

Just to give a bit of background to the work I've just started doing on the question of the oral traditions about Jesus in the years before the Gospels were written, some initial points:

1) I am not, decidedly NOT, the first scholar to think this might be of some interest! On the contrary, it has long been intriguing to scholars, and there are a number of important books that have appeared in recent years, for example, James Dunn, [The Oral Gospel Tradition](#) (just last year!) and, even better known, Richard Bauckham, [Jesus and the Eyewitnesses](#) (a fat and very important book.) I would make two points about these (and other similar) books: they are not written for general audiences but for scholars, and I fundamentally disagree with lots of their views and claims! My approach will be very different, as, no doubt, will be my conclusions and arguments.

2) I am just at the beginning stages of my work. My plan is to read as extensively as I can over the next three months on the issues of memory (cognitive and neuro-science perspectives, more cognitive than neuro-science, since I'm interested more in the phenomenon than in the brain science that explains it), collective memory (from a sociological perspective), and orality (from anthropological and folkloric perspectives). I'll then sit back and see what I need to read next. I'll then read it. I'll then figure out what the book might look like, and figure out what more I need to read and think about it order to write it. Then I'll write it. But only if I'm ready.

3) As I pointed out, all this reading is necessary, and all these modern works of scholarship have emerged because, the older view among New Testament scholars, developed in the 1920s - the first time oral tradition was taken with utmost seriousness by scholars - is subscribed to precisely no one today (to my knowledge). This was the view of the form critics. In my last post I indicated that I would say something about them, and here I will do just that. Well, I'll begin to do that, by giving some necessary background to the background.

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