosmos*). Despite the common background, the Johannine Christianity remains very different from the "Saviour Myth" of the Gnostics. For John the *Logos* becomes Man in fleshly reality. He is the offspring of the supreme God to reveal knowledge of the Father so that humankind can believe in Him but still within the material world. For Lindars (1972:41), John's language is capable of being understood alongside Gnosticism (3:13,31; 6:62; 16:28; 17:3). Although the language of the

Gnostics seems similar, the usage and expression in John remains distinct.

3.7.6. John and Reconstructed Pre-Christian Gnosticism: Bultmann's Hypothesis:

The question arises whether there was pre-Christian Gnosticism from which John derives his ideas. This view was favoured by Rudolf Bultmann, and scholars from the 'History of Religion School', such as Bousset and Reitzenstein. The view that was propagated by these scholars was that pre-Christian Gnosticism was an eclectic tradition of thought which influenced Judaism and Hellenistic paganism as well as Christianity, and which came from an Oriental source in Iraq or Babylon (Lindars 1972:41; Smalley 1978:53). For Bultmann, John's thought pattern was shaped by Oriental Gnosticism. The Evangelist was himself a Gnostic who restated the *kerygma* (proclamation of the Word) in Gnostic categories after his conversion (Haenchen 1980:34). With the discovery of the Mandaean sources, scholars like Bultmann and Reitzenstein were convinced that these could shed new light on the religious background of the Fourth Gospel.

In the Fourth Gospel there is no more than a few verses of the Prologue (1:1-18) dealing with the origins of the world and of man; and this is not set forth as the content of the revelation brought by Christ; it only indicates who He is and with what authority He speaks. What He reveals is God Himself, who so love the world that He sent His Son. The knowledge of God which He brings to men takes the form of love, trust and obedience directed to Him and whereby they united to Him, and consequently to His Father. Both John and the Gnostics followed deeply-grounded tendency, which sought redemption which was given through the eternal *Logos*. One thing should be clear that Gnosticism cannot explain the imagery and thought of John.

3.7.7. Mandaean Literature and the Logos Tradition:

It is important to understand the nature of this source before it can be related or compared to the Fourth Gospel. The Mandaean sect comes from a small community still living today in Iran and Iraq (Dodd 1953:115). This collection of literature cannot be dated before A.D.700. The Mandaean doctrine may be regarded as Gnostic in character. The saviour in this religion is a divine being called Manda d' Hayye ("knowledge of life"), who is sent from heaven to fight the powers of darkness and then to rise to the realm of light (Lindars 1972:42). In this myth the figure of an "Original Man" is oppressed by the Demiurge, this figure of light and goodness who was torn into small particles of light. These particles represent human souls, portions of the divine Logos that were divided and seeded in a world of darkness. The task of Satan or the Demiurge was to make them forget the heavenly realm and so God sent his son in corporeal form to waken these souls and to set them free from the bodies of darkness and to send them back to the heavenly realm (Brown 1966:LIV). This can only be achieved through proper performance of a baptismal ritual.

Bultmann finds a comparison between the Mandaean literature and the Fourth Gospel and this lies in the existence of the Gnostics' "redeemer myth." The central doctrine in Bultmann's reconstruction of this Gnosticism is the redeemer myth. For Bultmann, John was dependent on this Gnostic "redeemer myth," as he tried to retell the story of Jesus in Christianised Gnostic categories (Smalley 1978:52). The similarity of language and dualistic expressions, (light and darkness, truth and lie), and the union of the redeemer with "his own" and his contrast with the world seem to be Gnostic in essence (Schnackenberg 1968:139). In the Revelatory Source proposed by Bultmann this redeemer was existent in (John 1:1), and became flesh,(1:14) and

later returned to God. He was the light that came into the world, (1:9; 8:12). He was the way to God. (Brown.1966:LIV).

Bultmann's thesis on reconstructed *gnosis* and its comparison to the Fourth Gospel was not readily accepted by scholars like Brown, Lindars, Smalley, Dodd. and Bultmann, who presupposes that there was Gnosticism in the background of John, uses John as his main source to reconstruct this *gnosis* (Hunter 1968:25). Thus Bultmann's thesis is a circular argument. The result of the discovery of the Gnostic documents at Chenoboskion in the second century was to re-affirm the Patristic picture that Gnosticism was a Christian or Jewish heresy. Bultmann's radical approach in comparing the historical tradition of the Fourth Gospel with that of the Mandaean text must now be seen as problematic.

In particular Gnosticism displays a diametrically opposed view to the Johannine understanding of the Logos. Gnosticism understands Logos with reference to salvation through knowledge. The "world below" (κόσμος) and the human body was seen as evil, whereas the "world above" is the realm of pure knowledge. The philosophical foundations of Gnosticism display a continual dichotomy between the *noumenal* and *phenomenal* (Kantian terminology), in philosophical categories whereas John merges them. This shows a level of inconsistency in Bultmann's thesis in relation to John 1:18. For Smalley, John shows a real concern for the historical basis of salvation, whereas the Gnostics are lacking in a historical theology of salvation, in the deliverance from sin through the power of the cross (John 12:31-32) (1978:53).

For the Gnostics, salvation is a secret imputation of ontic-transcendence, but John discloses the

mystery in John 1:1,5-14 of a Logos who enters the world of history in human flesh. This would be a contradiction of Gnostic thought, which can be seen as cosmological dualism. The basis of salvation in the Johannine tradition remain historical and Christocentric. Bultmann's reconstructed pre-Christian Gnosticism lacks historical objectivity.

Second, Bultmann compares the Gospel of John with Mandaean Literature, which sets out a Gnostic redeemer myth. He constructed pre-Christian Gnosticism from the Mandaean text in order to strengthen his hypothesis. The Mandaean text dates back to A.D.700, which is 600 years after the Gospel of John was written down. The question that we need to ask is, 'Who influenced whom?' The Mandaean text dates later, and it is difficult to believe that John made use of it as a source, but rather the Mandaean text might have been influenced by the Gospel of John. In the Mandaean text the Redeemer is a divine being, who fights against the power of darkness. He does not enter the world, but his whole cosmological encounter is spiritual, and there is an absence of any real contact with the flesh and the world. This is in agreement with Kaesemann's observations that the redeemer does not enter the world but is consistently separated from it. The assertions that contradict this basic tendency (e.g John 1:14) do not mean that this redeemer truly participated in the world through the incarnation. For Kaesemann, Jesus remains a celestial being who merely contacts the world but does not enter into it and John can be seen as docetic and to this extent as gnostic (1969:27-55). Kaesemann's docetic Christological claim does not correspond with the worldview of John because the believers would be called upon to withdraw spiritually from the world, but John does not teach this as Jesus insists that the community needs to stay in the world. In the Prologue of John, the Logos who pre-existed with God at the beginning of creation entered the world (John 1:1) in human flesh (John 1:14)

and then returned to God. John placed the coming of the Logos in the midst of history which was the ultimate fulfillment of the Messianic hope.

Bultmann's thesis receives criticism from Schnackenberg and Dodd who regarded his thesis as hazardous. For Schnackenberg the Christian figure of redeemer did not exist in the form of Early Gnosticism (1968:140). For Dodd, the Mandaean literature is of great value for the history of religion in order to shed new light on the conditions of the land of the Euphrates at the time of the Islam invasion but sheds little light on John's Gospel (1953:129-130).

Bultmann's view of the 'Gnostic myth,' can thus be seen as questionable for historical reasons. The "Gnostic myth" in the form described above, does not come from the early period of Gnosticism but it comes at the end of the development of Gnostic thought. For Conzelmann, John had probably taken up both Hellenistic Judaism and early Gnosticism and connected them with the person of Jesus, thereby creating, a Christian narrative of his own (Conzelmann, Lindemann 1988:255) but his thesis is subject to the same problems as that of Bultmann.

What is clearly evident is that the Fourth Gospel did not rely on the Mandaean Text. For Brown, the merging of any proto-Gnostic attitudes and elements into the Johannine tradition took place rather later than earlier (1966:LV), ie after the completion of the present form of the Gospel.

3.8. John and Hellenistic Thought:

In raising the question of Greek influence on John, there is a need to make an important distinction. There were strong Hellenistic influences already present in Judaism, both in Palestine

and Alexandria which could have influenced the Johannine vocabulary and thought. In this section, I briefly examine Greek philosophical influences on the thought and vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel, with reference to Platonism.

3.9. John and Platonic Thought:

In John there is a contrast between what is "from above" and "what is from below" (3:21), between the Spirit and the flesh (3:6), between eternal life and natural existence (9:25-26), between real bread and natural bread from heaven (4:32), between the water of eternal life and natural water (4:14). These contrasts may be compared to a popular form of Platonism where there is a sharp distinction between a real world, (invisible and eternal), contrasted with the world of appearances here below. Platonism had already infiltrated Judaism in the first century C.E. (Brown 1966:LVII).

The contrast between Spirit and flesh is not unknown in view of the Old Testament (Isaiah 31:3) whereas Qumran offers a contrast between what is on the level of the flesh, and what is from above (1QH 10:23,32) (Charlesworth 1972:90). The binary oppositions displayed in the Gospel of John show a closer affinity to the Old Testament, without denying the Platonic thought that had already become part of the Jewish vocabulary and thought pattern. The second philosophical school (Stoicism) will not be discussed in this section, but Chapter four.

3.10. John and Qumran:

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, little was known of sectarian Judaism in Palestine. The Rabbinic documents preserved the spirit and thought of the Pharisees, but little

was known of the Sadducees and Essenes. The Essenes were mentioned briefly in the works of the Jewish historian Josephus, Philo (Alexandrian Jew) and Pliny who recorded the destruction of the Essene community in A.D.68. There has been considerable discussion on whether there is a relation between Qumran dualism and Johannine dualism. In the work of Charlesworth (1972), there is an account of the Manual of Discipline (1QS 3:13; 4:26) and its relation to the Johannine Corpus. The document (1QS 3:13; 4:26) instructs the Qumran community of man's nature. In 3:18; 4:1 the author recorded that there are "Two Ways" and that man walks in one or the other. First it was the "Spirit of Truth" which spoke of truth and light, and secondly the "Spirit of Perversity" which spoke of darkness. The second part in the discourse of this document (4:2-8) referred to ethical and religious attributes and the distinction between the "Sons of Light" and the "Sons of Darkness" (1972:78). What is clear concerning the nature of the document (1QS 3:13) is the pre-dominance of light and darkness, and the contrast that existed between the "Spirit of Truth" and the "Spirit of Perversity." Light is used interchangeably for righteousness whereas darkness related to perversity.

To understand the dualism in 1QS there is a need to comprehend the eschatological nature of the sect. The Qumran sect was conscious that it was living in the last days and 1QS displays the eschatological concern of the sect. In 1QS 4:18b-26 one reads that God loves the "Spirit of Light" and hates the "Spirit of Darkness". The sect reveals two distinct levels of eschatology. The eschatology in the closing lines of the first two sections understands God's rule breaking into the present in a similar way to the realized eschatology of John, whereas the last lines of section three reveals a more distant time when the "Spirit of Darkness" will finally be destroyed (Charlesworth:1972.82). 1QS reveals a cosmic dualism of the "Spirit of Light" and the " Spirit

of Darkness" who are engaged in a titanic war. The difference between John and IQS can be seen as follows, the Qumran dualism can be seen in the warring of cosmic spirits whereas the Johannine dualism assumed the entry of Jesus into the world below the realm of darkness. In IQS the emphasis of eschatology is on the future whereas the emphasis in John is on the here and the now. The Qumran dualism can be seen as cosmic and ethical where in John it is soteriological (Charlesworth 1972:99)

For Leaney it is only in IQS 3:13-4:26 in the Qumran writings that the " Spirit of Truth " and the " Spirit of Darkness" oppose one another. Leaney argued that either the Scrolls were one of the sources used by the Gospel or that they both used an earlier common source (1969:53). This observation is supported by Charlesworth. The similarities between IQS and John cannot prove that John was directly written down from IQS, but was strongly influenced by the expressions and language of the Essenes. This does not exhaust the relation between John and IQS. For John, Jesus is the Messiah and this explains why there is no " Spirit of Darkness " in John and why he uses the phrase "eternal life" because of the cosmic dimension of the resurrection, as inaugurating eternal life. In view of this, it can be concluded that John adopted some of his dualistic terminology and mythology from the wider Essene background evidenced by IQS 3:13-4:26.

This leads us to a second observation that the *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine tradition can be located in Palestine, since there is no evidence that IQS was read outside of Palestine (Charlesworth 1972:104). In view of some scholars (Yadin, Allergro, Ringgren) IQS 3:13-4:26 revealed a cosmic dualism but the dualism appears to be moral and ethical dualism, since

God created both ways. 1QS 3:25 states that God created both spirits, the "Spirit of Truth" and the "Spirit of Darkness" (Charlesworth 1972:81-85).

What is clearly evident in the Gospel of John, is the distinction between "two worlds" unlike the Synoptic Gospels. The primary world is the "world above" from where the Logos will descend and ascend, (1:51,3:13,6:41) and that the Λόγος created all things (1:3; 1:10). There is a contrast between the "world above" and the "world below" with its limitations (6:51:4:13). In John 1:11 the "world below" hates the "world above" as it rejects the revelation of *Logos* (8:23). In these two different worlds there are also two different forces in operation, "from above" is Christ who is the Eternal Λόγος and divine (1:1,14) and who is opposed by this world (1:11). The force from above is one, whereas the force from below are many (8:23;13:27;14:30) (Charlesworth.1972:90).

The differences between the Johannine and Qumran understanding could be seen as follows. In Qumran the conflict is between two spirits, both of whom were created by God, where in John there is a conflict between the world and the *Logos* that became incarnated. 1QS 3:13 refers to two spirits, "Spirit of Light" and "Spirit of Darkness," or "Sons of Light" and "Sons of Darkness."

In John 1:1, the *Logos* pre-existed and became incarnate (1:14), to be the light of all men, to all men who are in darkness. The *Logos* invites them to come to the Light. In Qumran the "Sons of Light" kept the Law of Moses (decalogue) as interpreted by the Teacher of Righteousness, whereas those who separated themselves from the Decalogue were seen as "Sons of Darkness."

For John the "Sons of Light" were those who believed in Jesus and hereby received eternal life. For John keeping the Law (*Decalogue*) meant abiding in love, the love of his disciples for each other becomes the new norm of the Johannine community (14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:12.17 etc). For Qumran darkness was disobedience to the Law, whereas in John it was the failure to believe in the Eternal *Logos* and failure to love (Ladd 1974:235).

The dualism of Qumran is really an ethical dualism (light versus darkness) as well as eschatological dualism as they looked forward in this cosmological warfare when the "Sons of Light" would triumph over the "Sons of Darkness." For Brown, the Johannine dualism remains soteriological and ethical. Λόγος is opposed by world (*κόσμος*), belief opposed to disbelief, righteousness opposed to sin, love opposed to hate and light opposed to darkness (1966:LXII). The Evangelist did not borrow directly from the Essene cosmic and communal theology, although John may have borrowed some of his dualistic terminology from the general thought world from which 1Qs emerges. (Charlesworth 1972:103).

There are close contacts between John and Qumran on important points, it can scarcely be proved that the Evangelist took over Qumran concepts directly. But that there were some associations must be seriously considered, however they were set up: by means of the disciples who came to Jesus from the school of John the Baptist (Jn. 1:35-51), or by Qumran Essenes who later entered Christian, Johannine communities which influenced his theological thinking.

3.11. Summary:

The context of the Gospel of John shows significant differences from that of the Synoptic Gospels. In John the Jews are in continual opposition to Jesus. They no longer appear in terms

of the sects which characterize Palestinian relations eg, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians but are always described simply as 'the Jews,' in contrast to whom Jesus and the disciples appear as non-Jews (8v17; 10v34). In the Gospel of John, the Jews represent the unbelieving world. The individual items handed down in the Synoptic tradition appear also in a minor role in John's Gospel eg, the separate logia, miracle stories, apophthegms, parables. There are also definite themes as they yield definite declarations about the sovereignty of God, the Son of man, the end times, the validity of the Law, the right of forgiveness of sins, ethical behaviour, missionary service, order in the community, the right sort of prayer, the use of sacraments and many other matters of concern. In contrast to this, the Gospel of John contains a single theme, the Person of Jesus. The entire Gospel is concerned with the fact of his presence, the nature of his claim, whence he comes and whither he goes, and how men relate themselves to Him (Bultmann 1971:4-5).

Our review of the various possible influences of the surrounding world of John has resulted in no definite picture. Various relationships came to light, some of them standing out more strongly than others. I noted the a primitive Christian tradition for Old Testament quotations. There were contacts with contemporary Judaism, especially 'heterodox' Judaism, and parallels with Qumran texts showing kingship with the mentality of Qumran, though direct dependence on it. There was also certain readiness to accept the questions put by Gnosticism and adopt its terminology. Here again closer contacts with the early stage of Gnosis influenced by Judaism. All this suggest that we should not look to far away from Palestine.

Both the Qumran literature and John were dependent on the Old Testament rather than on the Hellenistic traditions. The Qumran literature shows closer parallels than any other non-Christian literature either in Judaism or in Hellenism when it comes to the Johannine thought and vocabulary, and a far better parallel than post-Johannine Mandeian or Hermetic writing.

In what follows in the following chapter is an historical and etymological study of the concept *Logos* in the Johannine narrative and its relationship to the Prologue (Jn. 1:1:18). A repatterning of an entire paradigm of *Logos* (words in space) and *logoi* (words in time) towards a new synthesis and its relevance for Orality-Literacy studies. A genuine understanding of John's *Logos* hinges on in the discovery of its philosophical and historical background which range from the ancient Hebrew notion of the creative function of *dabar* (=Word) to Jewish Wisdom, Hellenistic philosophical traditions of Philo, Stoicism and Neoplatonism.

CHAPTER FOUR

What was from the beginning. What we have heard.
What we have seen with our own eyes and gazed
upon. What our hands have touched of the **Living**
Word. This we announced to you (John 1:1) (Sienaert 1990:143).

4. The Logos Tradition:

4.1. Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the *Logos* in two areas of biblical exegesis: the Historical Critical Method and Form Criticism. Historically and etymologically the concept *Logos* will be examined in the following traditions:

- The Greek Tradition of the *Logos*
- The Hellenistic Judaic Tradition of the *Logos*
- The Palestinian Judaism Tradition of the *Logos*

The concept *Logos* in the Johannine tradition will be examined to establish its form and its relation to a local community of faith. The first part of this chapter will focus on the *Logos* tradition perceived as transmissional process: The Historical Critical paradigm that has informed the reconstruction of the message of Jesus and the ensuing *Logos* tradition. The Historical Critical method has been applied exclusively to written text resulting in a paradigm that seeks to revise the logical historical data underlying the *Logos* tradition. This can only be achieved through a method of Form Criticism.

The second part of this chapter will establish the form through literary critical analyses of the Prologue of John 1:18. Here I will employ a method of Form Criticism, followed by biblical exegesis of the Prologue. Form Criticism focuses on the original 'forms' in which the various units of Jesus tradition were cast in the Johannine narrative, such as sermons, parables and hymns with the hope of discovering the oral Christian community underneath the written text.

4.2. The Greek Tradition of the Logos:

The philosophical use of the concept of λόγος (Word) reflects the determinate structure of thought and intelligible unity of being. There are two distinct Greek usages of the concept *Logos*. In the first instance, the concept λόγος προφορικός is used for 'word, utterance, revelation.' not in the sense of something 'proclaimed and heard', but rather something 'displayed'. Secondly λόγος ἐνδιάθετος refers to 'thought' or 'rational power' (Kittel 1967: 89).

The word λόγος carries an extensive range of meanings. Λόγος can be related to the mind as 'thought' and 'word'. Λόγος as 'Word' is never the assemblance of sounds (φωνή), but the word as determined by a meaning and conveying meaning (φωνή σημαντική). Λόγος, as 'thought', is neither the faculty nor the process of thinking as such, but an articulated unit of thought capable of intelligible utterance, whether a single word (ῥῆμα= Spirit), a phrase or a sentence. Whether the concept λόγος is written or spoken remains secondary to the matter. Behind it lies the idea of that which is rationally ordered, or what we called 'law' in nature (Dodd 1953:263).

In the LXX (Septuagint) λόγος almost always renders דבר (or its Aramaic equivalent), a term whose range of meaning overlaps that of λόγος but is not co-extensive with it. It is derived from the root דבר which means speak, and דבר is essentially the 'spoken word as means of communication'. In the Old Testament דבר is frequently used to refer to God's communication with humankind: "His self revelation, especially through the prophets, to whom the Word came (Dodd 1953:263).

The philosophical use of the concept λόγος goes back to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus in the 5th Century B.C., who said :' Everything is in flux(...) We never bathe in the same water twice' (Jousse 1997:115). Heraclitus referred to the λόγος as a 'word', 'speech', or 'content of speech'. It is the λόγος that evoked the words or the work of men. The λόγος, according to Heraclitus, can be understood as oracle or spoken word, for humankind is bound by the λόγος. It is the transcendent and lasting order in which the eternal flux occurs, binding the individual to the whole, amidst all the change in the universe (Kittel 1967:91). Heraclitus saw that the λόγος can be seen as a potent metaphysical force in order to bring order to the universe and humanity. This eternal principle is 'evidenced', both in nature and humankind (Ladd 1974:239, Howard 1965:34-35).

Heraclitus has suggested that there is both an inner and outer truth of *Logos*. The inner truth gives strength and sustenance to the powers of human thought. The outer truth is the life in all things and the living power of the universe. All human understandings are nourished by one Divine Word. Heraclitus describes the power in nature and in the mind as the 'ever-living force' through the disposing of the Word. Language can be seen as a sacred fire in the temple of humanity (Perkins 1994:28).

Heraclitus shows that the unifying principle of the 'One and All' concept of λόγος remains an instrument of thought. The λόγος now becomes predominantly the rational power set in humankind, the power of speech and thought. In the political life of the Sophist, it plays a distinctive part as the means of persuasion and direction (Walker 1983:69, Kittel 1967:82).

4.2.1. The Sophist:

Although Sophists were the first to work out a theory of λόγος, only in the Stoics does it emerge as a universal cosmic and religious principle. For the Sophist, speech was a powerful ruler. With these words, the Sophist rhetor and rhetorician, Gorgias, invoked what for him was the critical issue of language. The idea of language that he had in mind was shaped by the media conditions of culture. The λόγος was perceived here neither as sign nor signification, nor as a carrier of meaning or revealer of truth, but rather as a potent ruler intent on governing its subjects (Kelber 1995:412).

Gorgias' idea of the λόγος flowed directly from the experience of oral speech. Language was perceived to be a force orally processed and operative in relation to the hearers. What interested Gorgias about speech was not the process of verbal composition, but the aesthetics of reception, as seen in the following quotation,

Of *logoi* (words) some give pain, some pleasure, some cause fear,
some create boldness in hearers, and some drug bewitch
the soul by a kind of evil persuasion (Kelber.1995.411)

While the arousal of pain and pleasure, of fear and pity, is the primary incentive of the *logoi* (words), Gorgias did not entirely dismiss the rational aspects of speech. Occasionally, he would refer to speech as *technê*, an acquirable art. His main interest was in the elaboration of a psychology of the emotive powers of oral communication's effaciousness and the words engaged with the form of the soul, impacting it, molding it, and converting it. It was this affectionate persuasion of the soul that lies at the heart of Gorgias' theory of language (Kelber 1995:411).

Gorgias himself introduced the metaphor *pharmakon* which was later adopted by Plato. Central to the notion of *pharmakon* was the power of words that affects the soul as the drug does the body. In speech, the processes of healing and poisoning were mysteriously mingled, swaying the psychic condition for better and for worse. Under the powerful spell of speech, the soul was likely to be cured or deceived. Gorgias was aware that words can also be used for flattery, manipulation, and the fulfilment of personal longings for power (Kelber 1995:412). Speech, divine in origin can be seen as a form of divine madness.

The concept of *λόγος* was not restricted to the thinking of Heraclitus and the Sophists but it found a place in two of the most prominent philosophical schools, e.g. Platonism and Stoicism.

4.2.2. Platonism:

In Socrates and Plato, a deeper conception arose in which the thought, the power of the *λόγος*, is linked to *κοινός λόγος*, as a means to establish fellowship. This was widespread in the Greek world. In his doctrine of Forms, Plato draws a dualistic contrast between the invisible, "real world beyond" (above) and its inferior copy in this world (below). With this basic conception arises a further contrast between man's superior mind and his inferior flesh (Smalley 1978:43, Brown 1966:LVII).

For Plato *logos* means 'connected meaningful utterances', the stream of speech which flows out and serves intelligence, the exteriorization or representation (*mimema*) of a prelinguistic mental experience. *Logos* is the thought, that the soul has with itself prior to the exteriorization

in speech with the potential for significance; the opposite of which it termed *psophos*, which is insignificant noise (Irvine 1994:27).

In the famous reading of Phaedrus (274c-277a), Socrates is represented as being suspicious of the art of writing. Though it is supposed to be a help to the memory, it actually leads to more forgetfulness, since it encourages one to rely on written characters rather than on memory (Greene 1951:152).

Socrates' role in the formation of the literate culture of Athens was seminal. He encouraged his students to think constructively in the patterns and forms of the emerging culture of literacy. In order to achieve this, he did not need to write but rather used oral speech in a new way. Socrates, like Jesus was an oral teacher who did not write but trained his followers: He did this by forming their minds to think about ideas objectively. Socrates was later martyred for his role in initiating cultural and religious change (Boomershire 1995:25).

Eric Havelock argued that Plato banished the poets from the Republic because he wanted to break the ways of knowing that were a characteristic of oral culture. Plato identifies Socrates as a person who established a new way of knowing. In Plato's writings, Socrates encourages his dialogue partners into reflection on ideas, instead of continuing to identify with the heroes of great poetic epics. Socrates' questions were a steady invitation to step back from the immediacy of experience and to reflect critically on the presuppositions and ideas that were implicit in a conversation. This is what Havelock calls 'the separation of the knower from the known', in which the known can be examined as an object which is the essential turn of the mind that makes

it possible to participate in the world of literacy (1963 :197-233). Plato's theory of Forms shifts the definition of reality of the world of sense experience to a world of *a priori*, ideas present in the mind. This Platonic move established the foundations for the communication culture of literacy over and against the culture of orality.

For Plato, knowledge acquired by imitation, repetition and empathy was of little value. What really interested Plato was to determine what each object really was. This can be seen as a conversion away from plural or multiple expressions towards abstracted objective and timeless truth. The philosophical purpose of Platonism was "to accelerate the intellectual awakening which converts the psyche from the many to the one, and from becoming to beingness" (Havelock 1963:258-259). This new type of intellectual activity was related to the methods of mental storage and has undergone changes since the period of the Homeric bards.

According to Plato the written text did more than distance the individual from the tribal encyclopedia. For Plato the resentment against the poets in the Republic could thus well be understood as a revolt of the literate mentality against the oral traditional hegemony of the Homeric poetic structure. This resulted in the bringing about of the alphabetization of the Greek language and chirographic cultural tradition (Irvine 1994:23-27).

While Plato availed himself of a new chirography, he lamented its corrosive affects on memory, discourse and culture, basing his objections on a thoroughly oral perception of language. Writing, far from assisting memory, implanted forgetfulness in the soul (Phaedrus:275a). Written words were anti-social because they segregated themselves from living

discourse. Chirographic products were rather like children who had lost their parents and were unable to defend themselves. Plato knew that it was inevitable for writing to fall into the hands of the wrong people (Phaedrus:275a). To Plato writing finally, was an unacceptable exteriorization of thought that only gave the appearance of wisdom (Phaedrus: 275e). What is clearly observed in the argument between Plato and Socrates is that Plato's mind is rooted in an oral culture in that he displays a distrustfulness of writing, and is committed to the living, dialogical, and interiorizing speech.

4.2.3. Stoicism:

Stoicism owes its origin to Zeno (335-203 B.C.), who came to Athens from Cyprus in 313 B.C., and attended Plato's Academy of philosophy. The Stoics' major concern was to search for stability in the universe rather than salvation (Smalley 1978:43). The Stoic's point of departure on *logos* is Heraclitus' doctrine of an all pervasive formula of organization which the Stoics considered divine. Logos is the active force in the world and the pervasive presence in the universe (Peters 1967:112).

Stoicism defined *λόγος* as the ordered and teleologically oriented nature of the world, a term equated with the concept of God. The Stoics made a clear distinction between the *λόγος ἐνδιάθετος* (word in the mind), *λόγος προφορικός* (uttered word), the *λόγος* in the mind and the uttered *λόγος* (thought and word) (Kittel 1967:92). Logos is the active force in the universe, creative in the fashion of a sperm.

Stoics identified λόγος with the cosmic law of reason: it is this principle which creates the world. Λόγος προφορικός (uttered word) is the power that extends throughout matter, the organic power which fashioned unformed and unorganic matter (Brown 1978:1084). All powers proceed from the λόγος, and they all return to it. The λόγος of man (generically) is only part of a general λόγος κατὰ τοῦ κοινού θεοῖς καὶ ἀνθρώποις λόγον, a sense of awareness in humankind (Kittel 1967:93, Eliade 1987:11).

The duality of λόγος as reason and speech developed in Stoic doctrine immanently. For the Stoics the whole concept of λόγος refers to the rational power of order. A parallel to Stoicism has been suggested by John's technical terminology in the Prologue, since the Λόγος as the creative principle was a popular term in Stoic thought. Although early commentators say that John leaned on Stoic thought in his usage of Λόγος in the Prologue (1:1-18), this argument is disputed by Schnackenberg (1968: 482) and Brown (1966:LVII). According to the Stoics the λόγος sustains the κόσμος (world) and serves as a well-ordered harmonious unified principle.

This appears to be different in John 1:10, as the world rejects and opposes the Λόγος. The Λόγος in the Prologue of John does not just sustain the universe but appears to be in existence from the beginning, as He disclosed life and truth to the world. The λόγος hymn in John had its own history within the Johannine community and it remains risky to argue from terminological parallels in the Prologue (1:1-18).

4.3. The Hellenistic Judaism Tradition of the Logos:

The concept of Logos in Hellenistic Judaism was brought to its highest peak by Philo, an

Alexandrian Jew (20 B.C.- A.D. 42) and a contemporary of Jesus. Philo represented in his work an attempt to interpret Judaism allegorically (deeper mystical meaning), in the light of a synthesis of Platonic and Stoic thought, as he wedded the Old Testament idea of *hokmah* (wisdom) with that of Stoic concept of *logos* (Lindars 1972:39; Brown 1966:LVII).

The λόγος plays a considerable role in the work of Philo. This is shown by the fact that he uses the concept over 1300 times, as he identifies the wisdom (*hokmah*), of the Old Testament text with that of the concept Λόγος (Kittel 1967:89). The concept 'wisdom' of the Old Testament relates to Yahweh's creative activity in the world, which is closely related to the "Word of God" in the Old Testament, whereas the Philonic λόγος is a mediator between God and the material world (Eliade 1987:11).

According Philo's doctrine of creation, the wisdom (*sophia*) of God has begotten the world of eternal forms (κόσμος νοητός) as His first born. The λόγος is the mediating figure which comes forth from God, to establish a link between the remotely transcendent God and the world of humankind. The world of eternal Forms (κόσμος νοητός), forms the basis of God's creative powers (Kittel 1967:89). Dodd clearly sets out parallels between Philo's Logos doctrine and that of the Prologue in John in the wisdom literature:

Fourth Gospel

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος.

ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν

Wisdom Literature

κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν
ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ (Prov.8:12)

ἤμην παρ' αὐτῷ (Prov.8:30)
(Dodd.1953.274)

While this is not conclusive, it is sufficient to show that in composing the Prologue, the

author's mind was moving along lines similar to those of Jewish writers of the Wisdom School. The concept of the Λόγος in the Prologue shows clear parallels with the "Word of God" in the Old Testament.

Scholars like Brown and Schnackenberg see no clear evidence that Philo was known in First Century Palestine and therefore contended that if John was dependent on Philo, it would show that his work originates outside Palestine (1966:LVIII). However, John is a reflection of the penetration of the Jewish thought world by Graeco-Roman culture which was true even for Palestine. Philo's concept of λόγος is not simply the uttered Word, or a command of God. Rather it is the meaning of the universe conceived as transcendent as well as immanent, as the thought of God formed within the eternal mind and projected into objectivity (Ladd 1974:278).

The λόγος of Philo refers to God's power and action as well as His thought. This idea is even stronger in the Gospel of John, as the Λόγος is not simply a philosophical, cosmological idea, but the Λόγος that takes on σάρξ (flesh), or authentic being, to dwell among humankind, revealing the glory of God. The Johannine Λόγος is not a mere idea, but a personal entity who is equal to *Theos* (God). Philo's λόγος remain a metaphysical reality whereas John discloses the personhood of Jesus the Son of God. The Λόγος shows closed affinity to the Old Testament Torah. Neither the personhood nor the pre-existence of the λόγος was clear in Philo. The Philonic λόγος is a metaphysical idea, a mediator between the purely spiritual God and the material world, which seems to be closely related to Stoicism and Platonism. The Johannine Λόγος enters the realm of the material world, becomes (flesh) σάρξ and connects with truth

(ἀλήθεια), and life (ζωή) and can be traced back to the Semitic Palestinian milieu.

4.3.1. The Logos of Hermes:

In more recent years, much attention has been given to the Hermetica Writings that originated in the second and third century in Egypt (Smalley 1978:48; Howard 1965:40). For Hermetica there is no incarnation of the λόγος, but the equation of a revealing and cosmogonic principle with one of the deities of popular religion. This identification is found in the philosophical system of the Stoics, e.g. Zeus, the concept λόγος is seen as a god and being identified with God (YHWH). There is no question of the divine word of power and creation who became incarnated in human flesh. Hermes, as mediator and revealer, as a ἀγγελος (envoy), declares and makes known the will of the gods. His is a soteriological (salvation) role. As far as the λόγος is present for σωζειν, Hermes is the great power of conception and creation (Kittel 1967:88). In the Hermetica the λόγος comes forth from *Nous* (knowledge), who is the Son of God, to bring order and form into the world (Schnackenberg 1968:137; Ladd 1974:240). Thus the λόγος is also a Son of Hermes, because Hermes is the supreme deity. The λόγος is an εικὼν of God and man is an image of the λόγος.

The question that needs to be asked is, 'What affinity is there between Hermes and the Johannine writings?' For some scholars there are interesting parallels of thought and vocabulary in the Hellenistic concept, but John seems to relate more closely to Hebrew concepts of creation by the power of Gods spoken word, e.g 'Let there be light' (.....)(Genesis 1:3).

Dodd argues that Poimandres also used the Hebrew creation myth to sustain his teaching (1953:33). The *λόγος* in the Hermetica remains an expression of the mind of God, and the usage of the concept *λόγος* in the Greek context remains different from that of John. The following observation is clear: the *λόγος* of Hermes leans more to Gnosticism and the whole idea of secret *gnosis* (knowledge) as a means to obtain salvation. The Hermetica were more dependent on Stoic and Platonic thought than the Gospel of John, and borrowed from the creation myth of Hermes. The *Λόγος* in John becomes incarnated (1:14), unlike Hermes, and enters the realm of evil, to bring light and truth to the Johannine community.

4.4. The Palestinian Judaism Tradition of the Logos:

We have now the meaning of *λόγος* in the two traditions of Greek and of Hellenistic Judaism. The third tradition in which the *Logos* needs to be examined is the Old Testament tradition of the Word. "All over the ancient Orient, in Assyria and Babylon as well as in Egypt, the word, particularly the Eternal *Logos*, was not only an expression of thought, it was also a mighty and dynamic force. The divine *Logos* possesses peerlessly a dynamic force" (Moreau 1970:55).

In the Septuagint *Logos* renders דבר (*dabhar*) a term whose range of meaning develops that of the *λόγος* but is not co-extensive with it. The concept of the *Logos* is derived from the root דבר (*dabhar*) which means "to speak" and is essentially meaning 'the spoken Word as means of communication'. The use of דבר (*dabhar*) to seek the "background of a matter." No thing is דבר in itself, but all things have a background or 'meaning.' The analysis of the term shows two main elements: the dianoetic and the dynamic (Kittel 1967:92).

Dianoetically דָּבָר (*dabhar*) contains a νοῦς, or a thought. It displays the meaning of things, so that the דָּבָר (*dabhar*) always belongs to the field of knowledge and what is known becomes subject to thought. To understand something is like taking hold of the thing itself. Along with the dianoetic element of דָּבָר (*dabhar*) is the dynamic. Every דָּבָר (*dabhar*) is filled with power that is comprehended by the one who receives the Word and takes it to himself (Kittel 1967:92).

These two elements of דָּבָר (*dabhar*), the dianoetic and the dynamic, may be seen most forcefully in the "Word of God." The prophets in the Old Testament had a profound grasp of both concepts. In the LXX the meaning of λόγος is strongly influenced by the basic Hebrew. The nature of the Greek word λόγος has mainly a dianoetic value, but receives the dynamic element from the Hebrew דָּבָר (*dabhar*) (Kittel 1967:93). It is clear that the LXX concept cannot be fully explained in terms of the Greek λόγος but can be fully understood against the background of the Hebrew דָּבָר (*dabhar*).

In the Hebrew דָּבָר (*dabhar*) means both 'word' and 'event'. It is not something you see in space, like the written word is 'seen' on the page. According to oral cultural understanding, the incarnation of the 'Word in flesh' is not so much the advent of an idea but a 'word event', the Christ event. In primary oral cultures the 'word' is always an 'event'. *Dabhar* דָּבָר can only be sounded by the application of inner power: it really is breath or *Ruach*. That is why the Word was always thought of as having powerful magical properties. Words cannot exist in time as sound without inner power being breathed into them (Green 1999:333).

The notion דָּבָר (*dabhar*) expressed a dynamic character and possessed tremendous power.

There is a distinction between 'word' and 'voice' (*dabhar* and *qôl*) of YHWH. For 'word' signifies the power through sense laden utterances of God, whereas 'voice' in both these cases represents God's working through the forces of nature. For the Hebrews 'voice' signifies the sound of speech, but 'word' means the utterance or what is said itself (Moreau 1970:61).

The idea דָּבַר (*dabhar*) is frequently used for God's communication with humankind in His self-revelation through the prophets. The whole idea of revelation in the Old Testament is determined by the analogy of the Word spoken and heard, which is distinctively different from the idea of revelation as vision. This preserves the ontological distance between God and humankind. The idea is that God at the same time addresses 'a word' to what we call inanimate things, and by means of such a 'word' He called the universe into order out of chaos. The 'word' that came to humankind by the prophets was to bring justice into human affairs under the rule of the Torah (Dodd 1953:264).

For the Hebrews there was no 'word' which was not a reality. There was no reality which was not a communicable word. Word and action were bound together. The Hebrews, clearly observed that דָּבַר (*dabhar*) once spoken had a kind of substantive existence of its own. A blessing once pronounced continued to bless, and a curse once uttered works itself out.

The Old Testament understanding of the Hebrew word for 'wisdom' (*hokmah*) shows parallels in detail with the description in the Prologue in John. It is never said in the Gospel of John, apart from the Prologue, that Christ is the divine λόγος. He utters the λόγος the Father has given Him, and so He gives it to humankind as power unto life. The λόγος is equated with ἀλήθεια (truth).

Jesus not only gives the λόγοι (words), which is the truth, but He is the truth. All that Jesus is, is embodied in His words (Dodd 1953:268). Wisdom is identified with the Word of God, which is implicit in Jewish Wisdom Literature (e.g. Sirach 24.3), where wisdom can be seen as divine (e.g. 7:25-26), active in creation (Wisdom 9.9), and wisdom came into the world only to experience rejection (Wisdom 9:10; Sirach 15.7). These are parallels to what John claims of the Λόγος in the Prologue of the Gospel of John (Brown 1966:520-523).

The Hebrew word 'wisdom' (*hokmah*) in the Wisdom writings represents the thought of God immanent in the world. A list of parallels is sufficient to show that, in composing the Prologue, John's mind was moving along thought patterns similar to that of the Jewish writers of the wisdom schools (Dodd 1953:275). The Prologue shows many parallels with the Word of God in the Old Testament, but it is also closely related to the concept of Jewish personified Wisdom. That is to say that the thought of God is projected in creation and is perceived as an immanent power within the world and humankind. For Brown, the concept of Jewish personified Wisdom and the Old Testament "Word of God" had evolved into a single Rabbinic motif and influenced the Fourth Evangelist (Brown 1966:520-524).

In the Greek, the concept Λόγος primarily had to do with understanding (reason) and its intellectual possession. In the Old Testament, the 'Word of God' is never a human possession, but an historical act by which God addresses humankind. The prophetic 'Word' and divine Wisdom (*Hokmah*) was increasingly evident in post exilic Judaism. It is that combination which lies behind the Johannine Logos doctrine (Brown 1966:523).

Schnackenberg finds reason to believe that Jewish Wisdom ideas and thought provided meaningful links with the historical tradition of the *Logos* doctrine, although he still believes that the *Logos* concept must be seen as a Greek idea, that had been taken over by the Evangelist to include notions of the "Word of God." (1968:493).

Whereas Bultmann (1971) argues for a Gnostic background of the Λόγος hymn in the Prologue (1:1-18), shows a lack of historical objectivity and inconsistency with the Johannine tradition. However, the Johannine understanding of λόγος remains diametrically opposed to the *gnostic* view where the world and human flesh were seen as evil. Johannine Λόγος entered the world of evil in the form of human flesh (σάρξ) (1:14) as the light and truth (αλήθεια).

For Brown the Prologue's description of the Λόγος is closer to Jewish thought than Hellenistic. The Λόγος in the Prologue of John can be seen as the creative Word of God, the Word that came down from the prophets, and has now become personal or flesh (*sarx*) in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the divine Wisdom, pre-existent, who came among men to teach them and to give them life. (1966:524). Not the Torah but Christ Jesus is the eternal source of life. In the Hebrew language each word has an ontological and spiritual significance. Logocentrically the Johannine *Logos* is both Creator and life.

On the basis of this evidence I argue that John was most influenced by the Jewish modes of thought, although there are also non-Jewish influences already at work in Palestine in the First Century C.E. Thus I have located the *Logos* tradition in a Jewish *milieu*. The evidence for a non-Jewish setting has not been convincing while the Λόγος in the Gospel of John found

closer affinity to the Old Testament and Jewish Palestinian *milieu* (setting), in the concept of Jewish wisdom (*hokmah*) and the Hebrew concept חָכְמָה . Nevertheless I have also shown that the Jewish thought world, even in Palestine had been thoroughly penetrated by Greek culture and thought by the First century C.E. This leads me to examine the form and content of the Prologue through literary analysis.

4.5. The Form and Content of the Logos Tradition:

The Prologue in the Gospel of John has impressed many scholars, as well as literary critics with its style, composition and literary structure. Words are unable to match the Johannine vision of the entrance of the Logos in human flesh (1:14), into the world. Bultmann in his preliminary glance at the Prologue confesses that it is a remarkable introduction; indeed it is no introduction in the usual sense of the word at all. Bultmann's concern was whether the Prologue (Jn. 1:1-18) provides the reader with the key to understanding the Gospel. By itself it remains a mystery and it can only be fully comprehended in the context of the whole Gospel (1971:13).

What is the aim of the Prologue: are these aims simply identical or is the Prologue really an introduction, an introduction to the Gospel? Does the Gospel take on where the Prologue leaves off or is the Prologue the proleptic quintessence of the Gospel (Kaesemann 1969:138)

Harnack sees the Prologue as the key to the Gospel as it was composed by the John the Baptist the 'favoured apprehender' of Jesus, in order to prepare the Hellenistic readers.

The Logos doctrine is placed first, because, addressing a public nurtured in the higher religion of Hellenism, the writer wishes to offer the Logos idea as the appropriate approach, for them, to the central purport of the Gospel, through which he may lead them to the historical actuality of its story, rooted as it is in Jewish tradition (Kaesemann 1969:139)

Bultmann further argued that the basis of the Prologue can be seen as a Hymn of the Baptist community which was originally composed in Aramaic (*Memra*) against the idea of the Baptist as Messiah. This leads me to give a critical analysis of the *Logos*-Hymn in the broader context of the Prologue (Jn. 1:1-18).

4.6. A Literary-critical analysis of the Logos-Hymn from a literary perspective:

KATA ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ

- ¹ Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
² οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.
³ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν, ὃ γέγονεν
⁴ ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.
⁵ καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.
⁶ Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης.
⁷ οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ.
⁸ οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.
⁹ Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.
¹⁰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω.
¹¹ εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.
¹² Ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,
¹³ οἳ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.
¹⁴ Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.
¹⁵ Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων· οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον· ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτος μου ἦν.
¹⁶ ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος·
¹⁷ ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωυσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο.
¹⁸ Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.¹

John: The Word Became Flesh

- ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God
² He was with God in the beginning
³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made
⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men
⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.
⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.
⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.
⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.
⁹ The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.
¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him
¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him
¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God
¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.
¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
¹⁵ John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'"
¹⁶ From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.
¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

The problem raised by the Prologue's textual structure demands from a literary perspective, critical analysis. There are two clearly distinguishable forms of style within John 1:1, those of

poetry and prose. The poetic style begins with v.1, with interpolated sentences formulated in pure prose (vv.6-8, 15).

Considerable differences in the content become clear: Whereas the poetry deals with the divine being, the Λόγος, the prose text speaks of a historical human being, John the Baptist. The text contains two problems, one of form and the other of content. How far does the hymn extend and where is the transition from the pre-existence to the historical appearance of the *Logos*? It is clear that something entirely new begins with v.19 and the hymn has to end with v.18. Yet already vv.17,18 are interpreted in prose, which means that these verses should be excluded from the hymn (Conzelmann, Lindemann 1988:99).

Bultmann (1971) has argued that the hymn extended as far as v.16, whereas vv.6-8 were added on by the Evangelist. These insertions were the Evangelist's own comments. He further argues that the motive of the Evangelist in inserting vv.6-8, 15 can be seen as polemical, to dispute that the Baptist has the authority of the Revealer. The authority must therefore have been attributed by the Baptist sect to their master or oral teacher. They saw him as light and also as the pre-existent Logos (1971:16-18).

Kaesemann (1968) maintains that when we look back to the original problem of the parallelism between vv.5-13 and vv.14-18 there is no convincing evidence that vv. 5-13 refers to the historical disclosure of the Revealer. The pre-Christian character of the hymn is regarded as problematic. Verses 9-11 speak of the presence of the Λόγος in the world and the opposition he receives in the world. Verse 12 refers to the establishment of the sonship of human beings to

God, through the Son of God who can be seen as the eschatological end of all God's dealings with the world, the aim of the Creator and the Creation. Verse 12 can thus be seen as a suitable conclusion to the Christian Hymn. The whole salvation history is recited here. This idea seems to be familiar to us from the hymn in Col. 1.15, where two strophes stand, clearly articulated, over and against each other (1968:150-154).

Kaesemann maintains that v.13 can be seen as a note of John because of the prose style. There is also a need to ask whether v.9 ought to be ascribed to the John. Verse 10 links with v.5, whereas the insertion of v.9 is able to link up with the hymn after the words of the Evangelist (Kaesemann 1968:150-154).

Haenchen comments that Kaesemann locates the end of the hymn at v.12 and argues that v.15 is a clear interruption between v.14 and v.16 and that these verses cannot, for that reason, have come from the John himself but had to have existed in the framework of the hymn available to him. He further argues that the Christian hymn consists only of vv.1-2,5,9, 10-12. (Conzelmann 1988:99; Haenchen 1980:124).

The question of the parameters of the hymn have considerable theological significance, for it is a question whether v.14 on the incarnation belongs to the hymn or whether it was added on as an interpretation by the Evangelist. This further leads us to the question whether the hymn was Christian at all, or whether it was a pre-Christian hymn that the author included in the Gospel. Bultmann regards the hymn to be Jewish originally, including v.14. He ignores the idea that incarnation of a divine being was without parallels in Judaism (Bultmann 1971:13-83).

Kaesemann considers the hymn to be Christian while maintaining that v.14 is not the work of John. The real purpose of the *Logos* was to make known the presence of God (Haenchen 1980:124). Bultmann, contrary to Kaesemann's argument, believes that v.14 belongs to the hymn, and that the incarnation of the Λόγος does not begin until V.14. This raises further questions as to how v.5 and v.9 need to be understood. Bultmann makes a clear distinction between the hymn and the Evangelist: the former shows the transition in v.14, while the Evangelist already shows the historical appearance in v.5, as it refers to the eternal Λόγος (1971:17-18).

Kaesemann refuses to accept Bultmann's interpretation of v14. He asks how far it is true that a new tone is introduced in v.14a. The situation is different in vv.5-13 where there has already been mention of the historical eschatological disclosure of the Λόγος. v.14a reveals what has already been disclosed in the preceding lines of the hymn (Kaesemann 1969:155).

Bultmann (1971) concludes that the Evangelist made a cultic community hymn the basis of his Prologue and has developed it in his own words. It is clear that in vv.1-5; 9-12 the source spoke of the pre-existent Λόγος, before going on to tell of the incarnation in v.14, and that the text from v.5 onwards refers to the incarnate Λόγος. I agree with Bultmann that the Evangelist made a cultic community hymn the basis of his Prologue, but I tend to disagree that the cultic community hymn was part of the Baptist sect or Gnosticism: I believe that the hymn was that the Galilean peasant community.

In the ancient Jewish writings the border between prose and poetry was not nearly as fixed as it

is in modern writings. The *Logos*-Hymn was no doubt a liturgical piece of the Galilean peasant community which was socio-culturally active. The structure of the four two-line couplets, each advancing on the thought of the previous ones, lends itself perfectly to antiphonal recitation. One can easily imagine the precentor intoning the first line of each couplet and the oral peasant community responding in unison with the second, throughout the salvation historical stanzas. This hymn was used by the early Christian peasant community to re-enact the power of the words of Jesus that was then manifest in the Son (*vios*) who was the envoy or carrier of the *Logos* tradition. The antiphonal recitation was a practice of Aramaic-Judaic origin as the peasant Christians chanted these verses among themselves in honour of the coming of *Logos* in human flesh (*sarx*).

The early Christian community of Palestine was a community under the social and economic oppression of the Roman Empire. The Jerusalem aristocracy used the written Law to marginalise the Galilean peasants economically and religiously. The written Law created and shaped social boundaries of the Galilean community in order to exclude the Galilean peasants from the aristocracy in Jerusalem. This *Logos*-hymn thus reveals a public and a hidden transcript of the socio-economic conditions of the poor and the rich in the narrative text. John sets a new precedence in the Gospel in affirming the power of the spoken *Logos*.

Jesus' appearance in human flesh became a new authority for the poor and marginalised Galileans. Jesus as oral performer set a precedent in his teaching by affirming a new authority for the spoken Word for the poor and the oppressed. The spoken *Logos* under the authority of Jesus became a new mechanism of resistance for the Galilean community against the ideology of the written Law. The written Law was given to Moses for moral and social instructions for

all people but it became a tool that was used to shape social boundaries of oppression for the poor Galileans. The authority of the *Logos* was not rooted in the written Law, although Jesus claimed that he did not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it and to provide new meaning and interpretation for the *Logos*, the *Ruach*, the eternal *Pneuma* (Spirit).

4.7. Exegesis of John 1:1-18:

John opens the Gospel in a very unusual way, with a hymn. The context of the hymn is not clear but the *Logos* unfolds a new dispensation in the history of humankind. It is a hymn in praise of the coming of the Word. For Brown, the Prologue is a description of the history of salvation in hymnic form (1966:24). The fact that the Gospel begins with a hymn emphasizes that it is fundamentally located in a worshipping community and that the Word who now became flesh is incarnate in that community, who leads this community into all truth through his Spirit (16:13) (Suggit 1993:30).

**v.1." In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God".**

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν
καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

This shows a deliberate reference to Gen 1:1 and Prov.8:22. For Bultmann, the *Logos* does not belong to the world as if his manifested being was the answer to the Greek and Gnostic question concerning the origin of the world. The hymn that forms the basis of the Prologue praises the *Logos* as the Revealer become 'flesh' (Bultmann 1971:32). He was the *Logos*: According to Lindars, the *Logos* replaces the '*Hokmah*' (Wisdom tradition) used in the Old Testament (1972:82). For Bultmann the origin of *Logos* lies in non-Biblical sources (e.g. in a Gnostic source) (1971:17-18).

There are two non-Biblical sources that have received careful attention in relation to the *Logos* Tradition. For the Greeks '*logos*' refers to the expression of thought. In the work of Philo this difficulty is overcome as the *logos* of the Stoics is identified with Wisdom. The Word of the Lord of the Old Testament shows close affinity to the *Logos* tradition in John. In the Genesis account, God is speaking: Let there be light (Gen.1:3). The Word is full of power and creative potential: it is Word in its fullness.

For Brown the title *Logos* refers to revelation, not so much the divine idea but divine communication (1966:24). and the Logos was with God: (v.1a), the *Logos* is in God, a union of the Son with the Father, 'He who is in the bosom of the Father'(1:18) (Schnackenberg 1968: 235). and the Logos was with God: (v.1c), reaches a climax concerning the pre-existent Word. For Lindars the Logos was inseparable from God (1972:84). The *Logos* is God, as he is in union with God. Schnackenberg would argue that God is the beginning of Christology (1968:235).

The *Logos* proclaimed by the Hymn is the Word by which God created all things. This Word is more than the utterance of God at the dawn of history. It is the personal God that became flesh at a given time in history. The existence of Jesus Christ is traced back to before the world, to the divine eternity. The Word was not created but He already existed, absolutely, timeless and eternal. He was with God as one person is with another (Schnackenberg 1968:233). The *Logos* was prior to the realm of history. The creative power of the *Logos* cannot be fathomed in its purest sense as it breathes life and being into existence and gives meaning to discourse. The spoken Word of God remains uncontrolled and in a sense unknowable. The spoken Word filled with life, creates an intimate sense of presence.

v.2 " He was in the beginning with God " οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

V.2 repeats the first strophe of the hymn as it reinforces the timeless character of the *Logos* in relation to His union with the Father. For Bultmann one cannot understand this in the language of the myth but this needs to be understood in the succession of contradictory propositions. This contradiction seems to pervade the entire Gospel as the Father and the Son are one (10:30, 13:3, 16:27), and yet the Father is Greater than the Son (14:28). God is there in His revelation and whoever encounters His revelation encounters God. To speak of God is to speak of revelation. The *Logos* is not the act of revelation by God, but is pre existent and for this reason 'in the beginning' is repeated. (1971:35). For Schnackenberg this verse did not belong to the original hymn (1968:237). According to Brown it was a great danger for any Hellenistic community to read that the *Logos* was God. This would imply that there might be two Gods. However v.2 rather refers to the relationship with the Father (1966:25). The disclosure of the *Logos* reveals his oneness with God. Word in pure form reveals that there is no distance between *Logos* and God. It is the written word which produces distance, since it commits to a fixed series of signifiers.

The disclosure of the Word (*Logos*) has become the fitting analogy to communicate the reality of the Idea of God. The Word can be seen as the living God-given power: the profoundest comprehensive Energy of the human mind. The *Logos* remains eternally with God, and yet goes out to create, reveal and to redeem (Perkins 1994:25-29). The written encapsulation of the Word stands in danger of losing touch with its life and power which is the eternal *Logos*.

**v.3 All things were made through him,
and without him was made
nothing that was made.**

**πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο
καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο
οὐδὲ ἓν, ὃ γέγονεν.**

This reveals the Logos' participation in creation: "all things were made through Him". One is reminded of the Biblical account of creation, according to which God created the world by speaking His 'word'. "Let there be light spoken unto the darkness". The Word is creative and powerful in this unseparated state of unity with God. The thought of God issues in the Word in power which creates and cannot be controlled. All that is created is intimately related to the 'Logos' (Brown 1966:25).

We find the same idea in Col.1:16, "For in Him all things were created," and the same unity exists between the 'Logos' and the creation in John 15:5, where Jesus tell the Johannine community "Apart from me you are not able to do anything." According to Heb.1:2, God created the world through his Son. This is illustrated by the Qumran text, which contains a comparable saying, "And through his knowledge everything came to be" (1.QS, 11:11) (Schnackenberg 1968:238). The Prologue is far from Gnostic thought in that the world is a deliberate expression of God's spoken thought and Word. This stands polemically against Gnosticism which claims that the material world is evil. The hymn maintains the universal role of the *Logos* in creation. As the *Logos* and the Father are one, all things that were created are good. v.3 brings out the unique greatness of the incarnate *Logos* which calls the community of faith to respond in worship.

**v.4 In Him was life
and the life was the light of men**

**Ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν
καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.**

A new strophe of the hymn begins here. It describes the relationship of the Logos with the world of men. He was the giver of life to all humankind. The two concepts that stand out are

'Life' and 'Light,' which are linked to V.9 a-b as it expresses that the *Logos* was the true light which enlightens every human. Jesus says, "He who follows me (.....) shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). The light draws on the notion of eschatological salvation, which is another link with the Judaic world of the Old Testament (Schnackenberg 1968:241-244).

The activity of the *Logos* as 'light' begins with creation and extends by means of the Incarnation to the eschatological fulfilment. The very purpose of the *Logos* is to reveal the divine essence of life to humankind, as this light becomes the life for all humankind. This spiritual essence challenges the condition and state of humankind as the *Logos'* aim is to bring humankind into a relationship with the true light and life of the world. Light implies a correspondence with darkness.

According to Coleridge, the Fourth Gospel was a matchless and a true expression of the symbolic unity of life and light in the *Logos*, the Creator who is incarnate in the forms and the processes of His creation. The divine cycle cannot more clearly be expressed, from Light to Light through Life. Christ as the Light of the world has transformed the Light into a polarity of life and light whereby all the processes of nature comes into being (Perkins 1994:98).

The *Logos* is the 'Light' above all Being, which enlightens the human soul and brings him to self-consciousness concerning the true light. The Word is life when it is spoken by God: the uncontrolled, and dynamic expression of his Being. Once it is committed to writing, reduced to written text, it carries no meaning by itself, but depends on a reader to breathe a sense of life into it, a life coloured by the experience and goals of the reader. Even though the Bible is written, God's Word is essentially spoken. The spoken Word filled with life creates an intimate

sense of presence. The written marks seems lifeless in the midst of living speech, cut off from the Spirit (*pneuma*), the breath of life. This is clearly expressed by Paul to the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 3:6)

"the letter kills but the Spirit gives life..."

For Kelber (2 Corinthians 3v6) takes on a new aspect. Paul associates the Decalogue or written Law with death. According to him the *Pneuma* (Spirit) gives life while the written text takes life away. The letter for Paul is not the coding of marks on stone or paper but the letter is written in the hearts of people by the living Christ by the power of the Spirit (3:2-3). The letter with tablet stone (3:3) refers to the Decalogue, the principle of authority of the Law, whereas the antithesis of Christ is a letter written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God the eternal *Logos*. For Paul, 2 Corinthians 3: 1-6 casts fresh light on the linkage between writing (*gramma*) and death. There seems to be a connection between the written media and death. Writing refers to death over against the living Word. The living words have been frozen into a mute and immutable medium which resembles the rite of burial. These words were robbed of oral, spiritual life thus appear death like, but the Spirit gives life to the spoken essence of the Word (Kelber:1983: 157-159).

Paul draws a distinction between, the letter against the Spirit: and the written text against the transcendental *Logos*. The spoken authority belongs to a higher presence, the presence where the *Logos* is one with the Spirit (*pneuma*) which reveals the creative power of the Word in order to sustain the interior of being and existence. The Spirit brings the spoken Word to life. Writing can be seen as inferior to that of the spoken Word: it falls from innocence and can be seen as death (Ong 1977:238).

v.5 And the light shines in the darkness,
but the darkness did not grasp it.

καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτία φαίνει
καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

For Brown, the *Logos*-Hymn echoes Genesis from the beginning. Again the concepts of light and darkness appear. According to Gen.1:3 God said, "Let there be light" and here life was also linked to the creation account (Gen. 1:11) (Brown.1966:26).

The first chapter of Genesis refers to natural life whereas the Prologue refers to a new state of life, eternal life. Bultmann argues that until v.4 the imperfect tense has been used to describe the revelation of the *Logos*, but with the word 'shines' there is a change to the present. It speaks of the present revelation of the *Logos* to the world. The sentence is a riddle, for it is in v.14 that the revelation about the *Logos* is disclosed, although the miracle is already hinted at in v.9-13 (1971:46).

The light shines in vain in creation, as the darkness fails to comprehend it. The light has its basis in the life of the Creator. The life of the *Logos* does not cease to be the light of men just because men have chosen darkness. Darkness, in the context of v.5, shows a constant revolt against God and this is seen in the mythical figure of the devil (chp 8:44), because he represents a deliberate blindness in the world (Bultmann.1971:46). The *Logos* cannot be grasped by the world, which is the sphere of darkness. The Word is never fully disclosed, even though it is pure light and it cannot be controlled despite human attempts to reduce it to a single graspable meaning. When it enters finite minds it becomes many, in the same way as writing reduces the Word to traces of the written text.

V.5 can only be understood in the light of what has been said about the *Logos* in vv.1-4. There seems to be a continuity between creation and redemption. The light of the saving revelation shines in this world of darkness, as in v.5b the same process has been repeated," but the darkness did not grasp it." This rejection of the revelation runs parallel to its acceptance by believers as in v.12 and is fully developed in the second part of the Gospel (Chapters 13-17) (Bultmann.1971:48).

v.6 A man appeared, sent by God,
whose name was John.

v.7 He came to bear witness, to
give testimony to the light, so
that all should come to believe
through him.

v.8 He was not the light, but only
to give testimony to the light.

Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἀπεσταλμένος
παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης.
οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα
μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα
πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ.

οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα
μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.

Vv. 6-8 is an **interpolation** into the *Logos*-hymn, and it seems that the Evangelist inserted this for his own purpose. The first two strophes deal with the creation and the *Logos*, whereas the third strophe deals with the *Logos* coming into the world in order to defeat the darkness.

For Bultmann the insertion very loosely relates to the main thought of the hymn. The Evangelist includes it for a very special reason. He is concerned to oppose those who proclaim the light of the *Logos*, and its appearance as a historical figure (1:14), but who want to uplift none other than John the Baptist. In his account of the appearance of John, the Evangelist falls into the style of the Old Testament interpretation (1971:50). Brown notices that V.6 is a normal opening for an historical narrative, "There was sent by God a man named John" (1966:28). There is always the danger that what the light reveals will be confused with the Source of the revelation and that the words will be confused with the Word. What is written is potentially

susceptible to this confusion, as if the words revealed and written by humans could eventually disclose the spoken Word which is their origin.

Here, Jesus as the Revealer (1:19-34), but not the divine revelation (the pre-existent Logos). It is the first time in the Gospel the word "believe" appears (Bultmann.1971:51). 'Belief' is mentioned as the appropriate response to the revelation of the *Logos*, so that all men need to be brought to faith in Jesus. The positive statement of v.7 is now repeated antithetically in v.8. The Evangelist combats the view that John the Baptist was the 'light.' The goal of the Prologue was to discredit the claims made by the sectarians of John the Baptist that he was the 'light'. The Prologue in v.8 subordinates John the Baptist to Jesus (Brown.1966:28). According to Bultmann (1971:52) John the Baptist in vv.6-8 can be seen as the bearer of the revelation of the *Logos*. In v.9 the Evangelist returns to the written text of his source.

**v9" He (the Word) the true light
which enlightens every man,
that came into the world.**

**Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν,
ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον
ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.**

The negative side that was stated in V.5 is now described in vv.9-11. vv.10-11, like v.5, characterize the revelation-event and its rejection of the *Logos* by the world in antithetical phrases, while v.9 points to the importance of the Revealer (Bultmann.1971:52). This verse links with v.4 and must have been originally in the *Logos*-hymn. It is said that the light of the Logos was the light of humankind whereas in v.9 the *Logos* himself is called the light that appears in history (Schnackenberg.1968:253). Only in the *Logos* can a human being see himself/herself as they are before God (Bultmann.1971:53). With the vague phrase of "coming into the world," the Evangelist prepares for the incarnation of the light and also places the following strophe V.10-11

in the same context. The immersion of the uncontrolled Word in the world already implies the powerlessness of the cross. In one sense the incarnation already foreshadows the imprisonment of the Word in specific words: the oral in the specificity of the written text.

**v.10 He was in the world,
and the world was made through him,
but the world did not know Him.**

**Ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν,
καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο,
καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω.**

According to Schnackenberg, vv.10-11 form a new strophe in the original hymn as the world rejects the *Logos* (1968:255). This gives us the first antithetical description of the destiny of revelation as it develops the theme of v.5, that the *Logos* was in the world and, although he was the Creator of the world, the world did not know him. This claim of historical Revealer is grounded in the fact that he is the *Logos* the Creator (Bultmann 1971:54). In Brown's view most of the phrases in v.10 and v.12 occur in the Gospel. Jesus' coming into the 'world' relates to John 3:19; 12:46, while v.10 deals with the *Logos* incarnated in the ministry (1966:29). The place and the object are stated to be the 'world' instead of humankind. The 'world' stands over against *Theos* (God) and confronts him with hostility. The 'world' then is the darkness (v.5), as it turns away from the revelation. The 'world' refuses to see itself in relation to God as creation. This seems to be the basis of the Johannine dualism of God and the world, of light and darkness. In v.10b the 'world' did not know the Revealer. The world failed to believe in Jesus as the Revealer (1971:55). It is the sin of the 'world', which makes it the 'world,' namely that it rejects this gift of the disclosure of the *Logos* to humankind as it fails to know Him and this results in unbelief (16:9). Hence the paradox that the origin of knowing is not known when he reveals himself.

**v.11. He came to his own,
but his own did not accept him.**

**εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν
καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.**

The painful fact is that the *Logos* met with rejection in the world. v.11 is parallel to v.10b as each verse explains the other (Bultmann.1971:56). Brown interprets v.11 in the light of the Sinai covenant and the disobedience of Israel (1966:29). This view is further supported by Lindars as the history of the chosen people who refused to receive the light, thus anticipating the rejection of Jesus (1972:90). For Schnackenberg v.11 continues to speak of the spiritual coming of the *Logos* to the world of human darkness, as it rejects its coming. 'He was in the world' reflects an encounter between the *Logos* and the world. The *Logos* 'was' in the world as a force constantly at work and permeating it, and still he 'came' to it, in order to make a new offer. The 'coming' relates to the Gnostic text which speaks of the 'coming' of a heavenly messenger, meaning 'Gnosis' as a redeemer. This type of imagery was already evident in the Wisdom writings in a non-mythical sense, (Wis.7.7). The *Logos* 'came to his own,' to his domain which is the world, but they rejected Him (Schnackenberg.1968:260). The division in v.11 takes place when men are confronted with the revelation of *Logos* in v.12.

**v.12 But to all who received him he
gave the power to become children
of God, to those who believe
in his name,**

**ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν
αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι,
τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,**

In contrast to v.11 where the world rejected the *Logos*, there were still some who receive Him. Not all that hear the message receive him. In the context of v.12 the Evangelist does not tell us how many came to believe, but the rejection overwhelms the acceptance. The few who came to believe are the 'we' referred to in vv.14-16, as the believer has been given authority to become

the child of God. The significance of this gift of adoption by God is later displayed by Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus (3.1-21) (Bultmann 1971:57-58).

It is clear from this passage that it is a description of salvation. Schnackenberg distinguishes the Gnostic envoy and the *Logos* received by humanity in the Prologue. In Gnosticism the envoy from the heavenly world is in a strange land, where he finds his own, who listen to his 'revelation' and learn Gnosis (secret knowledge). In John it is the Father who leads the believers to Jesus and entrusts them to Him (6:37; 10:29), as it is a personal decision of faith that brings about union with Jesus. This contrast with Gnosticism becomes clearer as the verse goes on, 'to all who received him (in faith), the *Logos* gave the power to become children of God.' They are not yet his children and do not become so by knowledge or by their pneumatic quality, but they must first receive the power of the *Logos* to become his children (1968:262). The Evangelist makes it clear that this gift (of eternal life) can be received only by those who believe. This becomes one of the major themes of the Gospel. Jesus calls the world to believe in the revelation of the *Logos* by the Father. The expression 'believe' (*pistos*) in his name remains typical Johannine (2:23; 3:18) and is central to the *kerygma* (proclamation of the Word) of the Johannine narrative.

v.13b, who are born not of blood, nor of the desire of the flesh, nor of the desire of a man, but of God.	οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.
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Just as in the expression 'to those who believe in his name' or 'those that receive him,' so too V.13 explains how to "become children of God." Natural birth (nor any other natural process) does not make one a child of God (Schnackenberg 1968:263). It is a strictly supernatural event, accomplished by God alone on the part of humankind. It is by virtue of that faith a human being

is freed from the deception of the world and becomes God's child. The birth from God remains a mystery (John 3:8) as it appears in contrast to the natural birth of man. Natural birth is linked with blood. The birth of God is an act of divine origin (Bultmann.1971:59). This reveals the miraculous nature of man's relationship to God. A pneumatic (spiritual) experience between God and humankind creates children of God. This spells a new order and authority in the Johannine community. A community born out of the Spirit with a dualistic identity.

**V.14 And the Word was made flesh
and dwelt among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory such as belongs to
the only- begotten from the Father,
full of grace and truth.**

καὶ ὁ Λογος σὰρξ ἐγένετο
καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν,
καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ,
δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός,
πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

The hymn of the *Logos* reaches its climax. The fact that the *Logos* is once more mentioned is already a link with v.1. For Schnackenberg this can be seen as an unmistakable paradox, that the *Logos* who dwelt with God, entered into the sphere of human life, and became human flesh, perishable and material in essence (1968:266). In view of this statement Bultmann notices that the character of the Prologue changes. The source he proposes had until now only spoken of the revelation of the *Logos* in creation. There is also a change in the style of the Evangelist, who from V.5 onwards has spoken indirectly about the *Logos*, and only hinted what is about to come. The central theme of the Gnostic Redeemer-myth proposed by Bultmann is that a divine being puts on human flesh and blood in order to bring revelation and redemption. For this reason the Evangelist can make use of the mythical language of Gnosticism (Bultmann 1971:61).

This language of mythology for Bultmann is closely linked with an existential reality. The whole idea of revelation is that human beings possess a prior knowledge of revelation and that

this relates to one's own situation. Kaesemann insists that v.14a implies that the *Logos* becoming flesh possesses a certain weakness, that the scandal consists in the presence of God among men and not in becoming flesh. For Kaesemann v.14a says no more than v.10a "He was in the world". The parallelism between vv.14a-14b gives support to Kaesemann's argument (Conzelmann, Lindemann 1988:99-100). Brown notices that v.14a would not be in agreement with Gnostic and Docetic strains of thought. No line (v.14a) in the hymn gives sharper expression to the difference between the Prologue's concept of *Logos* and that of Stoicism and the *Hermetica* (1966:31). There seems to be a polemic intent in the expression of v.14a in the Gospel. Flesh (*sarx*) in John refers to the realm of the human and the worldly as opposed to the divine i.e.the realm of the spirit (3:6; 6:63), whereas the darkness refers to the worldly realm in its enmity towards God.

For Bultmann the Revealer appears to be nothing but a human being, and the human beings who meet him take him for a man. They know his father and mother (1:45; 6:42; 7:27). It is suitable that the title *Logos* plays no further part in the Gospel. "The Word became flesh": it is in humanity that he is the Revealer. His own has seen his 'glory' (Bultmann.1971:63). This is the paradox that runs through the Gospel, that the 'glory' must not be seen alongside the 'flesh,' nor through the 'flesh,' but in the 'flesh.' The *Logos* was incarnate in human flesh, dwelt among human beings, a theme hinted at already in v.5a. Redemption is brought by the Redeemer in human form. John's revelation and redemption is not understood as a cosmic process. The idea of pre-existence of souls, which has a central role in the Gnostic myth, finds no place here.

Bultmann argues that it is man that is visible and not the *Logos* and that the incarnation is not to be understood as a decisive revelation-event (1971:65). For Kaesemann the fact that Jesus was

sent is all important, and this is a tremendous revelation of "the one event that is necessary" (Brown.1966:32). v.14b explains the miracle of the incarnation "**He dwelt among us,**" which shows important associations with the Old Testament. The expression in the verb *skenoun* (make a dwelling) is found in Exod.25:8-9, where Israel is told to make a tent so that God can dwell among his people. The use of 'tenting' in the Prologue may call attention to passages in the Wisdom writings where Wisdom (*sophia*) is said to 'tent' or to make dwelling among men (Sirach 24). There is another aspect of divine presence in v.14b, the the $\kappa\upsilon\psi$ (*shekinah*) which underlies the Greek verb to 'tent', which also means 'to dwell' and from which the noun *shekinah* is derived. In Rabbinic theology *shekinah*, refers to God's presence among his people (Exod.25v 8) (Brown.1966:33). The thought of the divine presence who now serves as the Tabernacle and perhaps as the *shekinah* overflows in v.14c.. "**We have seen his glory**": It is the confession of those who have overcome the offence and have perceived the divine glory in the man Jesus. "We have seen" seems to be a reference to apostolic witness, eye-witnesses to the "glory" of the Revealer. The dispute over whether speakers are eye-witnesses or those who see in the spiritual sense is based on a false alternative. Johannine seeing is not concerned with eye-witnesses in an historical sense. In this context the Jews were also the eye-witnesses but they saw nothing (9:39-41) (Bultmann 1971:69).

For Brown, in the Old Testament the "glory of God" can be seen as a powerful manifestation of God to men (1 Kings 8:10-11; Exod. 26:15-16) (Brown.1966:34). The characterization of the 'glory' of the Incarnate confirms that **his glory** is nothing other than being the Revealer or the eternal spoken Word. This characterization, is the first time the Revealer is spoken of as the Son (*vios*) and God as the Father. According (John 14:6) Jesus is the only way to the Father (14:6), but whosoever has seen Him, truly has seen the Father (14:9) (Bultmann.1971:71). Finally in

v.14e, the Incarnate as Revealer is characterised as Χάρις (grace) and ἀλήθεια (truth), as it refers to the benefits in which God or the Revealer abounds. Χάρις (grace) has a formal meaning of "giving grace and gracious gift," while ἀλήθεια (truth) points to the content of the gift. Each of these expressions can denote both the content and the form, in Χάρις (grace) as the divine gift, whereas ἀλήθεια (truth) as included in v.16 is the gift one receives from the Revealer (8:32; 14:6) (Bultmann 1971:74). In reaction to Bultmann, Kaesemann insists on the glorious character of the Logos becoming flesh: The flesh is not simply an *incognito* through which men must see; but rather the glory of the Word keeps breaking through the flesh in miraculous works that can be seen (Brown.1966:35). Before the argument in v.14 resumes in v.16, the Evangelist inserts a note which relates to the witness of John the Baptist.

v.15. John gives a testimony to him, crying out: "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.

Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον, Ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.

This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me" V.15 stands out of the context more sharply than vv.6-8 in the *Logos*-hymn. The Evangelist inserts a statement about the Baptist that testifies to the precedence of the incarnate *Logos* and bases it on his pre-existence. It is not a continuation of the historical account of v.6 but it shows the same polemic interest as v.8 (Schnackenberg 1968:275). Thus the meaning of the Baptist's saying is that, in Jesus as the incarnate, eternal *Logos*, all the Judaic messianic expressions and all the Gnostic hopes of a Redeemer are fulfilled. They find their rightful place here, whereas v.14 already gives us the essential characterization of the incarnate Logos (Bultmann 1971:76).

Now the Evangelist returns to the text and the argument of his source, as this leads us to the first confession of the congregation about the *Logos*.

**v.16. For from his fullness we have
received grace upon grace.**

ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ
ἡμεῖ πάντες ἐλάβομεν, καὶ χάριν
ἀντὶ χάριτος.

The *Logos* allows a human being to share in his divine Being. Whereas elsewhere this gift of the Revealer is referred to as 'life' (3:15; 6:33,40; 17:2), in following v.14 **Χάρις** (grace) is used. This speaks of the character of the revelation as a 'pure gift'. In the context of the "life-sayings" which are spoken by the Revealer, the recipients of that gift are now speaking in v.16. There is a confession of thanks which praises the in-exhaustible bounty of his gift. "We all receive," confesses the congregation (v.12) (Bultmann 1971:79). The original hymn most probably ended with this word of thanksgiving.

There is a similar thanksgiving in the final prayer of the *Λόγος τέλειος* (the Latin *Asclepius* or the Greek *Mimaut*), one of the products of Hermetic mysticism. It shows clearly the difference between the Gnostic way of salvation and the Christian faith. The Gnostic says:

Through thy grace alone we have attained the light of knowledge.
Though has given us intellect (νοῦς), reason (λόγος) and knowledge
(γνώσις): intellect to grasp thee, reason to search for thee, knowledge that we
may rejoice to know thee (Schnackenberg 1968:276)

The Christian's thanksgiving is not for a knowledge which is ultimately concerned with the divinity of their own nature, an immanent experience of God in their own being, but because they have received superabundant gifts of salvation from the incarnate *Logos* or from the Lord who has returned to his glory, through the Holy Spirit (Schnackenberg 1968:276).

The confession of thanks reaches a proper conclusion in vv.17-18 which can be seen as the Evangelist's own words. vv.17-18 refers to what already has been said in v.16 with reference to God's covenant love, in the gift of the Law of Moses on Sinai, and in Jesus Christ. v.17 suggests clearly the enduring love of Jesus Christ, whereas v.18 reveals the superior love of the Father in and through the Logos (Brown.1966.35-36).

4.8. Summary:

In summing up the first part of this thesis, a genuine understanding of the concept Logos from a historical perspective hinges on discovering its philosophical and theological background. From the Hellenistic philosophical traditions of Philo, Stoicism, Neoplatonism, Mandaeism all the way to Bultmann's Redeemer Gnostic myth, I have argued that the Hebrew notion of the creative function of *dabhar* דָּבָר (= word) and that of Jewish Wisdom holds the principal key to the historical background of the concept *Logos* in the Johannine narrative.

According to Jousse the *Logos* existed with the Memra at the beginning of creation as it echoes the Palestinian Celestial tradition. A tradition where the 'world below' was prescribed as mimeme (replay) as it reflected the 'World above.' The spoken *Logos* that became a sign and a representation of the transcending tradition of the 'Word' in oral formulae.

The *Logos* forms part of the broader structure of the Prologue (1:1-18) in the Johannine narrative which reveals the poetic structure of the *Logos*-hymn. The *Logos*-hymn is a product of the Johannine peasant community, as they offer praise and confession in honour of the disclosure of the Logos in human flesh. The *Logos*-hymn is part of an oral performance in a cultic Christian

community now exiled in the written text.

It is a hymn in which the early Johannine peasant community celebrated the salvation-history enacted through the *Logos*. These peasants were ordinary unschooled people but deeply traditioned that rejoiced in their spiritual liberation against the power of the written Law which was as seen religious slavery and created social and economic boundaries in terms of race, religion and culture. The hymn can be seen rather as a mechanism of resistance which becomes the new oral authority of the living Jesus for this peasant community. This affirms the creative power of the Word which has now brought the *logoi* (words) in the Johannine narrative text under the power of the *Logos*.

The social and linguistic world that emerges from behind the written text is one constituted by the Spirit(*ruach*) which manifested itself in effacious speech. The preponderance and oral functioning of the *logoi* (words), are all features that have been profoundly nourished by an oral, prophetic and charismatic peasant community. The Spirit (*ruach*) arrival marks the hermeneutical turning point, separating the time of concealment from the time of remembrance. Remembrance in an era of *grammatology* is more fully accomplished with the production of the written or narrative text. This sets a norm for what is henceforth to be remembered in traces of more written text (Kelber 1990:119).

This does not bind oral communities and believers slavishly to textuality in the sense that all oral possibilities are extinguished. One of the functions of the *Paraclete* (Spirit) is to teach what the earthly Jesus did not and could not say. Now Jesus the eternal *Logos* harbors and administers himself the oral treasure of the spoken *logoi* (words). It may well be appropriate that Jesus

presides as *Logos* over the written text which sets new standards for oral proclamation of the Word. This creative pneumatic speech will continue in the age of the Spirit (*ruach*) and that all *logoi* (words) from now will be measured by a norm, the authoritative record of the written text. The incarnate *Logos* had now been re-incarnated into a new medium of the written text.

This brings us back to the principal topic of the authority of the Word in John's Gospel. Responding to a multitude of words and authoritative speakers. John articulate a singular authority by personalizing the Word and lodging it at the beginning of the Prologue (1:1-18). Once the speaker of *logoi* (words in time) was elevated to the *Logos* he will assumed position of control over the *logoi* material. Placed in authoritative position, the *Logos* will take charge of the *logoi* in an through the narrative text. The incorporation of the *logoi* that is presided over by the *Logos* does not, exhaust the Johannine hermeneutics of orality and writing. There is a move in the following chapter from etymological and historical bedrock of the *Logos* tradition to the binary opposition between the oral and written text which focusses on Jacques Derrida Logocentric critique of the *Logos*.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Deconstruction: Logocentrism versus Textcentrism:

5.1. Introduction:

In the prior chapter, the *Logos* moved from tradition perceived as a mono-directional transmissional process to tradition perceived as two-way communication. Although the *Logos* has been imprisoned by the written text, it reveals that underneath the written construction of the narrative text lies the 'oral text' of primarily oral community. The *Logos* has now been incarnated into a new medium of the written text. The *Logos* now presiding over the *logoi* (words) in the written text does not exhaust the Johannine hermeneutics of orality and writing.

Throughout Western history, speech has always been idealized at the expense of writing. This is clearly illustrated in the second Epistle of John as he writes to the 'elect lady'

I would rather not use paper and ink, instead I hope to come to you face to face so that our joy may be completed...
(2 John 12)

When I speak, my words seem to be one with my thoughts. Meaning is present both to the hearer and the speaker. What can be clearly observed is that speech creates presence but also authentic representation of meaning. According to Derrida in *Speech and Phenomena* says,

My words are alive, because they seem not to leave me: not to fall outside me, outside my breath, at a visible distance; not to cease to belong to me
(1978.76)

This is evident in the theological and philosophical names designated in the Western tradition e.g. God, truth, being, were endowed with a special sense of "metaphysics of presence." For

Derrida, the Western thought of orality was not just a paradigm for every form of presence but for every form of truth. This can be seen as problematic as it becomes the centre and guarantor of presence (Moore 1994:28).

The concept *Logos* in the Gospel of John carries the greatest meaning of 'presence'. The *Logos* is the origin of all things. The 'Word' underwrites full presence, because everything is the effect of this one cause (Derrida 1976:11). Even though the Bible is written, God's Word is essentially Spoken. The Spoken Word, filled with life, creates an intimate sense of presence. Logocentrism desires a perfect rational language that perfectly represents the real world. Such a language of reason would guarantee that the 'presence' of the world and the essence of everything in the world would be transparently (re) present (ed) in order to secure complete certainty (Appignanesi 1992:78). Words would be literally the truth of all things. Writing remains a threat for truth and a distortion of presence. The opposition of speech and writing can be seen as oppressive, where speech being superior, belongs to the *Logos* and a higher presence and writing, the inferior term, marks a fall.

In Socrates's account of the Egyptian story of writing there are two figures in the myth, Theuth, the inventor of writing, and Thamus, the king-god of all Egypt. Theuth presented his interventions to King Thamus, saying that his arts (*technai*) ought to be passed to the king's people. In Socrates' account, Theuth claims that letters will make the Egyptians wiser and improve their memories. He claims to have discovered an exilir (*pharmakon*: portion remedy, medicine) for memory (*mneme*) and wisdom (*sophia*) (Irvine 1994:26). The king's response should be considered in full (...)

O man full of art, one man is given the power to create things of arts, and to judge the harm or usefulness to those who shall use them. And now you, who are the father of letters (*pater grammaton*), I have been led by your affection to ascribe to them a power opposite to that which they in fact possess. For this intervention will produce forgetfulness (*lethe*) in the minds of those who learn to use it; they will not exercise memory because they trust in writing, bringing things to remembrance not from within themselves. You have not discovered an exilir for memory (*mneme*) but for reminding (*hypomneseos*). You offer your students the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom. For they will hear many things, while for the most part they are ignorant, and as men filled, not with wisdom, but with conceit of wisdom, they will be a burden to their fellows (Irvine 1994 27)

In this version of the myth of the origins of writing, those who practised the art of letters depended on writing externally represented: an activity that suppressed remembrance, something within the soul, an art of words (*logoi*) applied like medicine to the soul for the benefit of health.

For Socrates, writing resembles a son and a father relationship. For Socrates, words must have fathers. He claims that the relationship between spoken words and their fathers are more direct, more immediate, than the miserable relationship between the written text and their authors. Writing is like an orphan, and his father (of *Logos*) is nowhere to be found (Brogan 1989:1-24). Socrates views writing as dead and speech as living. This is clearly reflected in the following by him,

Once a thing is put into writing, the composition drifts all over the place, getting into the hands of not only those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it, it does not know how to address the right people and not address the wrong. And when it is ill treated and fairly abused it always needs parents to come to its help. An orphan and a delinquent, no sooner born then set adrift, cut loose from the author who gave birth to it. Writing seems fated endlessly to circulate, if not from foster home to foster home, then from reader to reader, the best of whom can never be sure that he or she has fully what the author intended to say. (Moore 1994:30)

For Socrates writing is like a painting, which generates a non-living being, which in return keeps silent when asked to answer. The written text is a non-self-interpreting. Nothing is clear when left to writing. Besides this sterile sameness, writing is indifferent to its addressees.

Writing wandering here and there, is heedless of whom it reaches, and if disputes arise, or if it is unjustly despised, it still needs the help of the father. By themselves, written texts are unable to rescue themselves (Valdes 1991:333). For Socrates, writing can thus be called an illegitimate child, a bastard brother, because it is silent to speak for itself when questioned (Irvine 1994:27). This is strongly reflected by Socrates in the following quotation,

What He does not say, but what is nevertheless true, is that the written word at its best fails to convey an illusion of the spontaneity of the spoken Logos, but with perfection of form as the premeditated speech seldom achieves, and conversely the spoken word, in the age of writing, aims at the considered structure of the written word, but without abandoning its own sense of immediacy and responsiveness to social use
(Greene 1951:152)

Though writing is supposed to help the memory, it actually leads to more forgetfulness, because it relies on the written characters rather than memory. Moreover the written word is not really intelligible or certain nor is it better than knowledge but it is a recollection of its subject matter. Writing cannot answer questions, but gives unvarying answers. Better is the *Logos* written in the soul of the learner, that can defend itself, and that knows when to speak and when to be silent. What can be observed is that the presence of the author seems to be absent and even 'dead' as described by Roland Barthes, and that the meaning of the written text cannot be defended. It is not just the (A)uthor who is 'dead' but also the property of writing (Greenfield 1972:169).

Phaedrus contains Plato's most vigorous attack upon writing, couched in the same familiar terms: 'presence' versus absence' and 'living speech versus the dead letter.' Writing is a dangerous 'supplement' which lures language away from its authentic origins in speech and self-presence. For Plato, writing displays a double sense of *pharmakon*-medicine and poison. Writing anything, put in *grammata*, is not a medicine or *pharmakon*, but a poison to the soul

and the *supplément* of Rousseau. Writing is not clear and certain. Written words are of no use except as a reminder of that which they are written about (Derrida 1981:42-43; Irvine 1994:27).

Plato, in the *Phaedrus* (c.411-404 BC) saw the technology of writing as an external threat. It was a threat to the importance of human memory. "Those who acquire writing will cease to exercise their human memory and will become forgetful, because they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs of their own external resources" (Havelock 1963:197-233). For Plato, writing was a threat to the system of education. Students depending on the written text would receive a quantity of information without proper instruction. Textbook writers continue having problems because the written word is quite incapable of defending or helping itself (Selden 1985:75).

Primarily oral communities may be seen as a lower stage of the development and the non-literate may be negatively defined by their lack of writing. In primarily oral cultures, the word is closely related to power and action. It is dynamic, not static, and includes the sense that once spoken it is gone without possibility of re-presentation. Thus an oral representation is an unrepeatable event in time, unlike written text which is repeatedly read and referred to. Further, in primarily oral cultures, recitation of words to sound determine not only two modes of expression but also thought processes. You know what you recall (Ong 1982:33).

The written text can never put a stop to speaking, but when it operates in a world dominated by the spoken word, the written text creates new worlds and new standards for interpretive interest. Most words are now being put into the mouth of Jesus who speaks prior to His *anabasis*

(departure to His Heavenly abode). They are distinctively Jesus' own words, grounded, as it were, in a historical framework. Now the incarnate Christ himself holds and administers the oral treasure of the Logos. It may well seem that Jesus himself presides as the *Logos* over the written text which is rooted in a deep oral matrix (Kelber 1990:119).

In John's Gospel, there is a paradigmatic shift from the charismatic speech (oral formula of the *Logos*) to the narrative text, where the status of *Logos* becomes the determiner of the written text. Central to the oral and written hermeneutics of John's Gospel, lies the idea of the pre-existent *Logos*. Being with Jesus he is situated prior to the realm of history and outside the reality and construction of the text. The written text cannot really be accorded full self-referentiality of the Word, because of its relation to the Father and the Spirit whose existence goes back to the beginning of creation. The *Logos* when viewed in relation to *logoi* (words) in the written text can be seen as normative but when it is viewed in relation to the spoken *Logos* it appears in a less prominent position (Kelber 1990:199). The written text which is subordinated to the metaphysical authority of the *Logos* can be seen as only in transition toward what is considered to be real, and affirms meaning and representation of reality for marginalised communities.

The *Logos* as discussed in Chapter Four refers in the Greek to 'Word,' 'reason,' 'truth,' 'logic' and 'law.' For Plato, *Logos* can be seen as a transcendent grounding principle of order and reason which gives meaning to discourse (Childers 1995:154-155). In the Gospel of John, the *Logos* refers to the Eternal Word which is equal to the metaphysical and ontological status of God. The *Logos* can be seen as a self-sufficient basis or self-identity by which all truth can be

measured. Linguistically, *Logos* refers to 'meaning, presence, idea, intention' that exists behind the written text, whereas spoken word serves as an adequate vehicle of expression (Childers 1995:154).

Logos is the meaning to which the sign refers. There is thus a struggle between speech and writing and a domination of speech over writing as deconstruction launched an attack against the metaphysical construction of the sign. *Logos* is the name and the element of that which makes possible an absolutely pure self-presence and self-knowledge. The *Logos* can be infinite and self-present and it can be produced as auto affection only through the voice. An order of the signifier by which the subject takes from itself, does not borrow outside of itself. This is at the consciousness of the voice hearing (understanding) oneself speak (Derrida 1976:98).

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on Derrida's critique of Logocentric hermeneutics, that tends to put an end to the priority of writing. Derrida's method of Deconstruction is connected to what he calls "metaphysics of presence." Derrida denies this presence in the construction of the written text and the social construction of reality. He further argues that signs cannot refer to something other than themselves. There is no signifier which is independent of the signified: we are unable to escape the system of signifiers (Norris 1982:3-6; Sarup 1988:38).

The concept of the *Logos* in John serves as a leading case for Logocentrism in the work of Jacques Derrida, who exposes the hierarchical oppression or the "violent rape" of the spoken word over against the written text. Textcentrists (e.g. Rabbinic Hermeneutics, New Anglo American Criticism, and Deconstruction) seek an uncompromising critique of Logocentrism

in the post modernist philosophical work of Derrida. These critical philosophers derive from the Husserlian tradition (1904-1910) which specialized in written text, especially the printed text from the Age of Romanticism. Most textualists show little concern for historical continuity (Norris 1982:42-45; Ong 1982:173). Central to the work of Derrida's hermeneutics of Deconstruction, lies the structural linguistics of Ferdinand De Saussure.

5.2. The Saussurian Text:

Linguistics before Saussure was bogged down in the search for the historical origins of language, which would reveal meaning. Saussure regards linguists, philosophers and semiologists as language detectives who basically agree on the same thing (Appignanesi 1992:55). If there is a single theme that draws together the Structuralists e.g. Barthes (1966,1977,1981), Lacan (1966,1973), Culler (1975,1981,1982), then it is the announcement that language can be seen as a differential network. For Saussure there is no link between the signifier and the signified, whereas both are caught up in a play of distinctive features e.g. the concept and the meaning we attach to it, e.g. (cat, bat) where the meaning changes only by changing the initial consonants. Language can be seen as diacritically dependent on a structured economy of difference (Derrida 1981:116; Norris 1982:28).

There is then no difference between language and objects because objects are a play in a system of differences. The sign that is articulated by the system of differences is all that there is, and therefore language is not secondary: the world itself can be regarded as a 'text' (Mc Namara 1991:1-5). Words for Saussure are not labels which have come to be attached to things already comprehended independently, but they supply a conceptual framework for man's

analysis of reality and a linguistic framework for his description of it (1983:99).

Saussure goes further to break the historical tradition of the 19th Century by insisting that linguistics can be scientifically examined in adapting to the synchronic approach. Language can be treated as a network of structural relations (Selden 1985:53). This resulted in suspending the diachronic methods of historical research.

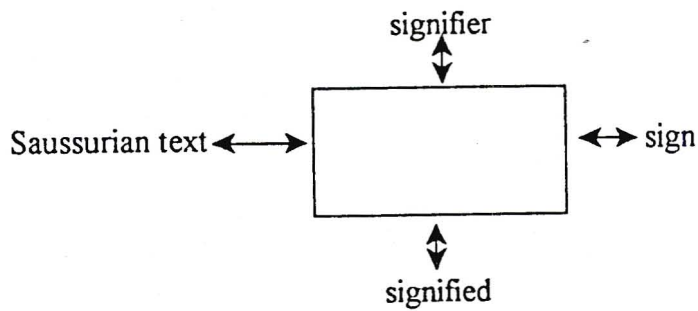
Culler rightfully shows that the theory postulated by Saussure explicates the system or *le langue* which underlies the literary work of art and which makes the artefact a meaning production which he called speaking (Culler 1981:22). Barthes regards the former: *langue* as "the language, which is both institution and system." In contrast to *langue*, Barthes defines *parole* or speech as "essentially an individual act of selection and actualization." (Barthes 1972:14). Saussure finds a clear distinction between isolated speech act or utterance (*parole*) and the general system of articulated relationships from which it is derived (*le langue*)¹ (Joseph 1990:61-5). For Saussure, words are not symbols but things which refer to a "sign." A linguistic sign is not a link between a concept and a sound pattern: it is a sound as processed by a hearer.

The Saussurian model of a linguistic sign consists of a two sided psychological entity;

- The concept 'signified' in semiology referred to words or pictures, or the acoustic image, which refers to that which carries meaning,
- whereas the 'signifier' (in semiology), was traditionally allocated ontological and epistemological autonomy, and the concept to which it refers. (Snyman 1993:247).

¹Saussure defines *langue* as follows: It is both a social faculty of speech and a collections of necessary conventions that has been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty (1959:9)

This can be clearly explained in the following diagram:



(Selden 1985:75)

The signification is the process that binds together the signifier and the signified in order to produce a sign. A sign has no meaning outside of the system of signification (Appignanesi 1992:58).

Language might also be compared to a sheet of paper. 'Thought' is on the one side of the sheet and 'sound' on the reverse side. Linguistics then operates along the perimeter where sound and thought meet. The contact between them gives rise to a form, not a substance (Saussure 1983:157). The choice of sound is not imposed on us by meaning in itself. This idea was later taken over by the Structuralists who believed that all cultural language systems can be studied synchronically. Roland Barthes' (1977:92) intention is to reverse this perspective and to reinstate linguistics as a science of semiology. Barthes insists that the moment we go to systems where there is sociological significance and it is no more than a superficial phenomenon of socially constructed reality, then we are confronted with language. We are different from former times, in that we are a civilization of the written word (Selden 1985:75).

It is at this point in time that Derrida intervenes in trying to move Structuralism away from the attachment to Western metaphysics of meaning and presence. Derrida goes on to critique

Saussure, as he insists that the "spoken Word" opposes written language. This dualism seems to be evident in the Western philosophical tradition (Norris 1982:29), and poses a challenge to both Positivism and Phenomenology.

In the work of Saussure, writing is treated as secondary, always dependent on the primary reality of speech, because the speaker's presence is behind his spoken words. The relation between the signifier and signified remains arbitrary. For example, different sounds designate the same objects that depend on the language that is used. According to Saussure, in language there are only differences, differences without positive terms (Scinto 1986:11).

Saussure re-affirms that the metaphysical strength of linguistics is that the meanings of words do not depend only on the play of differences when they are used in sentences, but also on a transparent link between the words and the unproblematically independent autonomous self sufficient realm. The spoken words in themselves possess 'presence,' which is grounded in the realm of the metaphysical. The concept can at least "refer" to some ideal realm supposedly 'out there,' or it can be taken in the materialist sense of something really out there which is reflected in concepts (Snyman 1993:247). For Roland Barthes, the relation of language and speech can be seen as diacritical, or dependent on a structural economy of differences which allows a relatively small range of linguistic elements to signify a vast repertoire of negotiable meanings,

Language does not exist properly except in the speaking mass, one cannot handle speech except by drawing on the language but conversely a language is possible only starting from speech. Historically, speech phenomena always precede language phenomena (it is speech which makes language evolve), and genetically, a language is constituted in the individual through his learning from the environmental speech. (Selden 1985:75)

According to Barthes (1972) language is not just an instrument of speech but a relationship or a dialectic process. Barthes' representation in a short essay on "The death of the (A)uthor

(transcendental signifier or eternal *Logos*)," rejects the traditional view that the author is the origin of the text. The [A]uthor is not simply a person but a socially and historically constituted subject. For Barthes the Author (*Logos*) does not exist prior to or outside the construction of language. He shifts the emphasis away from an all-knowing, unified, intending subject (Selden 1985:75). There is a need to liberate writing from the despotism of what he calls 'the work,' or what we have called 'The Book' or the 'End of the Printed Book'

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing (.....). However by refusing to assign a 'secret,' an ultimate meaning, to the text (and the world as text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God (*Logos*) and his hypostases, reason, science, law.
(Barthes 1972:12)

Barthes' formula is radical in the dismissal of such humanistic notions, where the author is stripped from his/her metaphysical status and reduced to a location of infinite citations, repetitions and references. This shows that the literary work is independent of historical and biographical background. The opportunity and ability for each of the readers to add to, alter, or simply edit the text opens possibilities of collective authorship that breaks down the idea of writing as originating from a single source.

Derrida differs with Barthes in accepting this paradox. For Derrida, there is a fundamental blindness involved in the Saussurian text: Saussure fails to think through the problems in his discourse. In Derrida's view the major problem in the work of Saussure is that writing is suppressed and language as a signifying system exceeds all bounds of individual presence and speech (Derrida 1976:38; Norris 1982:29). Derrida slyly writes: Saussure condemns the effect of writing over speech as '*vicieuse*.'" The contamination of writing is denounced in the accents of the moralist or preacher by the linguist from Geneva"(Derrida 1976:34-38). There is indeed

a Calvinist dualism in Saussure, which is the result of his consciousness of himself as a revolutionary and thus of the need to elevate speech, the fundamental element of his 'synchronic' linguistics, to some revelatory status.

For Saussure, the linguistic sign is a union of a concept and sound, without sounding, whereas language is speech without speaking. According to Saussure the linguistic sign and language are united by sound as a natural bond, whereas writing can be seen as secondary and it does not form part of that bond (Scinto 1986:13). What can be clearly observed in the Saussurian text is that speech remains a natural manifestation of which writing can be seen as secondary.

Derrida asks the question, "What are we to make of the privilege of speech (*parole*) in a theory which is committed to the prior signification of language as a system?" Derrida critiques Saussure by insisting that writing is systematically degraded in Saussurian linguistics. He uses this strategy in order to suppress the visible contradictions. In following these contradictions one is led beyond linguistics to a "grammatology" or a science of writing and textuality (Norris 1982:28).

For Derrida (1976), the history of Western thought which includes the language system of Saussure, amounts to a desire for a transcendental signifier or Logos. This inherently opens the possibility of thinking a concept signified in and of itself, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to a system of signifiers. Derrida terms such a concept a "*transcendental signified*" (Derrida 1981:25; Scinto 1986:10). For him the term "*transcendental signified*" (*Logos*) which after all refers to "no sign," and would no longer function as a

signifier (Derrida 1981: 19-20; Moore 1994:15-16). Everything that has been thought of in terms of metaphysics of presence, e.g. *Logos*, Being, Essence, Truth, Self, possesses a special relationship to "presence." The historical determination the West attached to these transcendental names became a matter of deep concern for Derrida (Derrida 1976:49). Derrida's phrase for this litany of names, and all it entails, is metaphysics of presence.

For Derrida (1976:34-38) the Saussurian text can be seen as fundamental blindness because the whole Western "metaphysics of presence" privileged speech in Saussure's methodology. The voice becomes a metaphor of truth and authenticity whereas the spoken word refers *Logos* equal to that of presence, as opposed to writing which can be seen as secondary. What is evident in the Saussurian text is the link between the spoken word and the speaker which not only secures presence but also authenticates meaning. For Saussure writing and the spoken word remain two distinctive structural developments. Writing destroys the ideal of self presence and remains a threat to the traditional view of orality, which associates itself with truth and self presence, and this is only possible through the expression of natural language (Norris 1982:27).

According to Norris, Derrida sets out to demonstrate;

- that writing is systematically degraded in Saussurian linguistics;
- that this strategy runs up against suppressed but visible contradictions;
- that by following these contradictions one is led beyond linguistics to a 'grammatology' or a science of writing and textuality in general.

(Norris 1982:28)

Derrida sees a whole metaphysics at work behind the privilege granted to speech in Saussure's methodology. The *Voice* becomes a metaphor of truth and authenticity, the source of self-present 'living' speech as opposed to the secondary lifeless emanation of writing. In speaking, one is able to experience an intimate link between sound and sense, an inward and immediate realization of meaning. Writing, on the contrary, destroys this ideal of pure presence. Writing, is a threat to the deeply traditional view that associates truth with self-presence and the 'natural' language wherein it finds expression (Derrida 1976:11-12; Norris 1982:28).

It is against this tradition that Derrida argued that writing is in fact the pre-condition of language and must be conceived as prior to orality (speech). The bias in which writing is privileged over speech has been called 'scriptism' or '*graphocentrism*.' In many literate cultures, the written text has a higher status than speech. Walter Ong comments that "because we have today so deeply interiorized writing, made it so much a part of ourselves that we find it difficult to consider writing as a technology " (Ong1982: 82; Norris 1982:28). *Graphocentrism* often involves an uncritical equation of writing to progress, growth and development.

The structure of language, is also a structure of thought. Separated from language, thought is chaotic. The comparison with Genesis 1, is irresistible: "In the beginning(...) the earth was formless and void:...Then God said...and there was(..)" Saussure was of the opinion that structured thought cannot exist before language; in consequence, language cannot be regarded as a mere instrument one uses to "express one's thought." For Saussure thought and language are coextensive (Saussure 1983:110).

The Saussurian distinction between the signifier and signified remains arbitrary, because the signifier already functions as a signified. Rather it means that there is no necessary link between the concept *tree* and the sound that English speakers use to represent it. Meaning is the product of difference. In language itself, there are only differences (Saussure 1983:118). The linguistic sign is arbitrary, the fusion between the signifier and the signified does somehow prevent the sign from being a radically differential and essentially negative entity, notwithstanding the fact that "the terms arbitrary and differential designate two correlative properties" (Saussure 1983:67). For Derrida the very distinction between the signifier and the signified is an arbitrary one: the signified always already functions as a signifier (1976:7).

This apparent innocent position has far reaching consequences. As Derrida puts it in *Structure, Sign, and Play* (1970) "this was the moment that language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a original **CENTER** or origin, everything became discourse ..., a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely" (Derrida 1970:280).

Derrida's major target is to deconstruct the sign system of Saussure in order to reinstate the authority of writing as self presence, self-identity over and against orality (speech) which received priority. Derrida (1981:19) applies Ockham's razor to Saussure's two-faced sign, questioning Saussure's "maintainance of the rigorous distinction between the signifier and the signified.

Saussure's methodology provides Derrida with a basis to expose the violent crack or, in philosophical terms, the hierarchical opposition in the binary model in order to deconstruct the metaphysics of presence of the *Logos*. Derrida refuses to accept that the Logocentric model can be seen as the main determinant of "Truth and Being" which resulted in meaning endowed with the Western metaphysics of presence. Derrida (1976) acknowledged that we cannot get rid of the metaphysics of presence, as he insists there is no language, no syntax, no lexicon which is foreign to history, and that such deconstruction is only possible in the framework of the metaphysics of presence.

To summarize, Derrida has metaphysics of presence for his target and one of the principal weapons is Saussure's innocuous sounding claim that language is a system of differences without positive terms. What this play of differences prevents is any single element in a language, or any other sign system from being present in itself (Gayatri Spivak, Translator's Preface, in Derrida 1976:xxi). This leads me to examine Derrida's critique on Logocentrism: The Privileging of the Spoken Word. This desire for centre or presence, Derrida calls "Logocentrism." Logocentrism refers to the Graeco-Christian or Platonic Johannine tradition to which language, above all written language, belongs in the realm of the contingent or metaphysical world (Kelber 1990:120).

5.3. Logocentrism: Privileging the Spoken Word:

According to Edward Jábés, the Jewish poet, the history of speech began allegorically in the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve heard the sound of God walking in the garden at the time of

the evening breeze. The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God.(Gen. 3v8).

The garden is 'speech'. Derrida extends Jábés's allegory:

God no longer speaks to us; he has interrupted himself: we must take words upon ourselves. We must intrust ourselves to traces because we have ceased hearing the voice from within the immediate proximity of the garden. The difference between speech and writing is sin, lost immediacy, work outside the garden. (Derrida 1978: 64-68)

Derrida's awareness of this possibility in the quote, particularly in the essay on Jabés, which is full of oracular comments on, is expressed in the remarks....

a certain Judaism as the birth and the passion of writing ...Perhaps the common root of a people. Writing is the moment of the desert as the moment of separation, alienation. The painful folding of itself which permits history to reflect itself as it ciphers itself. This reflection is its beginning. The only thing that begins by reflecting itself is history, and this fold, this furrow, is the Jew. The Jew who elects writing which elects the Jew.... (Derrida 1978: 64-68)

Outside the garden (allegory-speech) there is only sand and separation (writing). Writing is the moment of the desert or the moment of separation. Writing defaces presence. According to Ong, the relationship between speech and writing, between Logos and the Book is also an issue for Christianity. According to Ong,

In Christian teaching orality and literacy polarities are particularly acute, probably more acute than in any religious tradition, even the Hebrew. For the Christian teaching the Second Person (Logos) of the One Godhead, who redeemed mankind from their sin, is known not only as the Son (Berâ) but also as the Word of God. In this teaching God the Father (Abbâ) utters or speaks his Word (Logos), his Son. He does not inscribe him. The very person of the Son (Berâ) is constituted as the Word (Logos) of the Father (Abbâ). Yet Christian teaching also presents at its core the written word of God, the Bible, which, back of its human authors, has God as [A]uthor as no other writing does (Ong 1982:179).

Although Derrida has written around the Bible (the Book) on occasion he has never directly tackled the relationship of speech versus writing in the Jewish or Christian tradition.

The term 'logocentrism' bears a great burden in *Of Grammatology*. Derrida gives three dimensions of this burden:

- ❑ The phonetization of writing, which has often been hailed as a great advance of civilization, must dissimulate its own history as it is produced.
- ❑ Metaphysics finds its origin of truth in the *Logos*, that is, in the debasement of writing, and its repression outside full speech. *Logos* concerns speech and not the written word, not even phonetic written word. The primacy of the phonetic in systems of writing is rooted in its submission to speech: a 'debasement' that represses recognition of other of writing, forms that are not mere signs and perhaps have their own productivity.
- ❑ Scientifically *Logos* is rooted in logic, which grants primacy to the *Logos* or the spoken word, and then to phonetic writing. (Derrida 1976:11-12)

Derrida reads Western philosophy and theology not in terms of a fading Logocentrism and a rise of Textcentrism, but rather in terms of the illusion of Logocentrism. Western philosophy has long been phonocentrically centered on the 'voice' and deeply suspicious of the script (written text). It has been in the broader sense, logocentric, committed to the belief in some ultimate or axiomatic truths, for example: Word (*Logos*), presence, essence, truth which reality acts as a foundation of all our thoughts, language and experience (Sarup 1988:40). *Logos* is the sign which will give meaning to all others: the transcendental signifier. Derrida argues that any such transcendental meaning is fiction (Derrida 1976:11-13).

One of the key themes of Derrida's thought is the concept of 'presence and absence'. Derrida sees the metaphysics of presence, which he also calls 'logocentrism,' as the dominant tradition in Western thought from Plato and Aristotle to the present. Logocentrism is the privileging of the *Logos*, or the spoken word, over the written word. Derrida asserts that the Western tradition has always privileged the spoken Word or oral language over the written. In oral

communication, the speaker is present to an audience, and, according to this tradition, this presence ensures full, unmediated communication: writing, in contrast, is seen as 'secondary speech' (Derrida 1976:11-21).

As Rousseau said, writing is "nothing but representation of speech". Thus writing is seen as a system for transcribing speech, a system that functions as a supplement to speech in the absence of the speaker, and the specific differences that exist between the spoken and the written codes are a function of the perceived difference between their natures (Derrida 1976:27).

Derrida has gathered an impressive array of passages in which key Western thinkers privilege speech over writing, 'presence over absence'. Plato's attack on writing as a falling away from the purity of speech is perhaps the *locus classicus*. Aristotle also viewed writing as secondary to speech: "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words" (Derrida 1976:36). Derrida has criticized such contemporary thinkers as Saussure, Levi Strauss, and J.L. Austin for their analogous privileging of the oral over the written (Derrida 1976:27-73). Moreover, a sense of the spoken Word as vital is, of course, crucial to the Judeo-Christian tradition: "In the beginning was the Word," and God said "let there be light." (John 1:1; Gen.1). Derrida claims that in mainstream Western thought, speech has always been the paradigm not only for every form of presence but for every form of truth. "In the beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word was with God" denotes a special relationship of the *Logos* to Logocentrism and the idea of presence. Logocentrism is an ethnocentric metaphysics. It is related to the history of the West (Derrida 1976:20,79).

Logocentrism is being obsessed with the 'Word', or the big explanation of everything. It is the privileging of speech over the written word. Logocentrism, has been defined as "the illusion that the meaning of a word has its origin in the structure of reality and at the same time makes that truth part of that structure seem directly present to the mind" (Ellis 1989:36-37): a desire to ascribe transcendental significance or metaphysics of presence to the signified.

Logocentrism is the privilege of the (*phōnē*) or the "privileging of the *Logos*", of the 'system of hearing one self speaking' through the phonic substance, which presents itself as the non-exterior, therefore non-empirical or non-contingent signifier. It is centered on the idea of a full speech that [is] fully present, an originary speech itself shielded from interpretation. For "within the logos the essential link to *phōnē* has never been broken," and "the essence of the *phōnē* would be immediate proximity to that which within 'thought' as *logos* relates to 'meaning,' produces it, receives it, speaks it, 'composes it' " (Derrida 1976:17-21).

Husserl found evidence for self presence in the voice (*phōnē*): not the real voice, but the principle of the voice. "When I speak I hear myself and understand at the same time that I speak. In the act of speaking I seem to coincide with myself in a way quite different from what happens when I write. My spoken words seem immediately present to my consciousness and my voice becomes my intimate spontaneous medium" (Sarup 1988:39). At such moments, the voice, the breath, appear to be consciousness itself, presence itself.

In our logocentric world, speech is privileged over writing because of its sense of proximity to the source of utterance. When I speak, the seal between my words and the meaning I intend,

remains intact, secured by my physical presence. For Derrida, the *Logos* as spoken word is the source of the entire Western tradition of metaphysics (Derrida 1976:17)

Writing, by contrast, seems to drive a wedge between the speaker and his utterance. It is a second hand mode of communication, a pallid mechanical transcript of speech and so always removed from my consciousness. It is for this reason that the Western philosophical tradition from Plato to Lévi Strauss, has consistently vilified writing as a mere lifeless, alienated form of expression and consistently celebrated the living voice (Norris 1982:38-39; Sarup 1988:39).

According to Appignanesi, Derrida to wage a one man 'deconstructionist' war against the entire Western philosophical and literary tradition of rationalist or Logic thought. He goes on to target the Western philosophical and theological central assumption of 'Reason', which seem to be dominated by a 'metaphysics of presence' or the eternal *Logos*. For Derrida, 'Reason' has been shaped by a dishonest pursuit of certainty, which can be seen as 'Logocentrism' and the guarantee of the 'Word made Flesh' (Appignanesi 1992:76)

In the beginning was the Logos,
and the *Logos* was with Theos,
and the *Logos* was Theos.....,
and the *Logos* was made flesh and
dwelt among us... (John 1,14)

The Western history of philosophy and theology and literature, from Plato, its founding father, and Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, right up to Wittgenstein and Heidegger, as well as Saussure, can be seen as a constant Logocentric quest. Their works have contributed to the Western tradition of metaphysics (Derrida 1982:94; Moore 1994:28). In order to support a metaphysics of presence, the Western tradition has claimed that there is a Supreme principle, '*Logos*', that

gives meaning to all discourse and organized all differences in a system of relationships (Ruf 1989:30).

Derrida criticized the Western tradition that made use of the Logocentric model in order to absolutize meaning and sees it as a dishonest construction of reality. His major concern is with the deviant modes of thought as he shows a persistent fascination with Judaism and the problem of its relation to Greek and Christian metaphysics. To be more precise he has shown a fascination with writing, especially in Judaism, and the problem of writing and its relation of 'Speech' in the Graeco-Christian metaphysics (Derrida 1976:11). Derrida views the linguistic and theological concept of 'sign' as the root of Logocentrism.

Structuralists defined the linguistic 'sign' according to the signifier and the signified. The signifier represents the visible marks on paper, whereas the signified refers to the meaning attached to such written marks. The very oral power of the Word can be seen as a social production of knowledge. (Kelber 1990:24). Both the signifier and the signified determine the character of the written language. What can be clearly observed in the history of the 'sign' in Western philosophy and theology, is that the signified attaches meaning to the signifier and comes to take on reality or 'presence', by attributing transcendental or ontological status to the meaning of language.

For Derrida, Western thought has always based itself on binary oppositions, e.g, transcendent/immanent; spirit/flesh; primary/secondary; speech/writing; presence/absence. In the Fourth Gospel of John these binary oppositions or two-storied structures seem to be evident e.g. knowledge/ignorance (1:10,26,31; 3:10-11); spiritual/literal (2:19-21; 3:3-4), Spirit/flesh (1:18;

3:16); heavenly things/earthly things (3:12), light/darkness (3:19-21; 1:7-9), Baptism in the Holy Spirit/water baptism (1:31;3:5); heavenly ascent/descent (1:51,3:13,3:31) These binary oppositions can be seen as oppressive and the whole purpose of deconstructive hermeneutics is to dismantle or destroy such oppressive binary thinking, because there is no peaceful co-existence but rather violent hierarchy (Derrida 1976:49; Derrida 1981: 41). For Derrida, binary thinking is oppressive and can be seen as violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other: the first term in each of the pairs above is privileged at the expense of the second term.

This suspicion is evident among post-structuralists across the academic spectrum, where the oppositional binary thinking has been challenged. In addition, this oppositional binary thinking seems to be evident in our own context between androcentrism and feminism, white and black, the dominant ideology and marginalised oppressed Third World communities. There is a great need for liberation to take place against such dominant ideological structures (Derrida 1976:140-154).

One of these Logocentric binary oppositions to which Derrida directs special attention, is that of 'Speech versus Writing'. In the logocentric climate of Western theology, philosophy and linguistics, orality has been treated as a transcendental signified with writing playing the role of the signifier. The human voice transmits the elementary and unitary experience, while writing is viewed as the outer face of it. The internal, truly valuable, oral speech is set above the exteriority of writing. Speech is assumed to be 'innocence', and writing 'a fall from innocence': the pure originality of oral verbalization is disrupted by the original sin of writing (Derrida 1976:29).

In Of Grammatology (1976), Derrida intends to erase the logocentric illusion of the transcendental signified in whatever form one encounters it. The exposure of orality's status as a 'signified' throws us back upon the written text. Engulfed by written textuality, we are called in effect to replay the Rabbinic experience in its most radical sense. In the same way that the Rabbis engaged in the interminable play with the signifiers, so does Derrida invite us to "think of writing as a game of language" (1976:50). Both choose the exile of '*grammatology*' over '*ontology*' which is either assumed or declared to be absent. For Derrida, as for the Rabbis, the written text constitutes the space of difference, misspelled by Derrida, as *differance* so to protect himself from privileging language with final reference (Derrida 1976:66).

For Derrida, Aristotle is a representative of logocentrism. He suggest another model of centered linearity: the progress of the discourse of the "the privilege of presence" in the immediacy of spoken or oral signifiers (Derrida 1976:34). Aristotle wrote, "Spoken words (*ta tēphonē*) are the symbols of mental experience (*pathēmata tēs psychēs*) and written words are symbols of spoken words (Derrida 1973: 11) . The Voice, producer of the first symbols, has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind (Derrida 1976:21-22). Logos or speech, he implies, is closer to the signified, more present in the experience of signification. The written word, therefore, is always implicated as twice removed from "constitutive meaning"; it is simply a phonetic representation of what has been spoken to refer to what is (1973:11). Derrida groups the three phenomena of thought, speech and writing into an essential duality,

{thought = speech} -writing

Thought and speech are identified with each another, but their relationship is one of essential and the immediate proximity. Thought is symbolized by spoken words, which in return are symbolized by written words. *Logos* (speech) can be seen as 'innocence' whereas writing has 'fallen' from that innocence. The pure originality of oral verbalization is disrupted by writing. Writing seems to force itself on the natural condition of the *Logos*, even violating and raping it (Derrida 1976:29). Derrida accuses Aristotle of logocentrism in the sense that "absolute proximity of the voice and being, of voice and the meaning of Being, of the voice and the ideality of meaning" (Derrida 1976:23).

As Derrida explains, however, this privileging of speech or logos, is, in fact, "the origin of the notion of the 'signifier'" (1976:11). That is, within Aristotle's construction of meaning, speech and writing is the progress we have come to refer to as signification. Moreover, Aristotle's construction has remained relatively intact until this century; and has even in fact, come to embody "western metaphysics" to such a degree that Derrida suggest its renaming as "logocentrism."

5.3.1. Logos as Phonocentrism:

Derrida further argues that the privileging of speech over writing, which he called "phonocentrism," is a classic feature of Logocentrism. For Derrida modern analysis focuses on the oral text. Derrida criticizes this tendency to attribute special status to the spoken word as he labels this as phonocentrism. Phonocentrism treats writing as a contaminated form of speech. When we hear speech we attribute 'presence', to it, which seems to be absent in writing. Writing does not need the writer's presence, where speech implies an immediate 'presence',

which seems to be lacking in writing (Derrida 1981:24; Selden 1985:85). During the time of the Renaissance there was a change from oral and aural way of perceiving the world to a primary visual one. In the twentieth century linguists shifted from the earlier stance which tended to give priority to writing, to one in which writing was seen as merely a reflection of speech. Post-structuralism can thus be seen as anti-phonocentrist.

McLuhan (1970) "identifies this shift in the 'sense ratios' in the human sensorium' as being precipitated through the spread of writing. With the advent of the printed word, the visual modalities of Western life increased beyond anything experienced in a previous society." Phonocentrism is often linked with a romantization of oral cultures. This romantization of the 'wholeness' of non-literate modes of being by some Western intellectuals has been linked with a sense of psychic alienation which may owe something to the autonomous nature of the written text (McLuhan 1970:30).

For Ong, writing restructures consciousness. He believes that more than any other human invention, writing has transformed human consciousness, and has simultaneously proved to be unresponsive to the human event. It is a manufactured, unnatural technology, whereas speaking of the spoken word is a power event. Writing destroys memory and seeks to control by analysis. The writer's audience is always fictional, whereas the oral mind is orientated towards action (1986:333). In oral cultures the telling of a story can unify human groups. One of the generalizable effects of writing is separation. Writing is diacritic as it divides and creates distance. It separates the known from the knower. Between the knower and the known, writing interposes a visible object, the written text. Writing creates a phenomena in which knowledge itself can be thought of as an object, distinct from the knower (Baumann 1986:36).

Whereas oral cultures tend to merge interpretation of data with data itself, writing separates interpretation from data. Persons from oral cultures will often give an interpretation of what they originally said and clearly believe that the interpretation is exactly what they said in the first place. The written text is a visual given, a datum, separated from any utterer or hearer or reader. The understanding of the written text always involves interpretation (Ong 1986: 39).

Writing distances the word from sound, reducing oral-aural evanescence to the seeming quiescence of visual space. This distance is not permanent, for every reading of the written text consists of restoring it, directly or indirectly, to sound, vocally or in the imagination. Whereas in oral communication, the source (speaker) and the recipient (hearer) are present to one another, writing distances the source of the communication (the writer) from the recipient (the reader), both in time and space (Ong 1986:39). According to Culler, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau declared that 'Books teach us to talk about things we know nothing about', and further argued that writing would dehumanize language by separating author from the text (Culler 1982:103-105). Rousseau's perspective was phonocentric.

Ong regard 'primitive scratches' as 'writing' and 'speech is ancient archaic.' Writing can be seen as brand new in the sense that it has been with humanity for only about 5000 years (1986:34). Ong repeatedly refers to orality as 'natural' and writing as 'artificial'. Although on several occasions he admits "to say that writing is artificial is not to condemn it but to praise it" (1982:82). He further concludes that writing is dead and the speech can be seen as more real.

Ong declares that

Sound is more real or existential than other sense objects despite the fact that it is also more evanescent. Sound itself is related to the present actuality rather than to the past or future. It must emanate from a

source here and now discernibly active, with the result that involvement with the present, with the here and now, existence and activity' (1967:111). He further adds that 'Voice is alive (1967:309).

In all human cultures the spoken word appears as the closest sensory equivalent of fully interior thought: thought as nested in speech (λογος ένδιαθετος) (Ong 1967:37). Ong further observed that,

We are so literate in ideology that we think writing comes naturally. We have reminded ourselves from time to time that writing is completely and irremediably artificial (1987.129)

He further supports and strengthens this idea with that of natural, oral speech, whereas writing is completely artificial. There is no way to write 'naturally.' Oral speech is fully natural to a human being, in the sense that every human being in every culture who is not physiologically impaired learns to talk. Writing or script differs from speech in that it is not learned automatically (Ong 1986:31).

For a beginner, learning to write involves "the most arduous discipline" whilst speech comes about with less pain than writing. Speech is not drilled in with the grim determination that often marks the teaching of writing. Writing is learned by concentration and rarely becomes as spontaneous as speech. The spoken words lend themselves to everyone whereas the written word is lent only to the select few (Ong 1967:94-116). In "*Presence of the Word*" Ong refers to the spoken word as

The Word in its purest form, in its human and most divine form, in its holiest form. The word which passes orally between man and man to establish and deepen human relations. (1967:124)

Derrida criticized the romantic tendency among linguistic and literary theorists to value speech over writing, *Homo loquens over Homo scriptor*. He is outraged with Western hermeneutics

for using the Logocentric model, and for dishonestly using reason in order to have pure communion with the world and this can thus be seen as a seduction of logocentric reason.

According to Moore, Derrida's certainty of reason or the absolutization of meaning can be seen as a tyranny which is sustained by repressing writing. He is offended by the implicit claims of reason. He reminds the West of the most shameful atrocities that were committed by rationalist Western literate cultures, e.g. the mass genocide of six million Jews by the Nazi, the Atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and closer to our own context the 'violent rape' by Capitalism on marginalized communities by Colonialism, all performed in the name of reason or logic (1995:1-17).

Derrida asks the question, "What prevents the sign (*totem* = written or visible marks) from being a full presence?" He detects that there is a crack in the binary opposition of speech and writing, and that speech seems to be privileged in the Western tradition over writing which is viewed as secondary. This stops the sign from being a full presence. The violent hierarchy between speech and writing reveals a power struggle of "presence and absence," "being and non-being." The major concern for Derrida is to destabilize this power struggle between speech as superior and writing as inferior. He rejects the Logocentric model of the West that privileges speech over writing (Caputo 1987:193). For Francis Bacon, the hierarchy between speech and writing can easily be undone and reversed. For Bacon both speech and writing share certain writerly features. Both are signifying processes which lack 'presence'. (Selden 1985:87).

The whole process of reversing the oppressive binary thinking is not just to replace the superior term which is speech, with writing as inferior, because the result will be the same kind of

oppression in another form. The whole process of hierarchical reversal is a rather complex exercise. For Ruf, Derrida rejects the whole notion that something can be present for thought, because everything we think or experience has for us existence in a system of differential relations (Ruf 1989:30).

Derrida goes on to invent the term '*differance*,' a neologism (neither a word nor a concept), a term that refers both to '*defer*' and '*differ*.' *Differance* encompasses the meaning absent from difference. *Differance* will expose the divided nature of the 'sign' or the hierarchical opposition between speech and writing. In French the 'a' in '*differance*' is not heard, and so we will hear only 'difference'. This ambiguity becomes apparent only in writing. The French verb '*différer*' means both to '*differ*' and to '*defer*.' The term '*defer*' signifies an endless postponement of 'presence' (Kearney 1984:105-133). Now the word '*difference*' (with an e), can never refer to '*differer*' as temporisation. Thus the word *differance*, the neographism of difference (with an a) is to compensate economically this loss of meaning (Derrida 1982 6-15). For '*differance*' can refer simultaneously to the entire configuration of its meanings, postponement and submission (Derrida 1982:8; Derrida 1976: 7,20, 49). Derrida suggests that "I provisionally give the name *differance* to this sameness which is not identical; by the silent writing of its *a*, it has the desired advantage of referring to differing, both as spacing or temporalizing and as movement that structures dissociation" (Derrida 1973:129-130).

There is the "silent writing" (Derrida 1973: 129) of *a* instead of *e* which "remains purely graphic: it is written or read, but never heard" (Derrida 1973:132). Put together, these two points mean that *differance* "is put forward by a silent mark, by a tacit monument, or a pyramid-keeping in mind the capital form of the printed letter but also the passage from Hegel's

encyclopedia where he compares the body of the sign to an Egyptian pyramid. The *a* of the *differance*, therefore is not heard; it remains silent, secret, and discreet, like a tomb" (1973:132).

In this way Derrida extends the meaning of differences to indicate the dependence on a chain of linguistic terms, or a field on infinite substitutions that can always be extended, reviewed or recontextualised. Meaning for Derrida is never in the present: it emerges from a play of 'differences' between various terms in the written text (Derrida 1978:25). The play on the word 'differences' is one of Derrida's most celebrated messages. He further demonstrates that there is no phonetic writing. The replacement of 'a' for 'e' cannot be heard in the pronunciation. In order for the double game of duplicity to be played, writing must already be full of duplicity or double meaning. The speaking subject must resist the power of the spoken *Logos* by maintaining an indefensible position of empiricism, erasing the distinction between the truth of fact and the truth of reason. This is only possible through *différance* (Derrida 1982:8). One could take the risk of saying, "With its *a*, *differance* to what in the classical language could be called the origin or production of differences. Its locus and operation will therefore be seen wherever speech appeals to difference" (Derrida 1973:130).

Words begin to move, to take on unintended connotations, to be received in unexpected ways. Signifiers are no longer fixed to their signifieds, but begin to point beyond themselves to other signifiers:

The meaning of meaning [...] is infinite implication, the indefinite referral of the signifier to signifier [...] its force is a certain pure and infinite equivocality which gives signified no respite, no rest, but engages in its own economy so that it always signifies again and differs (Derrida 1978:25).

To question the bond between sound and sense is to subvert the metaphysical tradition of logocentrism at its roots. Writing for Derrida is "that which exceeds, and has the power to dismantle, the whole Western traditional attitude to thought and language." In the situation of speech, the presence of the speaker and hearer secures meaning which determines truth. The concept '*differance*' is to destabilize the presence of speech (*Logos*) and to abolish the idea of absolute meaning of speech (*Logos*) that seems to receive preference over writing. The purpose of '*differance*' is to create a disturbance at the level of the signifier which graphically resists such reduction as it offers its own unstable meaning (Derrida 1982:6; Berman 1988:205).

Catherine Pickstock (1995) in 'After Writing' argued against Derrida who associates orality with the metaphysics of presence, self-identity and stasis which are charged with sophistry. For Pickstock, Derrida is not merely playing with words, of making language deathly by instituting the very thing that he abhors at the centre of his logocentric critique. Sophistry is a charge against the commercialization and instrumentalization of language, of accumulating rhetoric in order to achieve more of whatever is required. For Pickstock, Derrida associates writing with capital and the monetary exchange of *différance* (1995).

Derrida uses the term '*supplément*' to convey the unstable relationship between speech and writing. In French '*suppléer*' means to substitute, or some thing that completes or makes an addition. Derrida further insist that the writing is not a '*supplément*' to the spoken word (Derrida 1976:244; Ong 1982:166). The graphic sign the visible mark of the written text stands in for the phonemic sign. It is therefore the 'sign of signs', while the oral sign is a 'sign of things.' Writing then is seen as supplementary. The graphic sign of writing is particularly supplemental, since it is a supplement to a supplement, a sign of a sign. Derrida strongly argues

that writing should not be subordinated to speech, because this subordination is nothing more than an historical prejudice. (Derrida 1976:144).

With reference to Rousseau's text, he describes writing as technique added to speech. For Rousseau,

Language is made to be spoken, where writing lacks presence and serves only as a supplement (Derrida 1976:144)

For Rousseau writing serves as a substitute for speech. Culler noticed that '*supplément*' is already at work between speech and writing. The question we need to ask is 'How?' Writing can be added to speech if speech is not self sufficient and if there is a lack of absence that enables writing to be a supplement. Rousseau condemns writing and views it as a destruction of metaphysical presence, a disease of speech. In the work of Rousseau writing reveals an endless chain of '*suppléments*' (Derrida 1976 150; Culler 1982:103-105).

In the binary opposition of speech and writing temporal priority distinguishes the first term (speech) in each pair where the second entity can be seen as a *supplément*. In the case of speech and writing, writing came later in the history of humankind. The result of this is that the first term in each opposition can be seen as privileged. Derrida pointed out that speech, untouched by the forces of what is supplementary, possesses no truth-value, because there is no original un-supplemented speech but only a desire for it or a myth creating it (Leitch 1988:284; Watson 1994:79).

According to Norris, Rousseau's text, meaning or presence is never fixed or absolutized but it is always deferred. The process of supplementation exists because of a lack in speech which

requires help from writing. What can be observed in Rousseau's text is that there is nothing outside the empirical text, but the writing in our different cultures forms a chain of supplements. Presence (Logos) does not require a transcendental signifier in order to authenticate meaning, but meaning is reconstructed by a chain of '*supplements*,' and therefore meaning is always '*deferred*,' in an endless supplementary process by the play of signification (Norris 1987:97-140).

Derrida's logocentricism accounts for writing as a system of traces that forever *defers* delivery, mere abstract tokens of postponed value that can never be realized in itself. In favouring writing over orality, Derrida denies a real *différance* to the radical flow of traces which are the uttered or spoken voice, where each syllable must pass to give way to the next, in order for meaning to arrive (1978). Derrida accounts for language as an infinite series of traces, as temporal rather than spatial, as breathing rather than writing, as living rather than dead. In opting for writing against speaking, Derrida opted for the inscribed tombstone against the contingent body, for chiselled, weathered, and finally crumbling letters, holding out against time (Pickstock 1995). Spacialization is the form that sophistry takes in modernity. The ancient and modern sophist, like Derrida, hang on to life as capital, and writing as space.

Saussure interprets history somewhat differently. Although he clearly privileged speech over writing, he considered historically that the Western world had privileged writing over speech, because of the permanence and status which literature held in developed countries (Derrida 1976:238).

Royle observed that writing for Derrida is not directed to the illusionary reality of the Logocentric model of the West, but meaning can be understood as a system of differences. For Derrida writing has to free its axis from the classical categories of history that have imprisoned and debased its presence and meaning at the expense of speech (Royle 1995:18-19).

For Derrida phonocentrism and logocentrism relate to centrism itself, the human desire to posit a central presence at the beginning and the end of interpretive interest. It is this longing for a centre, an authorizing pressure, that creates hierachical oppositions. The opposition between speech and writing takes its place within this pattern. Derrida's basic critique against the Logocentric model of the West centres around the problems of meaning and interpretation. His skepticism and anti-realist activity is to challenge the oppressive binary opposition between speech and writing and the whole idea of meaning.

5.4. Meaning and Interpretation:

Derrida's rejection of the Logocentric model of the West is largely based on the fusion of Heidegger's and Nietzsche's critiques of Western metaphysics. Derrida refuses to accept that there is a transcendental signifier that gives meaning to all of history and truth. Meaning is not an illusionary constructed reality, where the signifier and the signified are fused to create a 'sign' (*semeion*). For Derrida the meaning of the sign comes from another sign. Derrida opposes the idea that there is something like literal or true meaning or absolute meaning in the understanding of the social construction of reality (Leitch 1988: 277-282).

The rejection of any literal or true meaning shifts the interpretation from the transcendental signifier to the reader, who needs to interpret the text. Meaning is reduced to the self and there can be many legitimate understandings of the written text or different perspectives. Meaning is never full 'presence' in a sign system but always a substitute (Norris 1982:32).

Derrida's argument is that no meaning can be finalised in a 'speech act,' because it is only in the nature of a written text that meaning can be cited,

Every sign, linguistic or non linguistic, spoken or written, as small or large unity, can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new context in an absolutely non saturable fashion. (Easthope 1988:167)

For Derrida there is no 'single' meaning that can saturate the text, because the text can always be interpreted beyond its original context. The written sign is a mark that can be repeated in the absence not only of the subject who is uttered in a specific context but also of a specific addressee. The written sign is not bound to a specific context, but it breaks its real context and can be read in a different context regardless of what the author's intention is or its social, historical *Sitz im Leben* is. The written sign is subject to spacing, because it is separated from other signs in the particular chain of differences, and furthermore it is separated from 'present reference' (that is, can only refer to something not present) (Selden 1985:88). Writing involves a certain irresponsibility, because if signs are repeatable out of context then, "What authority does it possess in the light of meaning and representation?"

Derrida agreed that some interpretations are more powerful than others, because meaning is determined by a system of forces which are not personal. It does not depend on the subjective identity, but on the field of different forces, the conflict of forces that produce interpretations

(Easthope 1988:168). Meaning is a product of the play of differences. There is no final meaning to the signification process. This means that the signifier is not subordinated to the signified. For Derrida the absence of the transcendental signified extends the realm and the play of signification to infinity (Degenaar 1992:201). For Culler meaning is context-bound but the context is boundless. The context itself is a text which must be interpreted. Meaning can be interpreted as a product of a play of differences in a text within a context. Both context and text must always be defined, delimited, read and interpreted (1982:123).

The written text has been described in various ways depending on the paradigm used by the speaker. The written text is seen as a document producing information of the mind of the writer and his view of life. The written text can be seen as a monument with its own autonomy, "a timeless, self-possessed structure of meaning" (Degenaar 1992:200).

A written text is a happening in which signs and the traces of signs make themselves available to the reader for the adventure of understanding. The text is an episode in the all-encompassing textuality. For Derrida there is nothing outside the written text or there is nothing outside of context (Degenaar 1992:200).

Derrida refuses to accept that there is something like 'oral text,' because this leads to the Structuralists and Form critics who want to imprison the oral formulae of the *Logos* and reduce it to a written text (Fuchs 1994:401). He further argues that meaning must be free from the prison house of the Western tradition that has enslaved the written text with a dishonest metaphysics of presence. This violent hierarchy between speech and writing as constructed by the Structuralists is an economy of power. This economy of power exists among the literate

who violently want to secure meaning over speech by drawing on the assumption that there are structured forms in the written text (Ruf 1989:31). This remains a question of debate because with structured forms come boundaries and social maintenance of the written text. Immediately, an axiomatic expression can be seen as a false identity of the written text. Derrida insists that the oppressive hierarchy between speech and writing must be destabilized and even collapsed in order to free meaning from these oppressive hierarchical structures. The premise for meaning is built on a false identity which is constructed on the metaphysics of presence. The whole purpose of the ideology of representation is to privilege speech over writing, and to establish a regime of power and a disciplinary exclusion (Fuchs 1994:481; Devitt 1987:220-221).

The question that rests with the reader is, "How do you overthrow this oppressive hierarchy?" First the reader needs to point out its arbitrary status, and then has to cancel out 'Truth' or '*Logos*' and its will to power, because the dominant discourse or the Western tradition has established oppressive viewpoints. When interpreting oral signs, the reader has to recognize certain fixed and identical forms in the written text and whatever accent or distortion may be involved in the utterance of the word, it calls on the reader to exclude the accidental 'phonic' sound and then to recover the pure form. This form is the repeatable signifier thought characteristic of writing (Selden 1985:88). What can be observed is that speech is a product of writing.

Derrida's re-situation of the "Self" at the margins relates directly to the notion of "intertextuality," where the reader is a 'text,' one of many 'texts' involved in the act of reading. His concept of 'text' is not synonymous with "book or scriptism,".....

A text is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. (Long 1992:55)

In an article from 1966, Derrida said: "the trace is the erasure of selfhood, of one's own presence, and is constituted by the threat or anguish of its irremediable disappearance. An unerasable trace is not a trace, it is a full presence, an immobile and incorruptible substance, a son of God, a sign of parousia and not a seed, that, mortal germ" (1978:230). In a book published in 1967, a year before the Sorbonne lecture on *differance*, he opposed *trace* to the classical God of positive theology (Derrida 1976:71):

The subordination of the trace to the full presence summed up in the Logos, the humbling of writing beneath a speech dreaming its plenitude, such are the gestures required by an onto-theology determining the archeological and eschatological meaning of being as presence, as parousia, as life without difference; another name for death, historical metonymy where God's name holds no check. That is why, if this movement begins its era in the form of Platonism, it ends in infinitist metaphysics. Only infinite being can reduce the difference in presence. In that sense, the name of God, at least as it is pronounced within classical rationalism, is the name of indifference itself (Derrida 1976:71)

From Decartes to Hegel, God's infinite understanding is the other name for the *Logos* as self presence (Derrida 1976:98).

For many, the concept of the "text" in the work of Derrida has created a great amount of confusion. Writing for Derrida is 'free play' or the element of undecidability within every system. Derrida's "endless play" grows out of an encounter with another text, e.g. text from Plato, Rousseau and the work of Saussure (Bryant 1989:73).

In speech, the signifier (sound) and the signified (meaning) are given together. Form and meaning are immediately perceived. Voice, intonation, gesture, and the other communicative devices used by both the speaker and receiver help to clarify the meaning of the message. Writing is different because the signifier is in the form of words that have many possible forms of meanings once they are separated from the person who wrote them. Therefore, the signified (the meaning) is not given: it must be interpreted by the reader. This is what Derrida calls 'free

play' of words that can never be 'pinned down' to a meaning. Words are simply floating with no meaning attached to them. There is no common meaning to be found (Bryant 1989:73-75).

Derrida takes this notion of 'freeplay' a step further as he expands it beyond speech and writing and begins to question the whole concept of structure or centre of the written text. There is "no absolute meaning outside and above the world of discourse that gives significance to the whole interpretive interest,": there is no centre to define and guide interpretation. Rather, there is freeplay between the signifier and the signified, i.e. the message takes on a different meaning depending on who is receiving (reading) it (Bryant 1989:73-75). According to Norris, for Derrida, the concept of a CENTER (*Logos*) to structure is non-existent. Writing remains an endless displacement of meaning that places language beyond the reach of any stable or self authenticating knowledge. For Derrida, oral language belongs to a generalized writing which is ever disguised by the illusion of the metaphysics of presence (Norris 1982:29-32). The craving of writing for a self-presence and self-identity is withheld by phonocentrism that views speech as privileged over writing. This leads to a rejection of the Logocentric model of the West.

Derrida rejects all forms of Logocentrism. He claims it is a form of onto-theology that denies the social, historical, finite and contingent character of human thought. Logocentrism fails to see that meaning is tied to humans, which is a changing system of relations. Logocentrism is an onto-theological attempt to evade the recognition of human finitude that is able to give meaning to the written text. Logocentrism undermines the philosophy of Idealism and Western humanism (Ruf 1989:320; Derrida 1976: 56-65).

In the philosophy of Descartes whose premise was built on methodological doubt of the written text, as he came to realize that one cannot doubt oneself in relation to meaning. This is clearly stated in the following words, "*Cogito ergo sum*," 'I think therefore I am.' The 'I' becomes the determiner of the written text. What is evident in the hermeneutics of Derrida is a paradigmatic shift from the Western tradition whose underlying basis for meaning is deeply rooted in the metaphysics of presence to the 'I' or self identity which determines the meaning of discourse.

Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher put this into closer perspective, in view of the "I and Thou" theory which reveals a relationship between *Logos* and humans (metaphysics of presence) which gives meaning to the 'I' and its reality and the meaning of the written text and context. He became less interested in perceiving the mind or life experience of the author behind the written text. He is more interested in the integrity of the text, in developing a dialogical relationship with the text, and a dialogue between the speaker and the context (Kepnes 1988:193-213).

For Coleridge the primary word 'I-Thou' can only be spoken with the whole being (personhood) and all language and meaning is fundamentally rooted in the Divine *Logos*. Every word that proceeds from a person's mouth in whom 'Will and Reason' are united is in itself analogous is a symbol of the Divine *Logos* (Perkins 1994:271).

Gadamer further identifies that writing is the one that "presents the hermeneutical problem in all its purity" because writing is a kind of alienated speech. The self-alienation that takes place when meaning is written down, that is to say 'inscribed'- the written signs per se- are incapable

of yielding any meaning, unless they are transformed back into speech and meaning. The weakness of writing, is the lack of support for the written inscription from the circumstances of its inscription (Froman 1991:139). The sign language refers back to the actual language of speech. For Gadamer writing needs to be extended to aesthetics, the whole sphere of art and its complex questions. He later notes that the meaning of the text extends also to oral utterances (interface between oral and written-residual orality) and that Schleiermacher first discerned this truth (1985:353).

The perspective of Western meaning and representation is rejected by Derrida as he views the whole constructed reality of meaning as an illusion. The "I and it" gives meaning to the written text. The 'I' refers to the self-identity, and the 'it' refers to the written text, for the 'I' determines the meaning of the written text. Linguistically the 'I' referred to '*floaters*' (means whoever says it). The 'I' is not attached to a designatable object or a person but it refers to the individual's own personal world or awareness (Ong 1995:22).

The undecidability of writing is not a matter of bare play of signifiers, but rather an undecidability between writing as decentering. Derrida's attack is against the constant danger of attributing 'presence' and meaning to the *Logos*. His attack is not against the human need to seek truth, nor does he deny that truth can be found, but his major argument against Logocentrism is that truth cannot be found in the "metaphysics of presence" because that is no truth. It falls outside the realm of scientific objectivity. What we claim to be truth can be seen as a questionable phenomenon.

The whole objective of deconstructionist hermeneutics is to adhere to these marginalized voices and to empower the reader to decide on the meaning of the written text. For Derrida the written text can no longer be compared with an extra-mental or external social or primordial reality like *Logos*. The written text remains a social construct of the West in the production of knowledge because beyond the written text are only traces of more written text. The sign points to other signs and it no longer refers to an independent reality, because there is nothing outside of the written text, in other words there is nothing outside of context.

Writing distances the word from the *plenum* of existence. In the original, spoken condition, words are always part of context that is pre-dominantly non-verbal. The immediate context of spoken words is never simply other words. Context always controls the meaning of the spoken word. (Ong 1986:39). In primary oral communities the source (speaker) and the recipient (hearer) are present to one another in order to affirm meaning and representation. For words are sounds, and sounds are events. Words modify the holistic situation and in one way or another they explain and interpret it.

It is in orality that the verbal expression has its origin. The oral Word is essentially a call, a cry. It is not a thing or a reification, but an event an action. The oral word is a call from someone to someone, an interpersonal transaction. No interactive persons, no words. The oral word in meaning and representation is a unique kind of event, to whom the word is addressed, called out, cried out, The oral word is a call, a cry, addressed to another person. The oral word is essentially explanation or interpretation, a clarification by one person of something that to his or her interlocator (Ong 1988:267).

There is no centre from which one can finalise meaning, as the trained reader becomes creatively involved in the play of significations. Meaning cannot be finalised by linking the written text with the writer's intention (like Structuralism, Historical Critical Method) as a source of meaning. Interpretation is not to recover some meaning that lies behind the written text, but to participate in a play of possible meanings.

5.5. Deconstruction, Criticism and Counter Criticism:

The Deconstruction of Derrida has invited increasing criticism across the academic spectrum, as scholars and literary critics launched an epistemological attack against its alleged relativism or skepticism. The work of Derrida has shaken the epistemological structures of the Western tradition, which is built on the illusion of Logocentrism. A plea from Derrida is to abandon the implicit "Logocentrism of Western metaphysics" in order to adopt an "endless play" of written text, so that we can come to see reality as textual (Derrida 1976:56-65).

According to Derrida's critique of Logocentrism, he deconstructs the binary opposition between speech and writing to demonstrate that the Western metaphysical tradition of *Logos* holds that meaning is 'present' in spoken language. For Derrida this is an illusion because of the arbitrary nature of the sign, (e.g. speech over writing) and because there is no connection between the signifier and the signified. Language spells 'absence of meaning,' and meaning is a continual process of supplementation. For Long, Derrida's notion of *differance* functions to place the reader in a certain attitude with the text, which can be called a "style of accusation," but fails to provide the reader with a set of rhetorical tools (1992:52).

Snyman identifies the weakness of deconstructionism in that it fails to break from the philosophy of the subject or the authority of a secularized scripture, despite its "subversive gestures." The basic arguments that strengthen the skepticism of Derrida is his attack on the Western traditional notions of meaning and truth, reality and knowledge. Derrida insists that meaning is produced by the "play" between signifiers (e.g. absence and presence) of meaning

and that there will never be a unequivocal relationship between language and the world (1993:257).

In reaction to Derrida's theory of representation, there is a need to ask whether meaning is a result or a product of a relationship between signifiers. Truth or meaning for deconstruction can never be stable. Snyman notices that this can lead to *solipsism* (the doctrine that one cannot step outside the limits of one's own individual consciousness) (Snyman 1993:257). For Derrida, humankind can never know reality. This reveals the worst aspect of skepticism in the work of Derrida: humankind's failure to give meaning to reality. The work of Derrida can be seen as "radical skepticism" and the profound questioning of assumptions of truth and reality and an endless interrogation between written text and more written text. For Derrida it is not that the process of interpretation is ongoing, but that there is nothing the interpreter or even the text is trying to get at, no truth to which the text or its interpretation gives expression. As Ruf remarks,

The end-point of deconstructive thought, as Derrida insists, is to recognize that there is no end to the interrogative play between text and text. Deconstruction can never have a final word because its insights are inevitably couched in a rhetoric which itself lies open to further deconstructive criticism and can only be deluded in its claim to operate (...) outside the space of the text (Ruf 1989:74)

Derrida is accused of naive rationalism that fails to collapse the hierarchy between the sign and the signified, as deconstruction offers liberation, from extreme positions that hardly anyone holds (Ruf 1989:74). Deconstruction in undermining the structures of 'Truth' leads to accusations of ethical relativism, the claim that there is no universally justifiable moral code, principle or law, and that nihilism (the denial of value) prevails (Snyman 1993:257).

Clines in *The Ethics of Deconstruction*, views the hermeneutical process of deconstruction as unethical: it fails to show interest in any form of ethics. Clines goes on to point out a series of allegations against the work of Derrida's so called methodology of deconstruction, or "destructive methodology" of interpretation. Let me give a synopsis of the allegations that have been proposed by Clines;

First for Clines, deconstruction is nihilistic. The whole discipline of deconstruction is to undermine the existing structures of 'truth' and authority of the text, and to make the text mean anything he wants it to (1995:97). This view can be questioned, "What is truth, and who is the determiner of such truth?" According to Derrida, truth cannot be found in the "metaphysics of presence," but truth is determined by the 'I.' This can be seen as a paradox in the light of the Biblical narrative which explicitly sees humankind as sinful, and which possesses no truth in itself. In the Gospel, the Logos proclaims that He is the 'Eternal Truth'(...)

The Logos answered, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)

The essence of this 'Truth' is not a result or production of Western interpretation, but the 'Truth' of the *Logos* serves as a universal principle, as it gives meaning to being and to its interpretations. The basis of such 'Truth' refuses to be locked into the epistemological paradigm of the Enlightenment, but the very core of its existence is deeply rooted in an oral matrix, (e.g. the Patriarchs, Prophets and in the Galilean ministry of Jesus). For those who have encountered such 'Truth' they have found it to be faithful and trustworthy.

Second, Deconstruction can be seen as dehumanizing. Derrida fails to see the text as a human product, in accordance with Roland Barthes, who announced the "death of the (A)uthor" (Clines 1995:97). It is not just the human element that is dehumanized in the work of Derrida, but also the rejection of the "I" (the death of God) that gives meaning to discourse or writing. This tends to nullify the basis of writing, because the whole hermeneutical cycle is humankind's need to understand the "I" which gives meaning to the interpretations of humankind.

Third, Derrida is hostile to all Logocentric claims of attributing fixed meaning to the text. The very purpose of deconstruction is to shake such axiomatic structures of meaning and to collapse their very basis. Derrida's radical skepticism wants to destroy the very basis of the metaphysics of presence which serves as the fundamental basis of the Christian tradition. Moore says,

To deconstruct that tradition would be to think what up to now has been unthinkable, to think what this history has been able to dissimulate or forbid. To read all the text of our culture as kind of symptoms...of something that could not be presented in the history of philosophy, and which, moreover, is nowhere present, since all of this concerns putting into question the major determination of the meaning of Being as presence. (1994:35)

The work of deconstruction seems to be a greater illusion of reality in believing that what is 'presence' spells 'absence.'

For Derrida, writing can be seen as 'free play': nothing is fixed or stable. If deconstruction is a 'play' then the play is not serious and can thus be seen as not ethical. Derrida mainly concentrates on the work of Rousseau as he opposes the saddened, negative, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic thinking in order to adopt the Nietzschean way of thinking (Clines1995:99). The play of deconstructionism possesses no centre as it builds on the assumptions that there is no truth, no origin of the world which offers meaning to the text, a 'play' where the end is nowhere and nothing.

Fourth, Deconstruction can be seen as atheistical, as it launches an attack on the *Logos*, the gulf between language and reality. In Western metaphysics, God's presence is the ultimate guarantee of meaning. Hart in *Interpretations, Signs, and God*, views Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1976) as a language without God or the Word. Derrida's deconstructionist approach is in the final analysis "the death of God." Dominic Crossan suggests that, "what Derrida is saying leads straight into the contemporary revival of negative theology" (Derrida 1973:134; Hart 1985:48).

This calls into question the future of onto-Being of the *Logos* in the light of interpretive meaning. There is a need for onto-theology to discover the classical written text of the Word, so that the future generations can see and experience the intervention of Logos in their lives in a community of faith and the world. Only then is meaning and representation possible in humankind's quest for truth and authentic being. Bryant affirms this statement,

When there is no Other to be encountered and through which we are known, it is hardly surprising that when we probe the depths of things we come up empty handed.
(Bryant 1989:77)

Logos is more than a *genre* of writing. There is an experience of transcendence that gives meaning to the self or in Derrida's terminology the 'I'. For Derrida the whole reality of transcendence can be seen as a misrepresentation of reality. The 'Self,' as in the written text of onto-theology can be seen as an entry into a tradition in a life-giving way. Deconstructionism is ahistorical in making use of the 'Logocentric model' and then in violently opposing the very assumptions of the metaphysics of presence. This is problematic, as the Modern West wants to free itself from the hypothesis of God. Without the reality of Transcendence itself, we are unable to transcend the dead ends of our own making (Bryant 1989:77-85).

In the Gospel of John, "the *Logos* became Flesh (1:14)," and speech both in its spoken and written form, was transformed. Speech as the body of the Spirit seeks to incorporate us into life and, that means divine life. Speech is not just a 'mere clothing' or 'something external' but the way into the depth of the soul and body. The very aim of the *Logos* made Flesh, in Jesus Christ, and in the word spoken or written, is to transform the hearer so that he or she can understand the very essence of the eternal *Logos*. The *Logos* is made flesh in order that flesh might be lifted up into the *Logos* (Bryant 1989:78).

5.6. Summary:

It may be argued that Derrida, who opposes the Western tradition of 'metaphysics of presence' which is rooted in the eternal *Logos*, agrees that it is impossible to overthrow it, because it existed at the beginning of creation or outside the realm of scientific objectivity. To many hermeneuts, deconstruction is viewed as a new paradigm which can resolve and even destroy the basic structures of *Logos* in Western thought. Derrida's failure to provide the reader with the critical tools to deconstruct such oppressive hierarchies shows that he remains intrinsically gripped by Idealism and Western Romantic thinking. As much as he wants to change the oppressive binary oppositions between speech and writing, Deconstruction continues to affirm the ideology of the written text in relation to the power of speech. Binary oppositions represent a way of seeing ideologies.

For Derrida there is an "emancipatory element" in deconstruction: to free language from oppressive binary thinking. Derrida wants to free himself from the epistemological axis of *Logos* but he is deeply trapped in the Western Enlightenment paradigm. He wants to re-

affirm the authority of self-identity in the light of the 'Other'. The 'Other' remains a social construct or non-entity of the West and is in desperate need of deconstruction itself. For Derrida, man (generically) and the world are interwoven as it opposes any form of the 'Other' or the metaphysics of presence. There is nothing outside the 'written text'. In other words there is nothing outside the context. This implies that there is no origin to existence and all of reality remains in a state of flux. There is no absolute truth, and truth is only possible in view of other written text which is inherently humanistic and idealistically driven by postmodern theorists.

In the context of the Johannine *Logos* readers and hearers let themselves be guided by the narrative dynamic to move from plural experience of the *logoi* (words) to that of the singular *Logos* which takes command over the narrative text. The *Logos* does not represent an extra-linguistic mode of authority but an extra textual one (Kelber 1990:128). The very *Logos* epitomizes oral utterance.

Meaning, in the view of deconstructive hermeneutics, remains in traces of more written text, as presence spells absence, in a continual process of supplementation. For Derrida, the Western paradigm of Logocentrism has to be transformed by critical interrogations. One of the many weaknesses of deconstruction is that it refuses to break away from the Western metaphysics of presence. A pre-condition for the appearance of grammatology as a discursive practice was the formation of a stable meta-language that constituted a set of linguistic and textual objects. This meta-language received its authority in the philosophical schools and can be seen as a larger textual ideology that assigned cultural power to the grammatically trained. The definition of the signifier-signified relation entailed the separability of the meaning from the lexis of the written text. The interpretation of the 'Book' became an extension of institutionally based

authority. The philosophical discourse of speech and writing was a need for institutional control over speech and the interpretation of written text and meta-language and linguistic disciplines. The written text was privileged over speech which came to be seen as ephemeral and local.

The *Logos* incarnates itself in written text as writing emanates from orality which constitutes common thinking in First century Galilee about the relations of speech and writing. By oral standards, not even the personification of the *Logos* is entirely baffling, because what typifies oral verbalization is the inseparable unity of speaker and message (Kelber 1990:128). *Logos* can thus be seen as an appropriate metaphor for transcendence. Like oral speech the *Logos* is ephemeral. It has no visual or physical means of preservation and it manifests itself in a moment of verbal action. Its prime potency is sound which is a strong characteristic of divinity.

Having experienced the power of '*grammatology*' there is a need to examine the ideology between orality and the written text, the literate and the illiterate, which ushers us into a new power struggle as Derrida forms a new hierarchy in order to silence oral cultures and to strengthen the dominant ideology of the written text through the 'make believe' that power is in the hands of the reader.

CHAPTER SIX

6.The ideology between speech and writing from a South African perspective:

6.1. Introduction:

In South Africa, prior to the 1994 Democratic elections, the written text was a major tool used by the Apartheid government to engineer a social reality of poverty and oppression for the majority of communities in our country. It was an effective tool that was used to sustain power and to uphold the social boundaries of the dominant class which deepened the binary opposition between white and black, the literate and oral. One way of counteracting the social damage and injustice thus perpetuated by the Apartheid government, is to return to an Anthropology of Liberation and to rediscover the power and value of the spoken Word, and to use the spoken Word against the dominant ideological Western interpretive interest of the written text. The written text must no longer be seen as the ultimate paradigm for meaning and truth.

In the previous chapter, I focussed on the power of 'grammatology' and the need self identity of the written text. In the reading of Derrida's on *Of Grammatology* (1976) in reaction to Authority of the Word, I have posited a possible hermeneutical solution to step out of the literately developed paradigm of interpretation, and to identify us as the developing world, as distinct from the dominant ideology of the written text that has shaped the cultural identity and the social construction of our social context.

Derrida's Western counterparts find his anti-logocentric thesis somewhat disturbing and describe it as negative hermeneutics. In his work on Deconstruction, Derrida launches an attack against

the Structuralists (who privilege speech over writing or propose the idea of an oral text), imprison the oral formulae of the Word and want to reduce it to a written text. He refuses to believe that there is something like an 'oral text.' He further argues that meaning needs to free itself from the prison house of the Western interpretation that has enslaved the written text with dishonest 'metaphysics of presence' of the *Logos*. The hierarchy that exists between speech and writing as constructed by the Structuralist and modern historical critics can be seen as an economy of 'power' that exists among the dominant class, as it tries to secure 'meaning' over speech by drawing on the assumption that there are structured oral forms in the written text which are strongly embedded in an oral matrix (Ruf 1989:31). For Derrida this is not possible because meaning and representation do not exist beyond the sign or the written mark. Deconstruction encourages an anti-realism approach when it comes to the meaning of the written text.

In examining the Historical Critical method and its opponent, Deconstruction, in the light of the *Logos* tradition in the Gospel of John, I discovered that both interpretive methods have failed to provide the Third World counterparts with a liberating hermeneutic. As long as the written text is monologically constructed (reality seen from the dominant ideological perspective), it serves only the interest of the dominant class which results in unbalanced power relations between those from the 'other' side of history and the dominant class. What can be clearly observed is that there is an interplay between the historical critical method and deconstruction hermeneutics. Both want to sustain power over the spoken Word in order to enhance language as a closed system. Draper can no longer justify the hermeneutical hegemony of the dominant Western scholarship in the light of the history of the oral communities or the 'Other' (1996:2).

According to West, the Historical Critical method can be seen as a naive rejection of critical thought, as ineffective, irrelevant and ideologically loaded. West calls it the "ideology of objectivism" (West 1991:43). The Historical Critical method fails to provide oral communities with a practical and relevant understanding of their situation. Rather, it enhances a false construction of reality for oral communities and thereby perpetuates their silence.

No critical method can lay an absolute claim to truth. The Historical Critical method does not have absolute claims to truth, nor any other literate tradition. Meaning and truth in relation to Western scholarship has always been defined in relation to scientific verifiability in its own terms, not in terms of the body being a social system of communication. For too long history has been interpreted from the perspective of the dominant literate class. This is not to say that developed world counterparts should be ignored. Neither should the interpretive interest of the literate Western scholarship be rejected outright, but it is imperative that validity should be related to the perspective of the poor and oppressed, the voice of the 'Other.' Draper points out that absolutizing Western literate scholarship in a developing context can turn into the hermeneutical yoke of oppression (1996:2).

From the perspective of dominant Western literate scholarship, Deconstruction encourages multiplicity of meaning of the written text, because the reader is in a position to dialogue with the written text to affirm meaning and representation. This raises several questions; "Who is the reader?" (eg. the trained/untrained), and "With what tradition is he/she in dialogue?" Such questions have no relevance when interpreted from the perspective of the 'Other' or oral communities. Deconstruction thus fails to project a new reality or a gospel of the future for the

poor and the oppressed. Both these hermeneutical approaches are totally alien to the social and economic plight of oral people. Such an interpretation renders truth and meaning a product of Western interpretation which serves only the interest of their own socio-political and socio-economic advantage. The intention of the dominant class is to maintain control by using the written text which perpetuates false consciousness at the expense of the poor and oppressed.

Reading Derrida from a developing world perspective or from the perspective of the 'Other' could be liberating, were it not that it Derrida fails to step out of the Western paradigm or the Great tradition of the Western scholarly interpretive interest. The result of such interpretive interest can thus be seen as hegemonic against oral cultures. The arbitrary nature of the sign results in the unfolding of further binaries in relation to the written text which ushers us into a new power struggle between the literate and the oral. In our oppressive social history speech has been closely associated with oral communities whereas the written text is associated with the dominant or ruling class.

Derrida's major concern in arguing that writing comes before *Logos* as a transcendental signifier, is three fold: First it promotes the silencing of oral cultures. Second it strengthens the Western interpretive interest of the dominant class. Thirdly it conscientises the poor with Western beliefs and ideological practices. The power of the written text thus perpetuates false consciousness, sophistry and ideology.

What the Enlightenment failed to achieve has now been culminated and consummated in the work of Derrida: Western Idealism and authentic humanism on the exclusion of a transcendental signifier or "metaphysics of presence." Having freed humanity from the axis of a

transcendental signifier or *Logos*, socially constructed a context which serves the continual interpretive interest of the written text. This kind of linguistic and philosophical analysis poses a great danger when it is viewed from the perspective of the 'Otherness' or an oral community. This forces third world counterparts to awaken memory and call on the inward traditions of the soul, those traditions not constructed by the written text, but through the socio-cultural archive of indigenous knowledge for example: the performance of songs, rituals, poetry, art, storytelling. All of these re-enact and echo oral traditions as a mirror of the world above through the power of the eternal *Logos* which existed at the beginning of creation out of the memory of God and which give ultimate meaning to reality. The *Imago Dei* (the image of God of humankind) is reflected in the performance of age old orally transmitted traditions.

Derrida's hermeneutical shift, which allows the reader to decide on the meaning of the text, holds positive and negative implications for oral cultures. The work of deconstruction appears to be very convincing as the reader decides on the 'meaning' of the written text. In such instances, there is a need to ask: "Who is the reader?" in the construction of meaning and representation of the written text. The written text is less the construction of the poor and marginalized rather than the product of the trained reader who has been consciously restructured by the written text. Derrida's failure to provide hermeneutical tools to change the balance of power and to reverse the binary opposition between oral and written text, has failed to liberate those of primarily oral cultures in their quest for adequate meaning and representation. Deconstruction can only be seen as liberating as long as the dominant class views the written text as traces of more text. Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* would call it the "bewitchment of language or language as game." (Linge 1976:126). The written text remains an endless 'play' between signifier and signified which never points beyond themselves to the 'real' but rather to traces of yet more written text.

On the other hand, from a positive perspective, Deconstruction allows the reader of oral cultures to see history from their perspective and expose the atrocities that the Western interpretive tradition has committed against the poor and marginalized communities in the name of 'Reason' or Empiricism. According to West this shift is significant for "those on the underside of history" 'oppressed' people have more at stake than others in focusing on the tenuous and provisional vocabularies which have had and do have hegemonic status in the past and present societies (West 1992:46).

Negatively, the death of the (A)uthor (*Logos*) or transcendental signifier by Structuralist and Deconstructionist e.g. Barthes (1972; 1979), Nietzsche (1968), spells the end of the power and authority of the *Logos* for oral cultures in the face of the dominance of the written text. The idea that the reader decides on the meaning of the written text remains an illusionary socially constructed universe. The fictive reader remains a social construct by Western hermeneutics as those from the otherside of history are enslaved by a 'make believe' they hold power over the construction written text, because meaning and representation is already constructed by the dominant class for the 'Other' and is ideologically loaded. The written text secures power by acclaiming self-identity and autonomous status.

For Deconstruction, writing can be seen as a closed system. The written text is still firmly rooted in the Enlightenment paradigm as Deconstruction seeks to secure power over language which is seen as freeplay (endless deference of meaning) and resulting in traces of ever more and more written text, which serve to cover up the atrocities that the Western interpretive tradition has committed through the ideology of the written text against oral communities. Such false consciousness of interpretation has been achieved through the power of the written text in

announcing falsely constructed historical positions and in adopting an a-historical or a-political approach in relation to the socially constructed reality of oral communities. This leads us to identify deconstruction as ideology opposing ideology.

6.2. Deconstruction: Ideology opposing Ideology:

The work of Derrida is to create a 'new hierarchy' or a new ideology as it results in 'language opposing language' or 'ideology opposing ideology'. There have been different approaches to understanding the concept of 'ideology.' I would like to clarify my position and then to highlight the power of the written text in the context of this study. Ideological perspectives include, Marxism, Feudalism, Capitalism and Cultural but there is a need to narrow our focus on deconstruction as a new ideology. We can separate one ideology from another with difficulty because the major incentive of ideology is to perpetuate a distorted reality of the 'Other'.

The concept 'ideology' is a child of the Enlightenment. Ideology literally means the study of knowledge and ideas that belong to the 'great dream of the Enlightenment.' This term was coined by Destutt de Tracy, a French revolutionary aristocrat, during the French Revolution, who believed that reason, not violence, was the key to social reconstruction. Ideology was a new science of ideas which attempted to systematize in order to set aside religious and metaphysical prejudices. de Tracy argued that reason needed to replace religion, and that the power needed to be taken from the priests and to be invested in the hands of the scientific specialists. "The term ideology belongs to 'Modernity' and 'Post-modernity,' the epoch of secular rationality as it liberates humankind from mystification and irrationality, from the false reverence for *Logos*, to restore them to dignity of rational self determined being" (Eagleton 1994:2). Ideology is a revolution of the dominant

class at the level of the mind as it possesses the ability to socially conscientize marginalized communities and to perpetuate Western Idealism and true humanism.

Napoleon was the first to use the term in a negative sense, regarding the *ideologues* as thinkers who place their own ideas above the material interest of the state. Mannheim indicates that Napoleon's view was based on epistemological and ontological grounds. Napoleon discredited the *ideologues* because they lacked practical sense. Political realists of the nineteenth century came to use the term 'ideology' from their perspective in replacing scholastic modes of thought with political concepts of reality (Mannheim 1972:64). According to Larrain, prior to Marx, ideological distortions were accounted for by passions, superstition, individual interest, religious prejudices or man's self-alienation (1979:33).

For Foucault, ideology cannot exist without 'Power.' The meaning of the written text is a discourse of power that exists between the dominant ideology and oral cultures, the literate and the illiterate. In the hermeneutics of Deconstruction there is a shift from linguistic determination of the meaning of the written text to literate individuals who constitutes by power, power being the only ultimate principle of social reality (Grace 1993:87). Our power as individuals possesses the capacity to produce the truth we live by.

This idea of power is strongly supported by Cameron, who says that ideology is linked to the process of sustaining the relations of power of the dominant class. Meaning serves to sustain the relations of domination (1986:83). In this view Berger and Luckmann reveal pertinently, that "no human thought is immune to the ideolizing influences of its social content," and that humans

are transformed in the dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world: that man produces reality and himself (1976:204).

For the dominant class, 'truth' as a product of scientific reasoning and 'power' do not include oral communities. The power of interpretation in determining the meaning of the written text can be seen as a product of the elite or literate community. The literate world is a world of power and privilege, defined in terms of those excluded from it, namely the illiterate or oral communities. The literate culture assigns immense importance to the written word, whereas the elite has power over the art of writing. The prestige and power of the written text has been tied to social and political advantage. It has become the yardstick the Western literate tradition has used to 'civilize' oral cultures in our context. In the words of Oswald Spengler, "the spoken word is a possession of man, whereas phonetic writing belongs exclusively to those that are literate"(Graham 1987:12). The result is that oral cultures are unable to provide adequate meaning in the face of a literate society and its cultural development. The domination of the literate over the oral is not about meaning. It is about the constructions of power: the literate world discounts the oral.

The meaning of the written text as a product of the dominant ideology silences that of oral cultures. The written text is not a passive product, as it actively determines its own determinants (Eagleton 1976:17). Mosala agrees that there are no written texts that are free of the interest and the ideology of the ruling class, and few written texts can be seen as valuable for the poor and oppressed (West 1994:1-2). The written text, then can be seen as an ideological product. The written text is transformed into a unique, irreducible entity as ideology presents itself to the text as a set of significations which are already in certain structural relations (Eagleton 1984:20).

What is signified by the written text can be seen as a pseudo-real, that which is far removed from the interpretive interest of the poor and oppressed. This pseudo-reality does not correspond with the historical reality. What the whole process signifies can be regarded as ideological, which is in itself a signification of history (Eagleton 1976:17).

The falsely constructed social reality of history according to the literate Western paradigm was constructed alongside the

White myth of Western history, metaphysics, the white myth which resembles
and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his mythology,
Indo-European mythology, his own logos, that is the mythos of his idiom,
the universal form of that he must still reason (Young 1990:7)

A false social reality has been constructed for primarily oral cultures by the literate Western paradigm. Oral communities have come to believe that their social universe of oppression and poverty is an acceptable norm. The written text has been used by the literate Western tradition to destroy the beliefs, rituals, worship and cultural norms of primarily oral communities. The power of the written text with its thriving influence has succeeded in colonizing the minds of primarily oral people by excluding oral cultures from their history books, monuments, archives, and museums. They have conscientized the minds of the illiterate with the ideology of literate Western norms and perceptions. The triumphs and trials of primarily oral communities have been poorly recorded by the literate community. There are hardly any written records and evidence from their perspective of their poetry, artistic works, paintings because dominant literate class has willfully excluded illiterates from the written records. History was constructed in order to preserve the status quo of the dominant literate class and to perpetuate their ideological values and beliefs at the expense of primarily oral communities. Primarily oral cultures have come to accept that history ought to be like that and that their suffering and poverty were predestined by the

Almighty God. The meaning of the written text remains a construction of the dominant literate ideology. According to Levi Strauss, quoted by Norris,

The written text is an instrument of oppression, a means of colonising the primitive mind by allowing it to exercise the powers of the oppressor (1982:39).

Lévi Strauss hypothesized that writing should be linked to exploitation and oppression.

My hypothesis, if correct, would oblige us to recognize the fact that the primary function of written communication is to facilitate slavery. The use of writing for disinterested purposes, and as a source of intellectual and aesthetic pleasure, is a secondary result, and more often than not it may even be turned into a means of strengthening, justifying and concealing the other (Lévi-Strauss 1974:299)

This perspective is strongly supported by Antonio Gramsci quoted by Graff which distinguishes between 'domination' and 'hegemony'. Domination is exercised through force whereas hegemony refers to consensual formation, indoctrination, and maintenance of society. The written text is important for hegemony (1987:12).

For most of literacy's history, these functions have centered upon elite groups and their cohesion and power. For them, the uses of literacy have been diverse but have included common education, culture, and language (such as Latin, Greek etc); shared interest and activities; control of scarce commodities, such as wealth, power and even literacy, and common symbols and badges, of which literacy could be one (Graff 1987b:12)

The written text can thus be seen as a means of imperial control to exercise power through extensive use of written record and correspondence. Political power is closely linked to cultural and social hegemony which in many instances depend, on the ideology of the written text. It could be argued that written forms of communication, largely the territory of the dominant literate class, are more effectively anonymous. Anonymous tracts and circulars, for example, can be prepared, produced in secret. However

once a text is out of the author's hands, control over its use and dissemination is lost. The advantage of communication by voice (including gestures, clothes, dance, and so on) is that the communicator retains control over the manner of its dissemination -the audience, the place, the circumstances, the rendition. Control, then, of oral culture is irretrievably decentralized (Scott 1990:160).

The power of the written text has been powerful and extensive in the South African socio-political context. The written text was a major ideological tool used by the oppressor to colonised people of oral cultures. It was the medium whereby the oppressor communicated and organized resources, policies, and tactics. The written text was used to silence oral communities. The failure of these communities to 'reason' or apply the skill of logic resulted in a loss of economic, social and political power, as the dominant class conscientised the minds of these communities in constructing a false social universe for them.

The written text was used to conquer 'Blacks' (including Coloureds and Indians), in terms of their land, wealth and dignity. Oral communities were unable to defend themselves against the power of the written text as they failed hopelessly to understand the laws and legislation imposed on them. The written text had left the minds of illiterate communities in an state of ethical pain and false guilt. Actually it passed them by, and left them behind, with nothing. A classic example of the power of the written text is the way the dominant group used the Holy Bible to justify its atrocities against oral communities. According to West (1996), the dilemma that black South Africans face in their understanding of the Bible is seen in the following anecdote.

When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land.
The white man said to us 'let us pray.' After the prayer the white man had the land
and we had the Bible. (West 1996:2)

The anecdote reflects the paradox of the oppressor and the oppressed sharing the same Holy Bible and the same faith. The Holy Bible was used by the dominant class to 'spiritually' conscientize illiterate communities so that they could forget their plight and the pain of oppression whereas the liberating essence of the 'Logos' was twisted so that it could enhance 'white superiority' at the expense of illiterate communities or the poor and the oppressed. The written text

became the *opium* (drug), or as Derrida outlined in the work of Plato (1978), the *pharmakon* (drug) of illiterate communities.

The Biblical message was brought here by Western literate missionaries not to proclaim the 'Good News' of Jesus Christ but to enhance the false consciousness of the dominant literate class and to perpetuate the ideology and sophistry of the written text. From the outset, the missionaries recognized the value of the printed word in the spreading of both the Gospel and Western culture. The Gospel was closely linked with the ideology of British Colonialism. The Bible as a written *Logos* was used by missionaries together with catechetical materials and elaborate doctrinal statements and formal preaching styles. Oral cultures find the religious power circumscribed in a book first frightful and then absurd (Midgley 1998:180; Villa-Vicencio 1988:45).

The dominant group's major incentive was to bring an end to all heathenism and to impose the Western construction of meaning on primarily oral communities by showing that the Western paradigm of meaning and truth is the norm for all truth (Pui Lan 1991:17). Meaning and truth was measured according to the Western interpretive interest. The Western missionaries used the written text as a passport to civilize the African continent, as they imposed their Western beliefs and ethical values on primarily oral communities.

Oral communities have come to accept the "mythical construction of a white Christ," as this myth was closely associated with oppression and economic and social advantages which were deeply embedded in the layers of the colonial discourse of the written text. The West has constructed Jesus in their own image. He has been associated as the literate sage who has been moulded in a

colonial image which strengthens the ideology of the dominant class (Draper 1996:1-2). Truth and meaning was a falsely constructed social universe of the West as it sought to destroy and disintegrate oral cultures in order to establish superiority of the dominant class over oral communities.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), James Scott explains the silence of subordinate groups in the face of dominant ideological practice. Scott dramatized this reality in revealing two versions of ideological hegemony, eg the 'thick' and 'thin'. The 'thick' version of hegemony refers to government structures, educational systems etc. while the 'thin' version of ideological hegemony refers to oral or subordinate communities that hardly make any claim on the dominant ideology. Such ideological hegemony argues that the reason why oppressed people live in silence is because they use the words of the dominant class in order to describe their oppression. The dominant class makes the oral communities believe that their social reality is unchangeable, which is a misrepresentation of reality (1990:70-73; Willis 1991:26).

The power struggle between the dominant class and the illiterate or oral groups operates on two transcripts eg, the 'public' and 'hidden'. The 'public' transcript represents social structure whereas the 'hidden' transcript refers to the subordinate groups or oral cultures who offer seclusion, control, and anonymity, and is therefore a useful vehicle for ideological resistance. Each enactment is unique as to time, place, audience, as well as different from every other enactment. Gossip, rumour, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes and theatre are taken up, performed or learned as the option of the listeners and, serve as forms of resistance (Scott 1990:90;160). The dominant written text, deliberately, subjugate and marginalize the tales and texts of the oral cultures, they also subsume and co-opt them (West 1995:175-192). In the analysis of Scott, the oral cultures already

possess critical consciousness. This consciousness possesses the power to resist the influences of the false consciousness of the written text.

From the point of view of an analysis of orality-literacy, a hermeneutic of Logocentrism does not regard either the 'spoken' or the 'written' word as a closed system but sees it as a process of dialogism that exists between hearer and speaker, as it creates new meaning and truth. The reader and the hearer authenticate meaning, as the spoken word creates a sense presence with every word that is uttered (Ong 1982:169).

In the work of Gadamer in *'Truth and Method'* (1985), the concept 'dialogue' is central to his understanding of interpretation. Dialogue always takes place in relation to tradition, especially oral tradition. It is not simply a process that experience teaches us to know and govern. It is language, a genuine partner in dialogue and we belong to it, as the 'I' with the Thou. Historical existence is the 'horizon' of human existence. The history of the interpretation of any written text is an essential part of any interpretive activity (Long 1994:396).

Dialogue for Gadamer spells a 'fusion of horizons,' understanding is always the fusion of these horizons, the old and the new combined into a living reality, a fusion that leads to fundamental change not only in the interpreter's worldview but in his existential self. The written text if it is to be understood properly, must be understood in every particular situation in a different way (Kepnes 1988:213).

Gadamer's affirmation of human finitude implies that understanding is always tied to a concrete situation. The reader is rooted in a historical context, as is the written text. Dialogue is inseparable

from concrete human experience (Long 1994:399). This leads us to relate Gadamer's hermeneutics of dialogue to verbal communication.

For oral cultures, interpretation certainly took place in a dialogical setting. Oral utterances are inevitably discursive, verbal exchanges between two or more persons. The oral 'text' (the body as a social system of communication) reveals to us today more like an oral utterance: the interweaving of verbalization in the oral world. Oral habits of thought and expression are essentially interweaving with each other, which is deeply repetitive, built on formulaic expression, commonplaces, epithets and responsive to the total context in which they came into being (Ong 1995:15).

This view is strengthened by Botha's argument on gossip in relation to the Galilean peasant community. Gossip is among the most important social phenomena in the context of this study. To understand the power and importance of gossip one must recall the immense role of conversation in human beings. Most real people actively seek out occasions where they can spend their energies in talking to others. Conversation entails an integrated web of oral communication which is the foundation of all social relations (1998:31).

However even in situations of residual orality, meaning is established in the same way. Kelber's model of the speech situation is clearly conversational and dialogical. "Spoken words breathe life, drawing their strength from sound. They carry a sense of presence, intensity and instantaneous presence that writing fails to convey. They address hearers directly and engage them personally in a manner unattainable by the written medium. In oral cultures words are endowed with a

special quality of presentness and personal authority" (1983:18-20).

The Gospel of John fits well into Sternberg's (1985) biblical narrative paradigm of the interweaving of ideology, history and aesthetics into a single written form. The most determining event in the Gospel for both Judaism and Christianity was the Roman destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem in 70. For the people of Israel, response came in the narrowing down of the tradition symbols to that of a collection of books. With the outward manifestation of God's election destroyed, all that remained was a life of quiet faithfulness, grounded in the written presence of God and the wisdom of those who studied those words (Howard-Brook 1994:28).

The Johannine Jesus is not a law-giver but a riddle spinner of oral genres. His long speeches in John are more like poetry than pedagogy. How then are we to discern the ideology of the Logos tradition in the written text? Should we conclude with many Johannine interpreters. That the gospel is not ideological at all but rather 'mystical,' 'individualistic,' or 'personal'? This question presents false choice, one perpetuated by many scholars that opt for a separation of 'spirituality' from 'politics.' If the Logos is taken out of its social context, readers of a privatistic perspective can read the gospel as an extended meditation on God's call to mysticism (Howard-Brook 1994:28).

The spoken 'Word' is more evidently displayed in the Gospel of John where Jesus establishes truth and meaning through dialogue, eg. Jesus' encounter with the crowds, Jesus and Nicodemus (3:1-21); Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan women (4:1-41). Verbalization always implies dialogue between the speaker and hearer. Truth is not a monological construction. Never can the written text exist as an economy of its own but rather as the interplay of verbal and non-verbal

communication that invites illiterate or oral communities to dialogue. According to Ong, truth is never in words alone, but in words plus an existential context (1995:19).

There is a need to read and to understand the *Logos* tradition from the perspective of the 'Other' and to experience the liberative power of the spoken word. The logocentric critique of Derrida's binary opposition between the oral and written text has now resulted in further binaries, eg. literate and illiterate group classification. The written text can be seen as inherently an ideological construct which has shaped the oppression of the poor and the oppressed in relation to the South African socio-political context. The oppression of oral communities was textually constructed by the dominant class. The liberation struggle in relation to the socio-economic of the South African situation cannot be separated from the power of orality. Orality was a potent force that was used by oral communities to resist the oppressive written influences of the dominant class. Where the written text possesses social boundaries (the ability to maintain separate development of race and colour), oral cultures nullify these boundaries through the power of the '*Logos*.' This can be illustrated by reading the *Logos* tradition as power in the face of the dominant ideological practices of the ruling group.

In keeping with my thesis on the "Deconstruction: and the concept Logos in the Gospel of John and the binary opposition between the oral and written text with special reference to oral cultures in South African", there is a need for a paradigmatic shift from the historical tradition of Logos perceived as transmission to an oral tradition as speech communication. The diachronic description of the Logos-hymn in the context of the Prologue of John's Gospel can be of little help in relation to oral cultures. Form Criticism analyses of the *Logos*-Hymn (chapter 4) has helped me to strip away the textual layers of the *Logos* tradition and to discover an oral community

underneath the written text: A worshipping Christian oral community under the Roman and Jewish oppression during Jesus Galilean ministry. The diachronic description of *Logos* has resulted in several problems in relating it to oral cultures. The Historical Critical method commences at a certain point in history and advances according to a chronological continuum. Oral cultures are not concerned with historical data but rely entirely on memory, and the traditions of such societies are kept alive by the cultural and religious performances of the oral socio-cultural archive of indigenous knowledge eg. rituals, songs, poetry, hymns and story telling. This is clearly reflected in the ancient Palestinian cultural ethnic setting.

The Gospel of John was read logocentrically. Hearers and readers let themselves be guided by the narrative dynamic to move from the plural *logoi* (words) to the singular understanding of the *Logos* in the narrative text. The written text and the incarnate *Logos* need be understood normatively, they serve as trans-textual realities. The written text was thus not to be taken with ultimate seriousness. This is hard to comprehend in the *grammatological* age which has come to view language and literature as closed systems. Kelber observes, that Western literary history has only recently begun to view writing as an end in itself. What used to matter in Western literature and hermeneutics was not primarily the intra-textual construction of meaning *per se* but rather the textual strategies to affect readers' intellect and imagination (1990:128).

The *Logos* in John represents not an extra-linguistic mode of authority, but an extra-textual one. *Logos* knows no pre-word or non-linguistics metaphysics. It is fundamentally Logocentric or Word-centered in essence and it epitomizes oral utterances. The oral verbalization of the Word is inseparable unity of speaker and his message. *Logos* can thus be seen as an appropriate metaphor for transcendence. Like oral speech, the *Logos* is ephemeral: it has no visual or physical means of

preservation. It is inaccessible to any standards of measurement. Like oral speech, the *Logos* manifest itself in the moment of verbal action. Its prime potency is sound and this can be seen as a attribute of divinity (Kelber 1990:129).

6.3. The Oral Power of the Logos:

The metaphysics of presence of the 'Logos' in the Gospel of John, served as a vehicle of power and resistance for the Johannine peasant community in the midst of the dominant ideology of the written text. Jesus was an oral communicator within Palestinian Jewish environment that was significantly different from the more literate Hellenistic setting (Boomershire 1995:9).

The unique shift of power in the narrative of John disclose new social dynamics for the Johannine peasant community. The *Logos*-Hymn offers praise and honour at the coming of the Word in human flesh. John (Iohânân bar Zabdai), a major apprehender and envoy of the *Logos*, reveals unto the Johannine peasant community a new source of power in the face of social and economic oppression. *Logos* at the beginning of the narrative of John immediately takes command over the *logoi* (words) in the narrative text.

Jesus, the Son of God, will now reveal the *logoi* (words) of his Father (*Abbâ*) to the Galilean peasant community. A community that has been marginalised by the written Law or those of the Great Tradition in Jerusalem. The Johannine oral community was excluded from the social dynamics of the dominant class and they now find favour in the *Heilsgeschichte* (Salvation history) of the Jesus as oral performer." Those of the Great Tradition (inscribed in the official scriptures or the ideology of the society) were the custodians or guardians and interpreters of the official tradition, for cultivating it and applying it to the social relations and issues in the society"

(Horsley 1995:4). The official tradition serves to legitimate the dominant order, including the power and privilege of the rulers by the power of the written text. The Galilean community on the other hand represents the 'little tradition' or the hidden transcript of the ordinary people, as they were marginalised and not part of the aristocracy in Jerusalem. These were people who had their own recited and performed socio-cultural archive of indigenous knowledge. The official scribes, bards or local elders repeat and reverberate the traditional scribal norms and values to the community. This tradition was used by the Johannine community to resist the encroachment of the rulers of the dominant class on their traditional rights as peasants (Horsley 1995:4).

At the time of the appearance of *Logos* embedded in spoken words, the Jesus can be seen as a popular tradition among the Johannine peasantry as well as the official public transcript cultivated by the dominant literate class (Pharisees) and others of the scribal and priestly classes. While the priestly rulers in Jerusalem had been codifying Israel traditions into the Torâh and other scriptures as the official Law of the Judean temple state, Johannine peasants continued to cultivate Israelite traditions in oral form (Horsley 1995:4).

Jesus and his followers were peasants from a particular rural culture. They were not literate but oral in their orientation, actually they were Oral-style verbo-motors (Jousse 1990). Their attempts to respond to oppression and social collapse did not produce writing but social movements of protest and resistance (Draper 1996:1-3).

The *Logos* tradition was a popular oral tradition of the Johannine peasants which spelled liberation for this community. This community drew creatively on their own oral tradition of the Word. The Johannine peasant community formed a creative movement of resistance over and

against the ideology of the written Law which had imprisoned the oral formulae of the spoken authority of the words of Jesus. Jesus as oral performer of the Gospel of John reinstates the power and authority of the '*Logos*' in the midst of the written Law of the dominant class. The spoken Word can be seen as the primary source of power that oral communities have against the ideological influences of written text.

The Gospel of John for Western hermeneutics remains mystical, individualistic, or personal. The written text of John did not fall from the air, but its textual power was shaped in a social and political and religious context. The Prologue speaks of plural references, eg. He came to his own people (1:11-- the Son of God -*Berâs of Elâhâ*); to all that receive Him (1:12); we have seen his glory (1:14); from the fulness we have all received (1:16). There is an ideological tension between the world (or dominant class) and the Johannine peasant community. Apart from the spirituality of the Fourth Gospel, it remains a social product. The potency of *Logos*-Hymn should not be seen as only spiritual source, but the *Logos* operates in the midst of the dominant ideology and reaffirms its power as it takes charge of the *logoi* (words) in the text in affirming the power and authority of the Word (Howard-Brook 1994:28).

The entrance of the *Logos* into the world reveals its power over the written text for the Galilean peasant community. The written Law creates exclusivism of culture at the expense of the poor Galileans. The spoken 'words' of Jesus authenticated meaning. According to Ong quoted by Kelber, "words spoken are bound to present time" (1990:110). The power of the *Logos* manifests presence. The Galilean community reached beyond the 'written words' as the spoken authority of the *Logos* is attributed to Jesus. The power of the Jesus as oral performer lies in His speech.

According to John (7:46)

Never did a man speak like this

The words of Jesus can be seen as Life and Spirit (6:63), as they possess the power to cleanse the hearer (15:3). The power of His words relates to the hearer and the speaker.

The *Logos* subordinates the '*logoi*' (words), as Jesus employs a self-authenticating formula where He has an encounter with the dominant class, (6:38-48; 8:12; 10:11; 11:25). Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus takes over the prophetic role, as the Fourth Gospel originates in circles where prophetic oral speech is very much alive. The Biblical God of the Old Testament can be seen as oral, the prophets do not see Him but hear Him (Deut.4:12).

Social and oral rhetoric have impressed themselves on the written Gospel text. The social and linguistic world that emerges from behind the *Logos* is constituted by the Spirit (*Breath*) as it manifests itself in speech and heavenly visions (Kelber 1990:114). The *Logos* has returned to his Father and the ongoing tradition of the *Logos* is now disclosed in the coming of the Spirit(*Breath*) which will become a mechanism of resistance for the Galilean community.

No longer will the Johannine community be under the power of the dominant ideology (Pharisees) of the written text for the *Logos* changes the order of power from Jerusalem (scribality) to that of Galilee (orality), from the literate to the illiterate. Jesus faces continual interrogation from the dominant literate class about his claims, identity and mission. The question of authority for speaking the words of God (Elâhâ), becomes an ideological battle between the Pharisees and the peasant community (chapter 7-8), (Howard-Brook 1994:28).

The questioning of the authority of Logos by the dominant literate class is a struggle between the authority of the Torah (power of the written text) and the claims that the *Logos* makes about God (*Elâhâ*.) and the Breath (Spirit). The power of the *Logos* does not lie in the authority of the dominant literate ideology (or the Law) but in the words the Father (*Abbâ*) (8:19) has given to Jesus his Son (*Berâ*), where the dominant literate class is from 'from below' and He is 'from above'(3:31). In the social sphere the Pharisees are 'from above' while Jesus is 'from below.' Jesus as oral performer exercises his authority by virtue of His heavenly abode, coming from above, He is above all. The Pharisees (ruling class) insist that the Johannine peasant community clarify its Christology. The stronger their claims are, the more they will be ridiculed and even persecuted. Amidst the oppressive authority of the written text (Torah), the Johannine *Logos* deconstructs and destabilizes the power of the dominant ideology in questioning its source and authenticity as the Pharisees fail to live up to the Torah (7:19; 8:17; 10:34), whereas Jesus said, "I have come to fulfill it." I have come to actively live into the "written word" which was seen as dead and imprisoned by tradition. Actually "to bring it to life" to give it fullness of body and voice-the metaphysics of presence surely.

The Johannine narrative introduces a new source of authority whereby this Johannine oral community will be governed under the guidance of the Spirit. The Spirit (Breath) can only come after the departure of Jesus. The time of the presence of the Spirit spells also the absence of Jesus who is with the Father. One of the functions of the Spirit is to teach His followers all things of His Father (*Abbâ*) and to bring to remembrance the Logos of Jesus. It is to teach what the earthly Jesus did not and could not say. The Spirit's (Breath) arrival marks the hermeneutical turning point, separating the time of concealment from the time of remembrance. This remembrance for the dominant literate class is fully accomplished with the production of the written text, for it

incarnates the word which could not have been accomplished through orality (Kelber.1990:119). The creative speech of the Spirit (Breath) will continue in the age of the Spirit (Breath), but all spoken *logoi* (words) will be measured by the written text by the dominant literate class where as in an oral community the Spirit breathes life into the spoken words as it produces meaning and representation of social reality.

The requirement for entry into this community is not to become a Jewish proselyte (in adopting the culture and beliefs of the dominant class), or to reverberate the traditions of Abraham and Moses or to adhere to the 'letter of the Torah,' but to experience the power of *Logos* which poses a heart changing question that confronts the dominant literate ideology as well as the subordinate. They need to be 'born again' out of water and Spirit (Breath) and believe in the transformative power of the *Logos*. This calls for believing in the very words of Jesus. Jesus confronts the beliefs of the dominant literate class as well as the subordinate peasant community.

Jesus was a reciter of aphoristic sayings and parabolic stories. There is a distinction between speech and writing. Speech is not traceable to external verification. It surrenders itself in the act of speaking. While the voicing of the saying and parables of Jesus was destined to affect minds and lives of hearers. Orality outlasted the act of writing, but spoken words exist only in the act of speaking and in the memories of hearers (Kelber 1990:147). Spoken words cannot be broken or re-assembled until the next act of speaking, which re-constitutes its own original.

Jesus dialogical model of communication, was where speaker and listeners responded to one another, and were thus co-creators of meaning;

Spoken words breath life, drawing there strength from sound. They carry a sense of presence, intensity and instantaneous that writing fails to convey. They direct hearers directly and engage them personally in a manner unattainable by the written medium (Halverson 1994:184)

For the Johannine oral community the *Logos* is endowed with the special quality of presentness and personal authority.

The *Logos* offered a new form of resistance through the oral power of Jesus against the sophistry of the written text. The written Law constructed social boundaries and exclusivism of the written or scribal tradition of the dominant class at the cost of the Galilean peasants. Jesus as oral performer of *Logos* said no longer do you need to worship under civil oppression in Jerusalem and be falsely conscientised by the power of the written text (Torah), but "they that worship Him, should worship Him in Spirit (*Breath*) and in Truth" (4:24). The essence of civil authority lay in the very words of Jesus. In order for this community not to be divided, He called on them to eat His flesh and to drink His Blood as He will be raised on the last day (6: 52-59). Jesus' intertextual approach refreshed their minds with the 'manna' which his Father gave the children of Israel (Exodus 6:31; 16:4,15).

R. Waugh in "Word, Breath and Vomit" explains the exterior and interior quality of the *Logos*,

God's invasion of the self installs the Master, who, is Christ, the *Logos*, as the voice of Reason inside individuals. This new voice engages in ideal communication at the limits of all impossible languages, and teaches people the meaning of 'signs.' When the same God lives inside a person, when the body has lost its individuality, has become an exterior totem (written sign), the interior contains nothing worth ripping out. One no longer needs to engulf the words, reputation and interiors of others. Meaning and stories are more easily obtained from the exterior source. Also any remaining vestiges of desire for the word, the flesh and interior are satisfied in the symbolism of the Eucharist. (1995:379)

Reality for oral communities is not the written text but their ability to interiorize the power of the *Logos*. They find realisation in the performance of the socio-cultural archive of their indigenous knowledge which serves as mechanism of resistance against the influences of the dominant ideology, in their struggle against oppression and their falsely constructed reality. The *Logos* becomes interior or flesh as it gives meaning to their reality (Waugh 1995:379). Ong maintains the written text can never be a self-contained system or a natural product but it is technologically a constructed system. It is built by something outside it (1995:3-26).

In John's Gospel, the '*Logos*' became flesh, both visible and audible. The oral nature of John's written performance unfolded a new understanding for the hearer and the reader. Linguistically speaking, the *Logos* incarnated himself in a hostile world in choosing the exile of the written text. Deconstruction which serve as an antithesis of the *Logos* tradition, sees the written text as an independent reality or an economy on its own. This remains a paradox according to Ong, because no written text grows out of a live situation, but words are related to other words oral and written. If thinking today was written then texts are false bottoms, because meaning and representation are only possible through the hearer and the speaker (Ong 1982:169).

The spoken *Logos* manifests power and truth where writing reveals the absence of presence. Once the written text is in existence it is in a chain of interpretation: an ongoing search for truth and meaning in order to elucidate the art of confusion. The authority of the *Logos* amidst the power of the written text re-affirms a new norm for oral and written hermeneutics, not only linguistically but also written.

Dialogue between the written text and oral tradition in the South African context remains an essential phenomenon in establishing truth and meaning in discovering the voice of the 'Other'; a voice that has been subjugated and distorted under a mass of written historical data of the dominant interpretive interest of the ruling class in our context. The South African oral tradition of the poor and oppressed or the voice the 'Other' cannot be divorced from the strong Calvinistic and Reformed tradition of the Word that has been imposed on it. The 'hidden transcript' of this tradition developed a mechanism of resistance in order to overcome the demons of Apartheid. The politics of oral representation in these communities can thus be seen as potent, deep in the face of dominant ideological practices. These communities continue to favour the oral mode over the written.

Writing cannot put an end to orality. They communicate with their whole bodies, creating and shaping meaning. Their entire beings re-enact, as Jousse (1997) says, the rhythm-catechistic tradition. This is a community where the World Below was prescribed as mimeme (re-play) and a reflection of the World Above.

The *Logos* in John was not only logocentric in essence but it was also composed orally by the Johannine community and it was handed down from generation to generation. It was an Oral Style community a community empowered by the spoken Word. "One of such verbo-motor oral *milieu* (life setting) was that of ancient Palestine. It was a community that saw its tradition as a treasure house containing all its values, experiences, knowledge and thought, memorised as propositions moulded into formulas, into rhythmic schemas, rhythmic schemas into recitatives, recitatives into an ordained plan" (Sienaert and Conolly 2000:70).

A parallel can be drawn between the Palestinian First century oral tradition that prevailed in the oppressed sector of the South African society under Apartheid.

6.4. Towards an Anthropology of Liberation:

The Logos in John's Gospel must find echoes in the hearts of those who have been involved in the struggle for justice and peace in South Africa. John's peasant community constituted a sect over against the oppressive Jewish community of its day. They were expelled from synagogue and society of their own people, subjected to repression, inward security and persecution. Their response was the development of a close knit, inward looking groups, marked by a hostility to the power structures of society around them, suspicious of the motives of the authorities, and understanding themselves as engaged in the struggle of cultural and religious liberation (Draper 1991:118).

There are unique parallels between the liberation struggle in South Africa and that of the Galilean peasant community. The *Logos* in the Johannine narrative became a new source of power for the Galilean peasant community, a community under the social and economic oppression and false construction of the written Hebraic Law. The binary opposition between the speech and writing unfolded new social dynamics for further investigation in relation to the literate Hebrew elite and the oral Aramaic communities which was a common phenomenon in first century Palestine. The coming of the *Logos* in human flesh (*sarx*) can be seen as a mechanism of resistance against the ruling class in Jerusalem. The authority of *Logos* was rooted in the Spirit (Breath) and manifested its power through the spoken Word. The liberation of the Galilean community was rooted in the spoken authority of the words (*logoi*) of Jesus.

Over many years of working with marginalised and oppressed communities in South Africa, I observed the use of the mnemonic Oral-Style marginalised communities as a favoured mode of communication. Hermeneutics of Liberation interpretive interest remain unique in their social construction of the world, the people around them and their oppressed situation. At the centre of their interpretive interest lay a transcendental signifier or *Logos* which closely linked to their speech as it gave meaning to their lives and their communities. What remained interesting in my observation was how these communities related their oral tradition, whether through songs, poetry, ritual, storytelling or even dancing to the extended family and later to a whole community, from the father to the children, as was common in the Palestinian setting in the first century of the common era.

To understand the social dynamics of gossip as proposed by Botha in relation to the Jesus movement, the social and cultural context comes into play. The early tellers of Jesus stories were the small peasant villagers in the traditional agrarian society of First century Palestine, specifically Galilee. In oral societies, oral recording can be seen as a method of restoring and retrieving information about their social environment (1998:32).

Gossip for oral communities can also be seen as resistance and subversion. According to Spacks the power of gossip can be explained in the following..

Perhaps the concept of gossip subliminally recalls ancient belief in the magic of language . The idea of talking in secret, i.e., without the subject's knowledge about someone someone recalls old conceptions of words as dangerous weapons.....telling stories takes possession of other's experience: a form of magic no less potent for being familiar. Gossip means more in our communal imagination than we can sensibly explain (Spacks 1998:41)

These comments help us to understand the oral culture of First century Palestine. The magical power of words reminds us that gossip can offer passive resistance to many forms of power.

Resistance and subversion run powerfully through gossip processes. People gossip about the dominant class in order "to cut them down to size" but also to deal with situations of inferiority and oppression (Botha 1998:42). Subversive and resistance communication through gossip networks enable the peasants or oral communities to resist the influence of the dominant class.

The liberatory Jesus tradition was manipulated in support of the ruling class. Religion provides and sanctions the social universe of society, but it can also be manipulated by the ruling elite to legitimate oppression. In South Africa as in First century Palestine, the liberatory popular interpretive traditions eg. of the spoken Word had the potential to counter the official transcript of the written Law and even to turn it around (West 1988:30).

Among the ordinary people in South Africa during the Apartheid struggle lay a rich culture of oral tradition which was rooted in the primordial *Logos*, which can be compared with the 'little tradition' of Palestine. This oral tradition potentially has empowered the Southern African liberation struggle. The spoken Word was a source of empowerment against the written authority of the oppressive legislation." The cultural and religious roots of Palestine are profoundly closer to the embedded religious and cultural traditions of Africa than that of modern Western post-Enlightenment religion and culture" (Dickson 1984:141).

For Frostin, the poor and marginalised create their own language of resistance over and against the dominant ideology practices (1988:10). The unwritten tradition of the South Africa liberation struggle remains the voice of the voiceless: a struggle that was never accurately recorded. At the center of the liberation struggle lies the Word. It was this primordial understanding of the Word that became a source of power and resistance for oral cultures in their social and political context.

The historical and cultural struggles of the poor and the marginalised must be seen as starting point of an Hermeneutics of Liberation or Hermeneutics of Suspicion.

The spoken Word for the literate elite remain unfamiliar, because their hermeneutical interpretation of 'oral text' remains linear and inert. For oral communities oral testimonies were the strength in uncovering the terrible atrocities of the past. Oral sources, have helped to uncover crimes and atrocities that were previously denied by the dominant literate class (Roth 1998:102). This leads us to examine further to what extent the written text shaped and contributed to the ideology of Apartheid and the dominant discourse in South Africa history and literature. The written text has helped to sustain the colonial vision against marginalised communities(Boehmer 1995:45).

Writing has played a unique role in shaping the ideology of the dominant class and was a major contributor in re-ordering history and creating social boundaries, shaping intellectual and ethnic inferiority of non-Eurocentric cultures and strengthening the values and the beliefs of the dominant class against the social and economic interests of the poor and oppressed. The written text was used to implement the policies of segregation of the dominant class and to conscientise and brainwash the mindset of those that adhered and adopted such policies.

The social dynamics between the oral and literate culture remain unique in their operation. Although the South African liberation struggle held strong political views, at the very heart of the struggle lay religious and cultural oral utterances of the poor and the oppressed which were displayed in traditional and political dances (toyi toyi), poetry songs, political songs, praise songs and circumcision songs, spiritual hymns, storytelling, proverbs, riddles, verbal arts as well as

rituals were all mechanisms of resistance that were used by oral communities to resist the oppressive practices and influences of the Apartheid government. This oral tradition was reverberated by traditional leaders, preachers and freedom fighters of the struggle that refused to accept the oppressive social policies of the dominant literate class. Yet the voice of oral communities were not suppressed. Suppression was attempted by the dominant literate class in the dominant discourse as it remains hidden from the dominant literate discourse but recorded in human memory in the construction of history rendered in writing.

Oral cultures are the creators and guardians of a vast oral tradition, but their exclusion from government institutions limits the value of official documents produced 'about' them. Those ordinary people stories have been left out of the institutional and grand histories of our country (Adler 1990:232).

The experience of apartheid has demonstrated different kinds and levels of silence. There is the silence which exists in a dynamic relation with language and literature but there are also specific silences imposed by historical conjunctions. "A word uttered in the kind of repressive context exemplified by apartheid evokes an awareness of particular territories forbidden for language" (Brink 1998:15).

The lives and activities of oral cultures have in many ways been completely disregarded in literature. They have been written out of history. History is never a representation of fact but the written text in Derridean terminology, a continual *supplement* or *differance* of meaning written. History provides one of the most fertile silences by the South African Black oral poets. The written text has not included a record of oral cultures (Brink 1998:18-24).

The systems of political and cultural domination have determined systems of discursive and interpretive authority. Political domination includes the negation of the histories of dominated peoples, as argues Franz Fanon (1963:210),

Colonialism is not satisfied merely holding people in grip by a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.

This view is strengthened and supported by Luli Callinicos

One of the lesser-known crimes of Apartheid, like Colonialism elsewhere in African, has been to silence, distort and maim our history.

(Quoted by Narismulu 1998:295)

The written text is a discourse in which political struggles are played out. At an ideological level the written has the capacity to generate and sustain historical identities that have been suppressed by the dominant class.

The written text can thus be regarded a means of social control over oral communities. The whole understanding of the construction of written history was to strengthen the elitist position in history. It was to bewitch language (vicious cycle of interpretation of deferring meaning: Derridean hermeneutics) in order to reflect the victories of the dominant class over the minds of oral cultures. The opposing view to such history lies in the oral histories of the poor and the oppressed. This calls into account views of the underprivileged, the dispossessed and defeated or those that have been historically inarticulate (Roth 1998:100).

After the inception of the new Democratic era in 1994 in South Africa, oral communities can tell their stories and share their pain from an African perspective. Oral communities (non-Eurocentric) can be seen as dialogical (hearer and speaker) are co-creators of truth and meaning

with the literate tradition of the West. Oral cultures, their traditions, culture and beliefs as well as their oral way of life has now being disclosed to the international community. They are now being hailed as symbols of the African Renaissance (rebirth of a nation), the re-birth of the richness of their vast oral cultures. History is now being re-written in honour of the unsung heroes of the liberation struggle, the ones that have given their blood for the liberation of a nation.

The liberation struggle that was a long road to freedom as the vast masses of oral communities that were prisoners of the ideology of Apartheid. Apartheid ideology was deeply rooted in the power of the written text and had re-ordered the history of masses of illiterate people in South Africa. The written text manipulated the poor and oppressed in our South African context. This resulted in slavery, exploitation, illiteracy and moral and psychological distortion of identity among people of oral cultures. Their identities was falsely constructed for them, eg. Coloureds (*Hottentot*), Blacks (*Kaffir*) and Indians (*Coolies*). The myth has been rooted in the ideology of Nationalism, Liberalism and Imperialism which is strongly rooted in racialism (Malan 1987:3). Oral communities failed to understand and interpret the written text which resulted in social and economic oppression. The ruling class used writing in order to socially engineer the ideology of Apartheid, in the form of political treaties, diaries, acts and edicts, administrative records and missionaries reports: all such socially constructed documentation was designed to oppress oral communities.

South Africa in the construction of a nation of Apartheid terms from 1910, has in various ways relied on writing in their construction of national literature of oppression. According to Gunner, "literacy and nationalism engendered a critical mentality of dominant ideological practices, that the ability to compare, written text is part of the linkage of literacy and that the oral tradition is

malleable and volatile whereas the written text remain fixed "(1999:51). What was clearly noticeable is that the linkage between orality-literacy was discredited in contemporary discourse in South Africa because it intended to promote a monological construction of history.

Apartheid was deeply entrenched in the constitution, and the rights, existence and civilization of certain oral communities were ignored. The South Africa's political and legal system classified people by race and accorded specific rights to identified racial groups. Apartheid ensured in writing that the white minority government, dominated by the Afrikaner National Party, maintained economic and political power over the resources of South Africa.

Apartheid policies were implemented in writing against certain oral cultures. Several Apartheid 'Acts' were legislated and implemented in order to sustain the power of the ruling party. The following Laws operated against certain oral communities and shaped new boundaries, and created race and class classification: the Population Registration Act (1961) classified the people of as Bantu (Africans), in order to separate whites from non-whites, Coloureds (persons of mixed race), Asians (mainly of Indian origin) from each other and one indigenous African group from another. Unjust written 'Laws' of apartheid treated blacks as sub-humans (less than the image of God in humankind- *Imago Dei*). The implementation of the written judicial Law meant that the oppressed and exploited masses were required to submit to their oppressors and exploiters. Black people remained powerless, with no access to economic and political power whereas the white minority of people maintained political and economic control (Meer 1989:20).

White supremacy was the essential ideological anchor on which 'white South Africa' was founded. The National Party policy of Apartheid pursued their oppressive reasoning without

flinching. As the appetite for cheap black labour grew, segregation evolved logically into Apartheid. Grand Apartheid, so-called, was an attempt by the white ruling class to have its cake and eat it. Cheap, non unionized African labour was essential to maximize the profits of white capital (Magubane 2001:10-11). The basis on which the Bantu (the name Apartheid ideologues gave to Africans), were allowed in 'white South Africa' , said M.C. Botha, the Minister of Bantu Administration, on August 20, 1976, was 'to sell their labour and nothing else'.

The colonial settlement too was expressed by the written text. Writing in the form of treaties was used to claim territory. The written treaty confirmed the right of the conqueror to the land, giving the act of conquest permanency over time and space. The history of South Africa is replete with accounts of the efforts of the literate invaders to persuade or demand that the oral traditional rulers 'touch the pen.' The written document justified conquest, the published proclamation established the right to rule, and the codified legal system acquired the grounds to identify the right to punish the transgressor. The written precedent extending these oppressive practices over time and space to the ever growing body of state guardians and practitioners of the law (Guy 1991 398).

"The Land Act (1913) according to the imperial annexation which call in account black spots, artificial homelands, forced removals, and other maneuver of the colonial and Apartheid government was to disinherit indigenou people of their land and wealth" (Narismulu1998:109).The written text was a vehicle of imperial authority over marginalised communities. The Group Areas Act (1948) established separate section for each race. Members of other races were forbidden to live, work, or own land in areas belonging to other races. This was the cornerstone of the Apartheid regime. Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd implemented a policy of separate development by establishing Bantustans (homelands) for African ethnic groups

in assigning them about 14% of the country's land, whereas more than 80% of South Africa's land was set aside for its white residents, despite the fact that they comprised less than 10% of the population. In these homelands Africans exercised their rights but elsewhere their activities were strictly curtailed and they were excluded from participating in the governing of South Africa (Rich 1984:10-36). The Group Areas Act (1948) (by ensuring physical separation) enhanced ethnic exclusiveness, and thus guaranteed divisions of subordinate groups.

Whole territories of historical consciousness were silenced by the power establishment and invaded by the dominant discourse in order to make them inaccessible to other voices. The distortions in construction of the written text and oral communities failure to understand the written text resulted in their loss to the right of their land. Few white South Africans realize that blacks had settled in the sub-continent many centuries before the first Europeans entered the Cape of Storms. The Dutch Calvinist misapplied the Bible in the name of Christianity in order to instill an acceptance by the oppressed of their fate and to enslave indigenous people. They have also perpetuated strategies to ensure the marginalisation of women in black societies, and to strengthen the involvement of Coloured people in the Great Trek. They raped the environment in the process of taming the wilderness. The process of silencing would also include dominant myths, stories (e.g John Bunyan, David Livingstone) and travellers adventures' as well as the intervention of God in Afrikaner history (Brink 1998:15).

Various laws were passed by the Apartheid regime. The first series of Acts were intended to alter the demographic pattern of the country by formalizing unbridgeable divisions among non-Whites-Africans, Coloureds and Indians. These laws included the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act,

(1949), The Population Registration Act 1950 (Act 30). I say 'formalized', because Lord Selbourne, high commissioner for South Africa and governor of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony after the Anglo Boer war spelled out how to divide Coloureds from the Africans in order to ensure cheap labour and to deprive Africans of what he called 'Coloured political leadership' (Magubane 2001:10-11)

The Apartheid government later implemented Pass Laws against Blacks and Coloureds. The South African Legislation controlling the movements of blacks and coloureds (people of mixed racial descent) under the system of apartheid or racial segregation (Dowling 2000:1-3) The earliest pass controls were developed in the 18th century by the ruling class in order to control black labor and to keep Blacks and Coloureds in inferior positions.

The written text means power in a literate society. It gives the literate elite power in order to access the written text and print and to free themselves from the chains of social oppression. The power of the written text was further disclosed as the ruling literate class imposed two official languages (Afrikaans and English) on oral communities. These languages were foreign to primarily oral cultures. The reading, writing and speaking of both these languages for many Blacks meant to comprehend the language from their oppressors. Both Afrikaans (Dutch) and English (Imperialism) were languages of power. Both these languages, Afrikaans and English were languages that allowed access to social and capital control (Katamzi 1992:26-27). The Black Conscious Movement had strong objections to the use of Afrikaans. The objections were quite understandable since Afrikaans is not only the language of the oppressor but has also produced literature that portrayed the Black man in a bad light.

Residual orality (interface between oral and written) was used in order to restructure the mindset of oral cultures and to enhance rhetorical interplay between oral and written text which was used as the powerful ruler over oral communities. The reading, and writing, and speaking of both these languages (Afrikaans and English) were powerful mechanisms that were used by the dominant class in order to conscientise oral cultures in order for them lose touch with their ethnic languages (Zulu or Xhosa, Hindi, Tamil- other comparative languages) and to speak the language of their masters or their slave drivers. These languages had become languages of instruction in higher educational institutions as well as schools in order to implement the ideological beliefs and values of the government of that day.

The empire of writing which was built on Colonialism and Protestant Calvinism was a major source that created and shaped illiteracy among blacks and those of non-Eurocentric descent in the South African context. In 1981 four million Blacks in South Africa were scribally illiterate. Scribal illiteracy in our context means the total incapacity to interpret written messages. Scribal illiteracy was imposed on them by the ruling literate class as opportunities for them were denied through the rigid apartheid laws. The result of scribal illiteracy created social and economic impoverishment which led to high unemployment, violence and many other deviant ways which can be seen as the core social problems in the post-Apartheid era (Wedepohl 1984:4). This clearly indicates that a number of people that are scribally illiterate possessed a high oral residue and this became a mechanism of resistance in order to secure identity, dignity and cultural values.

The written text lay at the heart of the struggle over education, the demands for education, the debate of education, the nature of education, from the 19th into the 20th century. A central feature

of the policy of the dominant literate class was to restrict education on racial grounds (Guy 1991:399). The introduction of a centralised State policy with Bantu education in 1953 added not only to greater control but to a more explicit racist ideology. Higher educational institutions according to legislation (as written-*de Jure*) denied Blacks and Coloureds and Indians access to study at white English and Afrikaans Universities. These were major institutions that were the custodians of ideology of writing in the pre-Apartheid era. Colonial empiricism was closely tied in with the ideological beliefs of the ruling literate class which perpetuated racial segregation, social boundaries and the positional superiority of scientific knowledge over against oral tradition. The production of knowledge became commodities of colonial exploitation.

Oral communities were seen as only 'near human' or almost human, uncivilized and barbarian. According to these Higher educational institutions oral tradition cannot be rated as scientific or empirical knowledge. Knowledge was only accepted when it was scientifically verifiable or substantiated. In these institutions the whole output of knowledge was more about power and domination and to legitimate vile colonial practices against oral communities (Smith 1999:62). These Higher educational institutions were highly instrumental in the social engineering of the ideology of Apartheid.

Thus in the history of the passage from in the light of the binary opposition between orality and literacy another category was created-the illiterate. The literate world is a world of power and privilege. It is defined in terms of those excluded from it- the illiterates. In the South African racist system the historically illiterates have formed the majority, and this has given many aspects of oppression a particular character which resulted in levels of resistance.

6.5. Orality as resistance in South Africa:

To acquire literacy is acquire a social skill which has never been available to all in South Africa. In South Africa it has been granted to some, and denied to others, distributed, withdrawn, appropriated and seized as part of the struggle for power and profit, and its availability will remain part of that struggle. Most of our oral communities belonged to this category, and their illiteracy is a recurring theme in their testimonies (Guy 1991:394).

The South African liberation struggle revealed not only its desire to be free from the prison house of colonial written text but also to redefine identity in terms of racial oppression and the constructed social boundaries by the dominant class. The written text was seen as an ideological force in order to affirm political and economic legitimacy and the hidden agenda of the ruling class as it came face to face with the Black Consciousness Movement. The movement displayed the power of orality as a mechanism of resistance by marginalised communities or oral communities in their endless struggle for freedom against the oppressors of Apartheid.

With the rise of the Black Conscious Movement in the late 1960's, many political organizations were banned. Thousands of people were convicted for undermining the security forces and for being members of banned political organizations. It was also a time when Robert Sobukwe the founding President of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), who led the 1961 Sharpville march against the 'pass laws' was imprisoned without trial on Robben Island from 1963 to 1969. In 1964 Nelson Mandela and seven ANC members were convicted to life in imprisonment in terms of the Sabotage Act (Motlhabi 1984:31).

The 'oral text' that emerged in mid 1960s played a role in the revival of resistance. The key of the popular resistance lay in the Black Conscious Movement which broke the silence of the poor and oppressed, through activism, and the eloquence of charismatic its leader Steve Biko. Steve Biko, the leader of SASO (South Africa Student's Organization) was a student at the University of Natal. It was out of these circumstances that the Black Consciousness Movement arose. The movement reflected the importance of black youth, who played an important role in the liberation struggle (Pityana, Ramphela & Wilson 1991:119).

The Black Consciousness Movement was critically concerned about identity. Their concern was racial identity and to contest the naturalization of the superiority of whites rather than to engage in reverse racism (Rive 1981a:21).

The Black Consciousness Movement concentrated on the development among oppressed people in redressing the inequalities of the political system. It challenged the unrelieved whiteness of the political and cultural discourse. The Black Consciousness Movement tried to re-address the systematic psychological degradation that had occurred over centuries against people of colour and to develop a positive identity that contradicted the logic of Apartheid and Colonialism (Motlhabi 1984:148).

The Black Consciousness Movement tried to address the specificities of oppression in the early 1970s by building unity among those oppressed South Africans who opposed Apartheid,

We must resist the attempts by protagonist of the bantustans theory to fragment our approach. We are oppressed not as individuals, not as Zulus, Xhosas, Vendas or Indians. We are oppressed because we are black. We must use that very concept to unite ourselves and to respond as a cohesive group (Biko 1988:113).

The Black Consciousness Movement was not based on colour of the oppressed people, but upon their common condition of oppression arising out of apartheid. The Black Consciousness Movement thus represents a dialectical moment in the political and cultural development of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

The spirit of self-assertion has been sinisterized purposely by the white press, because the white people are horrified that the black man, that is the African, Coloured and the Indian, are coming together to form a single united block that will confront and demand freedom from white domination. (Chapman 1982:109)

Biko took an unequivocal position on the question of white liberal involvement in the struggle against the supremacy, in asserting that the interest of blacks and whites were diametrically opposed;

The problem is white racism and it rest squarely on the laps of the white society. The sooner the liberals realize this, the better for us blacks...White liberals must leave blacks to take care of their own business while they concern themselves with the real evil in our society White Racism. (Biko.1988.37)

Biko rejected the involvement of white liberals in black politics, because of the dominant class close association with the oppressive policies of Apartheid. The Black Conscious Movement sought to overcome the psychological consequences of oppression and to rediscover the value of black culture and to rewrite black history: a history that has been falsely tarnished by the lies and sophistry of the oppressor. The movement opposed any form of involvement with any institution of apartheid as it re-introduced the notion of African humanism and contested the monopoly of universalism of liberal humanism which was strongly rooted in Western colonialism (Motlhabi 1988:112).

As the Black Conscious Movement challenged the silence that had been imposed on black people, it equally challenged the validity of the dominant literate discourse in the construction of meaning and representation for oral communities. The level of resistance was inspired by the

production of many plays, art exhibitions, songs, poetry performances and ritualized activities.

This was strongly reflected in Siphso Sepamla's poem "Now is the time"

Now is the time to know words not to shut out their meaning. Nor to dress them in gaudy clothes.
For there have been words. Thundering like angry elements, simmering like septic wounds or silent
as spooks trotting over disused graves (1976:69)

The oral power in these cultural activities was used, while the ephemeral nature of words allowed activists to escape the restrictions of political utterance. They adopted rhetoric epic forms and traditional African oral techniques of repetition, parallelism and ideophones (Chapman 1982:177).

In Joussean terms, oral communities used their age old mnemonic Oral-Style to perform the socio-cultural archive of indigenous knowledge. A distinctive characteristic of political and spiritual songs was the emphasis placed on the performance to convey the verbal message. The various components of the performance constituted powerful images which enhanced the political messages and helped to sway the audience. Oral communities shape the theme of the message throughout the performance, eliciting responses from even massive audiences.

Cries, sounds, whistling and words are different aspects of political resistance. Oral communities cannot do without cries, sounds and whistling when political words are chanted. These oral resistance messages are conveyed by these four devices. In the political mass, powerful spiritual and political cries are commonly uttered. Words accompanied by whistling carry the message to mobilise people and to unite and strengthen them in their participation. A person outside the performances would not grasp the importance of these sounds, cries and whistles. They mean a lot to oral communities engaged in these performance, as they carry a complete meaningful message of resistance against oppression. They unleash the spiritual strength of the one who makes them and invites the listeners to participate in the performances (Damane 1994:30).

Sounds and cries chanted in spiritual and political performance are rhythmic in nature. Cries were used in the old days wherever Africans gathered for a social event, eg. weddings, birthdays or circumcision rite. When things go well, the women release rhythmic, harmonious cries to express their happy emotions. One can explain such cries as a way of inviting other members of the community who are not at the gathering. It might be noted that 'cries' referred to the oral phrases that constitute the beliefs and customs of Africans and oral communities (Damane 1994:32). Sounds and cries may seem to have little intrinsic meaning yet they carry a clear message of resistance for those involved in the performance.

Black poetry and freedom songs were much more about the development of the public voice and commitment to social justice. Speech was seen as a ruler and a mechanism of resistance against oppressive social structures. The use of oral tradition privileged the indigenous tradition against the literary traditions that the conservative liberals tried to impose. Not only were the elite Western traditions considered inimical to the interest of the oppressed people in South Africa, but there was a commitment to draw upon the disparaged tradition, in which activists affirmed the struggle for liberation (Narismulu 1998:111).

Pallo Jordan's foreword to A.C. Jordan's *Tales from Southern Africa* helps to clarify the reason liberal protest was unattractive to African writers who had experience of cultural traditions in which poets are central to the lives of their communities and who celebrated their poetic craft not as an elite activity but as part of a shared communal practice:

The ethos of traditional society was enshrined in an oral, religious, and literary tradition through which the community transmitted from generation to generation its customs, values and norms. The poet and storyteller stood at the center of this tradition, as the community chroniclers, entertainers, and collective conscience. Their contribution to society was considered of great significance. (1973:.xi)

The public voice of the poet and storyteller suggested that his ideological mission was to articulate the experiences of the oppressed people. "Through the speaker the poet affirms his location within an indigenous oral tradition, celebrating his conjoint roles as orator, historian, seeker and healer. In the local oral tradition, music and poetry are not distinct genres, and this influence is evident in the collections of poets "(Narismulu 1998:111).

From the townships to the ghettos, poetry was performed. Poetry was performed in church halls, on occasions of political funerals of people shot dead by police during political uprising and political mass meeting. This sort of poetry was very oral. It was designed to be spoken aloud to large gatherings of people (Cronin 1987:22).

These oral historians were to speak: eg. storytelling, and then the entire village and individuals would leave their homes or huts and gather in large groups in order to listen. A speaker demands an audience, and many of the spoken words demanded a response. By this manner people were brought together and the idea of audience was still maintained (Kambysellis 1997:1-5).

Oral resistance was displayed in different forms, as a chairperson, community leaders and ministers lead people in prayers, militant and political and spiritual songs with call and response chants. When these songs was chanted everyone engaged in performance moves. The repetition forcefully focused on the key themes and conveyed a sense of urgency and resistance. Repetition not only ensured that the audience not only grasped the message but also responded. The constant repetition helped to keep the key themes in memory (Finnegan 1970:401). The proceedings would be energized with more chants from the audience and songs and hymns which undermined the

policies and practices dominant literate class. In churches, choirs added traditional and religious harmonies (Sitas 1990:96).

This oral tradition of resistance in marginalised churches is a solid conservative and orthodox core, committed of a body of dominantly Christian moral and cultural values. These communities would not survive without continually comes to terms with the urban industrial context in which it is firmly rooted. "Primarily oral communities incorporates an outstanding variety and diversity of oral forms, a continuum ranging from public reading to meaningful speech, to inchoate and confused sound, to musical expression; encompassing all the nuances of the literate, the verbal oracular and the merely vocal "(Kiernan 1991:389). Primary oral communities, transmits in clear language engaged in formal prayer, preaching and hymns and ritual.

6.5.1 Preaching:

Although people in the churches were not literate they had an oral knowledge of the Bible or the Word (Mosala 1996:43). The reading of the Biblical text gives way to sermon and witnessing, in which an effort is made to spell out a coherent message, or to draw lessons from experience which have meaningful import for practical living. Preaching is preceded by a prolonged, laboured stumbling and repetitive reading of a short biblical extract. The written text and speech are situationally associated. The preacher is not led by, or bound by, a text, he is led by the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is not confined to the written text. All the written text does is to open the door to the Spirit. Once the written text is revealed and proclaimed, the preacher is imbued with the Spirit and this explains the style of oral expression in the sermon. " The speaker impulsively

leaps from one idea to another in a manner which defies Western logic, and the power of the Spirit comes in great surges, expressed in a high-pitched shouting tone, constantly climaxing and ebbing. These surges of energy evoke physical and verbal responses from the audience, of shuddering and yelping, expressions of an intense state of fervour and enthusiasm which is the human complement of the Spirit ascending among them” (Kiernan 1991:391). Priest-like prophets of the Old Testament would preach against the evils of the ideology of Apartheid in the trains along the Cape Flats, buses and on the street plains in these local communities. Religious services came to a stand still because of prophetic announcements, oral testimonies, prayers, hymns and spiritual dancing that reflected their struggles and fears of oppression.

6.5.2 Song:

Oral communities singing styles ranged from the introspective hymnal harmonies of Wesleyan origin, mixed with mild forms of call and response styles. From the pious swaying, their moves would break into some shuffling steps in the more joyous gospel moments (Sitas 1990:101). Hymns serve more specific and instrumental purposes as activities within oral communities. This may be summed up by saying that the incidence of musical oral form functions to stitch the various other parts of this resistance meeting together into a single unbroken discourse. Songs and hymns are employed to integrate the meeting into a continuous flow of oral discourse, and it affords the congregation some degree of control over what transpires in the course of public speaking. There can be no speech without song (Kiernan 1991:392).

Jousse reminds us that

the laws were sung (were rhythmically recited) in order not to be forgotten as they are still sung today among the Agathyrses (1990:136)

Rhythm is the pattern and movement of words uttered. Rhythm is a basic element of political slogans. Jousse (1990) describes these as rhythmic schemas. When these political and spiritual songs are chanted and the hands move high up and down with a clenched fist, foot tapping, marching and dancing; all these balances complement what is released verbally. However in performance, the words are chanted in such a way to accompany gestures as it acquires a rhythmic dimension that is forceful and striking, enhancing the message conveyed verbally (Jousse 1990:127).

6.5.3. Prayer:

It seems at many occasions that the physical spiritual presence of *Logos* was in their midst. Prayers were uttered extemporaneously as there was a unison among the congregants as they started thanking the Almighty God for social and political change in advance. The leader of the congregation, is fairly free and spontaneous in style. The speaker invokes the power of the deity (Father). The style of delivery is forceful and declamatory as the speaker evokes the living presence of the Spirit in order to bring an end to social injustice and oppression (Kiernan 1991:390). Another forceful mechanism of resistance was orality and the power of ritual which can be seen as transformative in essence.

6.5.4. Ritual:

I see no reason why we should not view ourselves as ritualising animals
(Grime 1982:7)

Apart from the loss of power in our rituals, there is still great need among oral communities to ritualise. Ritualisation is not a process that developed in itself, but it needs a body. The body, it has always been so important in religious experiences for oral communities. Ritual and the body

cannot be separated, because it serves as a deep inner expression of symbolic action and attitude. Only when the body embraces the act of ritualisation can it experience a true sense of power and resistance. Ritual symbolism in oral communities is able to draw on the simplest intense sensory experience, (hearing, seeing, feeling, touching and smelling) which serves as a social system of communication (Douglas 1970:65).

The Eucharist as ritual became a symbol of unity in destroying the social boundaries of racial segregation. in relation to the oppressive social context: "We are one at the Lord's table irrespective of race, colour, and social status". The spoken authority of the Word provided a sense of belonging, an identity for those under the forces of oppression as God is on the side of the poor and oppressed. In the Eucharist, the old oppressive social universe was challenged and even disintegrated as the emblems (bread and wine) became powerful instruments in order to build oral communities (Driver 1991:158). In this situation the power of ritual challenged the existing status quo and forced the old oppressive social universe to disintegrate or fused as the power of ritual creates new norms and values in order to develop unity, homogeneity, equality and social justice in oral communities. The ideological role of the whole act of the Eucharist lay in the power of the Logos which built the solidarity for marginalised communities.

Paul expatiates on this idea in Ephesians (2v12-16) in which the Gentiles become part of the covenant of God through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Christ's body as an act of ritual destroys the barrier or the dividing wall of hostility (racism) through his blood (crucifixion) in order to create a new community of the Spirit which is rooted and granted in Him. The ideological pole changes from the Torah (written Law) to faith in Jesus Christ. A new community of the Spirit where there is no Jew or Gentile (black or white) but rooted in the incarnate reality of the

living Logos. We cannot appreciate the power of ritual unless we see its usefulness to those in need, especially those who have little or no social power, and who are victims of oppression and social injustices. In the Apartheid era, ritual (eg. initiation rites, eucharist, baptism and circumcision rites) have become powerful instruments of resistance against oppression and social injustice.

Maybe this was not openly displayed by oral communities as these traditional rituals were used to dismantle social injustice and disintegrate oppressive social universes as they became transformative instruments and symbols of resistance to marginalised communities. Western civilisation showed an antipathy to traditional ritual practices as they failed to see the power of ritual and its ability to transform oral communities and their existing social structures (Driver 1991:30). Ritual belongs to those that ritualised. Apart from the symbolism in ritual it cannot be separated from human beings.

For Turner (1969) ritual is the main component in the process of social change. We fail to experience the power of ritual if we deny the reality that ritual can change the status quo or re-ordering of existing social universe. For Driver a world that is seen by magic or spirit is a world that is ritually ordered. A world in which society is fused in a single vision which enables transformation (1991:168). This is in agreement with Grime, that ritual is also magical, and can be related to our own cultures (1982:45).

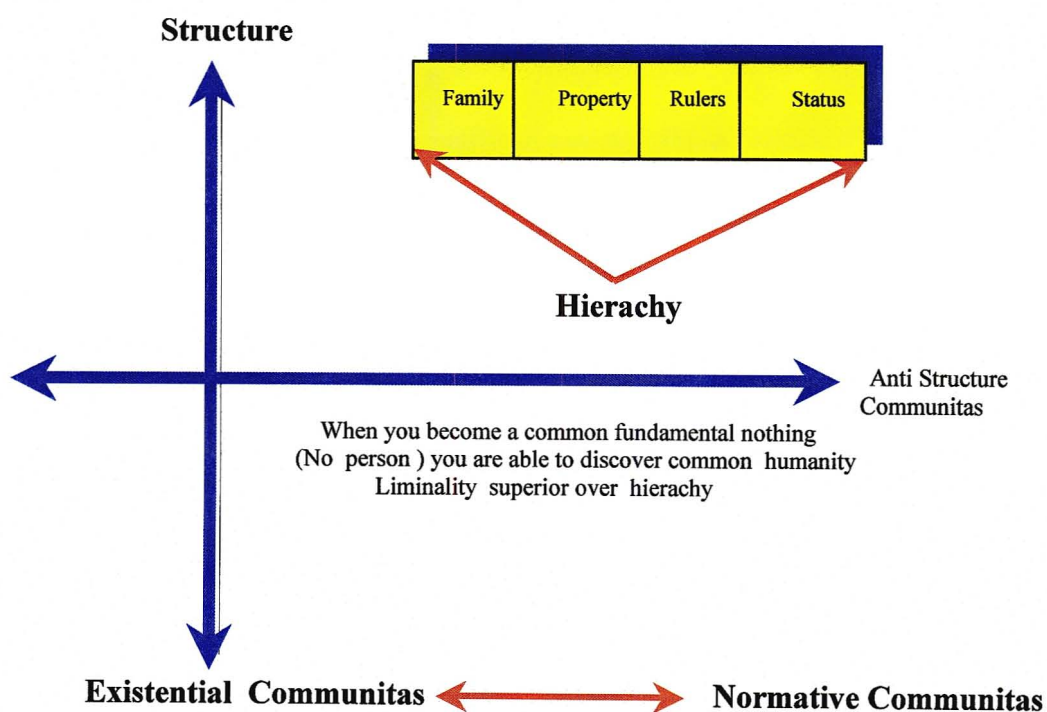
The power of ritual changes and transforms as the ritual process takes on a new meaning. Ritual is not rigid or stereotyped but dynamic and powerful. This power is displayed through the interrelations of symbols, time, space, body and social structures which makes the oral

performance efficient and effective. For us to experience the power of ritual we need to leave our prejudices and bias behind which at times calls us to conform to certain cultural and religious values of those that engaged in ritualization. The power of ritual touches our lives and even our bodies.

Douglas notes that ritual co-ordinates the body and brain in a mnemonic action. According to her, there are somethings we cannot experience without ritual, because it creates control, undoes what has been done, and at the same time looks like as if it never happened. Ritual “makes visible signs of internal states.” It symbols only have an effect on those as long as oral communities have confidence in it, because symbols have the power to work changes (Douglas 1966:64-70). This is seen in the act of the ritual baptism, whether full immersion or sprinkling. The moment the ritual is performed the space, symbols, time take on a whole new meaning.

For Bell (1989), who presents two approaches of change, stresses that ritual is viewed as a mechanism of continuity as it resists forces that can destroy the fabric of the community like social injustice and oppression. An example of this is how the traditional African practices (e.g. Umtagati or Sangoma) were used in order to denounce Western influence of meaning through the throwing of the bones and transcendental communication (speech acts) with the gods and the ancestors. Oral communities maintain traditional African practices and rituals but at the same time resist modern Western technology and literary influence and practices, by enhancing traditional practices and activities through ritual, which shows a continuity of oral history and traditional values as they show a continuity of communities (Bell 1989:34).

Secondly, Bell (1989) believes that rituals in themselves change. Such changes remain dynamic, when we look at the difference between the Eucharistic meal and regular meal (1989:34). The Eucharistic meal takes on a new symbolic meaning as it possesses the power to perform miracles, bodily, socially and psychologically. Turner more explicitly shows how such changes take place. as he bases his theory on Arnold van Gennep's understanding of liminality. This is more explanatory in the diagram, as it describes the functionalism of Turner's approach in relation to the transformation in the whole process:



This is seen in the Initiation rite of the neophyte in the Ndembu ritual process. Turner divides the whole process in three phrases, e.g. separation, liminality and aggregation. The neophyte is separated from the social structures. He is then stripped of his identity and social status. In the liminal stage the transformation takes place. This distinctively separates the neophyte from other people in the community. The liminal stage is a period of social ambiguity but it is also a time of physical and social reconstruction of status and identity. In the aggregational stage or period we

see status reversal as the neophyte become part of the larger community in order to perform or take up his role. In this period he is in a stable state, by virtue of rights and obligation. The initiated is expected to behave according to customary norms and ethical standards (Turner.1969:94).

As seen by Bell (1989), Douglas (1966,1982) and Turner (1969), ritual possesses the power to transform culture and at the same time has the ability to challenge the status quo. In order to experience the deep transformative power of ritual, there needs to be a deep sense of seriousness on the part of those that are ritualized. This must not just be seen in our traditional African practices of (Initiation, Purity rites, Isoma,etc) but its transformative power must be experienced and felt in our local churches, as the Sunday morning liturgy. Eucharist, baptism bring life and transformation to our oral communities. Rituals contains power directly or indirectly, as it call for sincerity, commitments of our beings to conform to its transformative powers.

The power of ritual belongs to those that are ritualized. Living in a democratic era in South Africa we might think that ritual is not necessary, but the time has come to explore the reality of such power. Ritual is integrally part of us. Ritual cannot be captured in one simple theory, neither can we explain how symbols work or function by thinking or writing about it. Humans are ritual animals, therefore cry from the core of their beings, to experience the power of ritual. For the marginalized, who have no power or rights, economically, politically and socially, find hope and vindication in the power of ritual. Ritual possesses power which can be experienced in our bodies and our community. Those that have embodied it, experience a deep sense of transformation.

The Logos became a means strengthening primarily oral cultures in their quest for social and political liberation. The voices, sounds, and gestures of primarily oral communities will continue

as long as the South African cultural revolution propels people to gather or gather in different ways (Sitas 1990:103).

6.6. Summary:

Derrida's critique of Logocentrism in privileging writing over and against speech can be regarded as a new paradigm in understanding the binary opposition between orality and literacy in the Biblical narrative text. It finally seems that Third World counterparts can step out of the dominant discourse of Western interpretive interest which has shaped their cultural beliefs and social reality.

Derrida's antithesis of the Logos or transcendental signifier can be regarded as negative theology and nihilistic in essence. An end to metaphysics of presence or Logos can have dangerous effects on oral communities. Derrida's critique can be regarded as language against language or ideology opposing ideology (Enlightenment over and against Deconstruction). Derrida's philosophy perpetuates Idealism and privileges Western humanism over and against *communitas* (Latin) of oral cultures. For many hermeneuts, Derrida's method of Deconstruction has finally produced a liberating hermeneutic for those developing countries but in return he strengthens the epistemological foundation of the Enlightenment and secures the power of the written text over speech as a transcendental signifier which is rooted in the eternal Logos.

Both Deconstruction and the Historical Critical method seek to secure meaning over and against the written text. This can be seen as hegemonic and ideologically loaded. Privileging writing over speech results in further binaries, eg. Literate versus Oral. In testing Derrida's hypothesis against the South African socio-political context the following evidence has emerged.

The written text was a major tool that was used by the dominant literate class to organise their oppressive policies, tactics and to pass oppressive laws against primarily oral cultures. The written text has socially engineered a superior status for the dominant literate class over the marginalised or those from the 'Otherside' of history. Apartheid has contributed to slavery and social and economic exploitation of oral communities. Apartheid was the force behind the false construction of social boundaries and constructed racial segregation.

Oral cultures during years of oppression found great strength and encouragement in the spoken Logos. For them there was a supernatural force that governed the order of the world and that force gave meaning to their speech utterances and interpretive interest. It was the spoken Logos of Jesus that kept oral cultures rational and sane against the vile atrocities that were committed against them in the name of 'Reason'. It was that unseen metaphysical power in the Logos that helped oral communities to believe in the liberating power of the God who on the side of the poor and oppressed. It was the very words of Jesus that become the liberating force against the evil of racism and oppression.

Although the Logos is written, it remains spoken and creative in essence. It is an 'oral text' put into writing. The Logos existed prior (*arche writing*) the realm of history and existed outside the construction of the written text. The creative power of Logos cannot be fathomed in its purest sense as it breathes life (*zoe*) and being into existence and gives meaning to the oral discourse. The spoken Word of God remains uncontrolled and in a sense unknowable. The spoken Word is filled with life, and creates an intimate sense of presence. The written text can never imprison Logos because it existed with the Father at the beginning of creation.

Oral communities have revealed the metaphysical power of the Word in their performance of the socio-cultural archive of their indigenous knowledge against their oppressors. Although these communities had no economic and political power they have literally come to believe in the creative and convincing power of the Word which was the only source of resistance against the vile atrocities that were committed against them and their impoverished communities. It is only the power of *Logos* that could transform and change the hearts of those that demonically kept millions of marginalised people in socio-economic web of oppression.

The *Logos* remains razor sharp and it is a living force that has persisted in revealing truth and meaning to the very soul of primarily oral communities. The *Logos* is not just metaphysical in essence but also has the qualities and characteristics of orality. It is divine and constitutes what humanity is all about. It is the quality that represents the *Imago Dei*, the image of God in an oral communities. The world can never be a written construction as Derrida projects but dialogism and logocentrism (metaphysics of presence) spells meaning and representation which can only be verifiable through speaker and hearer which creates instant meaning and representation of reality. The *Logos* is that force that gives meaning to the world and the discourse of humankind. *Logos* has the potential to create resistance but at the same time the power to forgive and to love those who had created pain, plight, unhappiness and social and economic oppression for oral communities. Orality rooted in *Logos* spells life abundantly in Jesus which can be seen as the finest and the truest example: as His words spell life and death to the hearer.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. Conclusion

In the previous chapters I have examined: **“Deconstruction and the concept Logos in the Gospel of John and the binary opposition between the oral and the written text with special reference to primarily oral cultures in South Africa.”**

In summing up the argument and findings in the light of my proposed hypothesis, I would like to give a synopsis of what has been researched in this thesis. Reading the *Logos* in the Johannine narrative a new dimension for oral and written hermeneutics unfolds. For the purpose of this study a multi-disciplinary approach has been employed in order to achieve the objective of the research: a diachronic approach provides us with historical bedrock for understanding the *Logos* tradition whereas the synchronic understanding in the work of Jacques Derrida provides us with an anti-thesis approached against Logocentric interpretation of the Logos. A contextual model of a Hermeneutics of Liberation or a hermeneutics ‘from below’ has been employed in order to unfold a critical analyses of the discourse of the ‘Other’ in relation to the South African social political situation.

Primarily oral cultures in the light of this thesis refers to ‘Other’. The ‘Other’ has been constituted with a name, a face and particular identity, namely indigenous people. It refers to those that have been marginalised in a literate society. They have been excluded from the written construction of the dominant literate discourse. It is a discourse of power and those from the ‘otherside of history’ are not part in the social construction of reality of meaning and representation of the written text.

It is a society where the oral formulae of the spoken word has been and still is imprisoned by the written text. The Western discourse of the 'Other' has been supported by institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines and even colonial bureaucracies. The whole idea of the 'Other' is linguistically and ideologically constituted by the West and can be seen as a social construct which is in need of deconstruction.

The Gospel of John shows significant differences from that of the Synoptic tradition. In the Gospel of John there is this continual opposition between the ruling literate class namely the Jews and Jesus. They no longer appear as a sect which characterize Palestinian relations eg. Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians but they are always described as 'the Jews' in contrast to whom Jesus and his disciples appear to be non-Jews. The Gospel of John contain a single theme, which is the personhood of Jesus as the eternal *Logos*. The entire Gospel is concerned with the fact of his all pervading presence, the nature of his claims, whence he comes and whither he goes and how humankind relates to Him. The Johannine Jesus makes very pertinent claims, as He presents Himself with the solemn "I AM" formula. The *Logos* enters the world of darkness as the light and in a world of falsehood He brings truth. Throughout the Gospel narrative text there is a binary framework eg. light and darkness, Spirit and flesh, from above and from below. These binary oppositions reveal the character and nature of Jesus in relation to the Johannine peasant community.

In order to explain these concepts, the History of Religions school searched for parallels in the Jewish, Hellenistic, Qumran and Gnostic texts. Both Qumran literature and John was dependent on the Old Testament rather than on Hellenistic traditions. The Qumran literature shows closer parallels than any other non-Christian literature to Judaism than Hellenism when it comes to the

Johannine thought and vocabulary, and far better parallel than post-Johannine or Hermetic writing.

A genuine understanding of the concept *Logos* from a diachronic perspective hinges on in discovering its philosophical and theological background. From the Hellenistic philosophical traditions of Philo, Stoicism, Neoplatonism, Mandaeanism all the way to Bultmann's redeemer Gnostic Redeemer myth, I have argued that the Hebrew notion of the creative function of *dabhar* דַבָר (= word) and that of Jewish Wisdom (*sophia*) holds the key principle to the historical background of the concept *Logos* in the Johannine narrative.

The *Logos* was a hymn in which the early Johannine peasant community celebrated the salvation-history enacted through the *Logos*. These peasants were ordinary unschooled people but deeply traditioned that rejoiced in their spiritual liberation against the power of the written Law which was seen as religious slavery and created social and economic boundaries in terms of race, religion and culture. The hymn can be seen rather as a mechanism of resistance which becomes the new oral authority of the living Jesus for this peasant community. This affirms the creative power of the Word which has now brought the *logoi* (written words) in the Johannine narrative text under the power of the *Logos*.

The social and linguistic world that emerges from behind the written text is one constituted by the Spirit(*pneuma*) which manifested itself in effacious speech. The preponderance and oral functioning of the *logoi* (words), are all features that have been profoundly nourished by an oral, prophetic and charismatic peasant community. The Spirit (*pneuma*) arrival marks the hermeneutical turning point, separating the time of concealment from the time of remembrance. Remembrance in an era of *grammatology* is more fully accomplished with the production of the

written or narrative text. This sets a norm for what is henceforth to be remembered in traces of more written text by Jacques Derrida (Kelber 1990:119).

This does not bind oral communities and believers slavishly to textuality in the sense that all oral possibilities are extinguished. One of the functions of the *Paraclete* is to teach what the earthly Jesus did not and could not say. Now Jesus the eternal Logos harbors and administers himself the oral treasure of the spoken *logoi* (words). It may well be appropriate that Jesus presides as *Logos* over the written text which sets new standards for oral proclamation of the Word. This creative pneumatic speech will continue in the age of the Spirit (*pneuma*) and that all *logoi* (words) from now will be measured by a norm, the authoritative record of the written text. The incarnate *Logos* had now been reincarnated into a new medium of the written text.

It may be argued that Derrida, who opposes the Western tradition of 'metaphysics of presence' which is rooted in the eternal *Logos*, agrees that it is impossible to overthrow it, because it existed at the beginning of creation or outside the realm of scientific objectivity. To many hermeneuts, deconstruction is viewed as a new paradigm which can resolve and even destroy the basic structures of *Logos* in Western thought. Derrida's failure to provide the reader with the critical tools to deconstruct such oppressive hierarchies shows that he remains intrinsically gripped by Idealism and Western Romanticism thinking. As much as he wants to change the oppressive binary oppositions between speech and writing, Deconstruction continues to affirm the ideology of the written text in relation to the power of speech. Binary oppositions in the written text represent a way of seeing ideologies.

For Derrida there is an "emancipatory element" in deconstruction: to free language from oppressive binary thinking. Derrida wants to free himself from the epistemological axis of Logos but he is deeply trapped in the Western Enlightenment paradigm. He wants to re-affirm the authority of self-identity in the light of the 'Other'. For Derrida, man (generically) and the world are interwoven as it opposes any form of the 'Other' or the metaphysics of presence. There is nothing outside the 'written text'. In other words there is nothing outside the context. This implies that there is no origin to existence and all of reality remains in a state of flux. There is no absolute truth, and truth is only possible in view of other written text which is inherently humanistic and idealistically driven by postmodern theorists.

In the context of the Johannine *Logos* readers and hearers let themselves be guided by the narrative dynamic to move from plural experience of the *logoi* (written words) to that of the singular *Logos* (words in space) which now takes command over the narrative text. The written text was thus not taken with ultimate seriousness. The *Logos* does not represent an extra-linguistic mode of authority but an extra textual one (Kelber 1990:128). The very Word epitomizes oral utterance.

Meaning in the view of Deconstructive hermeneutics, remains in traces of more written text, as presence spells absence, a continual process of supplementation. For Derrida the Western paradigm of Logocentrism has to be transformed by critical interrogations. One of the many weaknesses of deconstruction is that it refuses to break away from the Western metaphysics of presence. A pre-condition for the appearance of *grammatology* as a discursive practice was the formation of a stable meta-language that constituted a set of linguistic and textual objects. This meta-language received its authority in the philosophical schools and can be seen as a larger textual

ideology that assigned cultural power to the grammatically trained. The definition of the signifier-signified relation entailed the separability of the meaning from the lexis of the written text. The interpretation of the 'Book' became an extension of institutionally-based authority. The philosophical discourse of speech and writing was a need for institutional control over speech and the interpretation of written text and meta-language and linguistic disciplines. The written text was privileged over speech which came to be seen as ephemeral and local.

The *Logos* incarnates itself in written text as writing emanates from orality which constitutes common thinking in First century Galilee about the relations of speech and writing. By oral standards, not even the personification of the *Logos* is entirely baffling, because what typifies oral verbalization is the inseparable unity of speaker and message (Kelber 1990:128). *Logos* can thus be seen as an appropriate metaphor for transcendence. Like oral speech the *Logos* is ephemeral. It has no visual or physical means of preservation and it manifests itself in a moment of verbal action. Its prime potency is sound which is a strong characteristic of divinity.

Having experienced the power of '*grammatology*' there is a need to examine the ideology between orality and the written text, the literate and the illiterate, which ushers us into a new power struggle as Derrida forms a new hierarchy in order to silence oral cultures and to strengthen the dominant ideology of the written text through the 'make believe' that power is in the hands of the reader.

Derrida's critique of Logocentrism in privileging writing over speech can be regarded as a new paradigm in understanding the binary opposition between orality-literacy in the Biblical narrative text. It finally seems that Third World counterparts can step out of the dominant discourse of Western interpretive interest which has shaped their cultural beliefs and social reality.

Derrida's anti-thesis of the *Logos* or transcendental signifier can be regarded as negative theology and nihilistic in essence. An end to metaphysics of presence or *Logos* can have dangerous effects on primarily oral communities. Derrida's critique can be regarded as language against language or ideology opposing ideology (Enlightenment over and against Deconstruction). Derrida's philosophy perpetuates Idealism and privileges Western humanism over and against *communitas* (Latin) of oral cultures. For many hermeneuts, Derrida's method of Deconstruction has finally produced a liberating hermeneutic for those developing countries but in return he strengthens the epistemological foundation of the Enlightenment and secures the power of the written text over speech as a transcendental signifier which is rooted in the eternal *Logos*.

Both Deconstruction and the Historical Critical method seek to secure meaning over and against the written text. This can be seen as hegemonic and ideologically loaded. Privileging writing over speech results in further binaries, eg. Literate versus Oral. In testing Derrida's hypothesis against the South African socio-political context the following evidence has emerged.

The written text in the South African context was a major tool that was used by the dominant literate class to organise their oppressive policies, tactics and to pass oppressive laws against primarily oral cultures. The written text has socially engineered a superior status for the dominant literate class over marginalised communities or those from the 'Otherside' of history. Apartheid has contributed to slavery and social and economic exploitation of primarily oral communities. Apartheid was the force behind the false construction of social boundaries and constructed racial segregation.

Oral cultures during years of oppression found great strength and encouragement in the spoken

Logos which is rooted in a metaphysics of presence of the Spirit. For them there is a supernatural force that governs the order of the world and that give meaning to their speech utterances and interpretive interest. It was the spoken *Logos* of Jesus that kept oral cultures rational and sane against the vile atrocities that were committed against them in the name of 'Reason.' It was that unseen metaphysical power in the *Logos* that helped oral communities to believe in the liberating power of the God who was on the side of the poor and oppressed. It was the very words of Jesus that become the liberating force against the evil of racism and oppression.

Although the *Logos* is written, it remains spoken and creative in essence. It is an 'oral text' put into writing. The *Logos* existed prior (*arche writing*) the realm of history and existed outside the construction of the written text. The creative power of *Logos* cannot be fathomed in its purest sense as it breathes life (*zoē*) and being into existence and gives meaning to the oral discourse. The spoken Word of God remains uncontrolled and in a sense unknowable. The spoken Word is filled with life, and creates an intimate sense of presence. The written text can never imprison *Logos* because it existed with the Father at the beginning of creation.

Oral communities have revealed the metaphysical power of the Word in their performance of the socio-cultural archive of their indigenous knowledge against their oppressors. Although these communities had no economic and political power they literally came to believe in the creative and convincing power of the Word which was the only source of resistance against the vile atrocities that were committed against them and their impoverished communities. It is only the power of *Logos* that could transform and change the hearts of those that demonically kept millions of marginalised people in socio-economic web of oppression.

An Anthropology of Liberation re-instated the poor, as subjects of their own identity. They are no longer to be on the margins of society at the mercy of the dominant literate class. An Anthropology of Liberation has underscored the absolute value of persons and that human beings are not a finished product but become true persons when they work for social justice. The *Logos* has freed human beings from the bondage of sin so that they can become a community. An Anthropology of Liberation put in bold relief the role of social sin. Human beings have a historic role to play in the abolition of injustice which is the ultimate result of sin. An Anthropology of Liberation enable people to become true persons, created in God's image. An Anthropology of Liberation has therefore re-interpreted and enriched Christian anthropology and embraced the themes of spirituality and liturgy .

The *Logos* remain razor sharp and it is a living force that has persisted in revealing truth and meaning to the very soul and being of primarily oral communities. The *Logos* is not just metaphysical in essence but also has the qualities and characteristics of orality. It is divine and constitutes what humanity is all about. It is the quality that represents the *Imago Dei*, the image of God in an oral communities. The world can never be a written construction as Derrida projects, but dialogism and logocentrism (metaphysics of presence) spells meaning and representation which can only be verifiable through speaker and hearer as it creates instant meaning and representation of reality. The *Logos* is that force that gives meaning to the world and the discourse of humankind. *Logos* has the potential to create resistance but at the same time the power to forgive and to love those who had created pain, plight, unhappiness and social and economic oppression for primary oral communities. Orality rooted in *Logos* spells life abundantly in Jesus which can be seen as the finest and the truest example: as His words spell life and death to the hearer as the incarnate Christ himself harbors and administers the oral treasure.

7.1. Results and findings of the thesis:

I have arrived at the following results in the light of my thesis: that the concept *Logos* in the Gospel of John can serve as a mechanism of resistance for primarily oral communities. The model of Orality-Literacy Studies has extricated greater linguistic and cultural binaries when it is read in relation to discourse of the 'Other'.

Logos is deeply rooted in a metaphysics of presence which existed outside the realm of the written text. The written text cannot contain the power of *Logos*, because *Logos* is creative and is inherently a quality that belongs to humankind. It is a characteristic that gives meaning to anthropos (humankind) and the construction of meaning and representation of social reality. The written text cannot be seen as autonomous because meaning and representation authenticates itself through hearer and speaker and not through traces of more written text.

The written text in view of our context was lethal in relation to its social dynamics. It was a major tool the oppressor used against primarily oral cultures. It was through the written text that the dominant literate class organised their tactics and vile atrocities against primary oral cultures. The written was a tool that was used to sustain the superiority of knowledge against the primitive mind of primarily oral communities. The written text has shaped the political and economic oppression of primarily oral communities and has sustained racial segregation and social boundaries which were textually implemented against primarily oral cultures. The failure of these communities to understand the laws and policies of the written text resulted in a loss of land, wealth and dignity. The written text in view of our context can thus be seen as a product of slavery and exploitation.

The metaphysics of presence of the *Logos* can thus be seen as a powerful force of resistance for primarily oral cultures. The authority of the *Logos* is not part of the ideological and social construction of the written text. The very essence of the *Logos* is rooted in the *pneuma* (Spirit) which is that living breath that is revealed in the power of orality and displayed in anthropos (humankind) which has now become a source of strength for primarily oral cultures in their struggle against social and economic oppression.

This thesis has only touched the surface for ongoing research in Orality-Literacy Studies. Orality-Literacy research helps primarily oral communities to interpret history and to identify different binary oppositions in the written text. It allows primarily oral cultures to dialogue with the tradition of the past and the future and to unravel literary and cultural domination in the written text.

This research leaves many questions unanswered and open, which can be researched, for example, the unwritten accounts of cultural, political and religious hymns and poetry, rituals of primary oral cultures during the days of the political struggle. Orality-Literacy research affords primarily oral cultures to break the culture of silence that has been imposed upon them by the dominant literate class and to tell about their triumphs, fears and levels of oppression. Orality-Literacy research helps to record the history of the 'Other' and to treasure the ongoing culture of orality through residual or secondary orality which is the interface between the oral and the written text. This kind of research can help us to secure and preserve the rituals, poetry, songs, epics, drama and language of primarily oral communities.

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