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UNEDUCATED APOSTLES

ORALITY, LITERACY, AND LEADERSHIP
IN THE EARLY CHURCH

A BILD ENCYCLICAL BY JEFF REED

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Introduction

Orality, literacy, and leadership development is a huge issue today as the gospel spreads across the Global South. I have been arguing for several years that the whole system exported by the West to train oral learners is deeply flawed and is doing great damage to the development of oral learners as leaders. This is a very complex issue and demands careful reflection on the development not only of the illiterate as leaders but the uneducated as well.

I am indebted to two key books on the subject, which I consider seminal to the whole conversation. Both are from The Library of New Testament Studies, and both cost a fortune.

Illiterate Apostles: Uneducated Early Christians and the Literates Who Loved Them by Allen R. Hilton (T&T Clark, 2018)

Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee by Chris Keith (T&T Clark, 2013)

I am also indebted to 2 chapters in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, Volumes 1 and 2, edited by J. Paul Sampley (T&T Clark, 2 ed, 2016)

“Paul and Frankness” ch. 12

“Paul and Literacy” ch. 18

Again, the starting point is “the way of Christ and His Apostles”—which means we cannot sort out complicated issues and problems in the 21st century without revisiting the plan and teaching of Christ as laid out to the Apostles and Christ’s churches.

I am going to lay out the issues in this encyclical which are both not understood and misunderstood by Western theologians, parachurch discipleship organizations, “oral-learning parachurch materials providers” and even Bible translation organizations and publishers.

Unless one truly revisits the early church Greco-Roman research in search of the historical church, the paradigm paralysis of the Western Church and those trained theologically is as blinding today as was the scribal-literate Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day.

All evangelicals and Pentecostals are writing out of failing Western paradigms. I’m not aware of any of the wealth of Greco-Roman research, developed over the last forty years in search of the historical early churches, that appears in any of the oral-learner training manuals. Nor does it appear in materials of those in the West trying to train the massive number of illiterate in the Global South.

My arguments here are totally contrary to the development of orality materials today.

So where do we begin?

We begin by returning to and understanding, very clearly, “the way of Christ and His Apostles.”

When we began the first day of our D.Min. Residency in partnership with a highly respected traditional evangelical seminary, I introduced the D.Min. as a study in “the way of Christ and His Apostles.” The professor that was involved with us challenged me immediately: Who was I to say we had “the way of Christ and His Apostles”? By the end of this encyclical, you will understand why the professor will probably never be able to speak with the confident authority of the uneducated Jesus and His Apostles.

Let’s begin with Luke’s assessment of Peter and John as uneducated.

4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus....²⁹ Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness,³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy

servant Jesus.”³¹ When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:13; 29–31 (NRSV)

Uneducated Apostles

This is Hilton's translation of Acts 4:13–14:

“Then, as they observed the audacity (παρορησία) of Peter and John and yet realized (καταλαβόμενοι) that they were illiterate men (ἀγράμματοι) and not appropriately educated for this behavior (καί ιδιώται), they began to marvel (ἐθαύμαζον) and to recognize that the two had been with Jesus; and seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, the Sanhedrin could offer no refutation.”

Luke uses three key words here:

- *boldness (parresia)*—confident, outspoken, freedom of speech, eloquent
- *uneducated (agrammatos)*—illiterate, unable to read and write, without learning, unlettered, unschooled
- *ordinary (idiotes)*—unskilled person, uneducated, layman, ungifted, amateur in contrast to expert

From the perspective of one with a classical Greek education, Luke chooses these words very carefully. So we need to take time to understand what they would have meant to Theophilus, one of high standing in the Greco-Roman world.

The whole sequence of this story (Acts 4:1–31), which eventually finds them standing before the council of rulers, elders, and scribes, is set up to explain the *parresia*—the confident authority of Peter and John—which was inexplicable to these Jewish leaders. Why? Because these uneducated and untrained men had *parresia*—the highest goal of all education in the Greco-Roman world.

Luke uses the word *parresia* three times. And Theophilus, highly classically educated, would get the point. They spoke with confident authority—they knew what they were talking about—just as Jesus did. Luke had previously made that point several times in his gospel. We will visit that later.

Now it is time for some “Greco-Roman” background. These quotes are a little lengthy, but they are important to understanding what was really meant by Luke’s amazing text of this confrontation in the key event he chose to include in his “accurate account.” These quotes are from *Illiterate Apostles: Uneducated Early Christians and the Literates Who Loved Them*.

“The ability to read and write is both a skill and a significant social fact. That is true in highly literate cultures, and it is especially true in semiliterate ones.... those who communicated in languages other than Greek (and later Latin) were considered culturally inferior. No matter what other languages a person could read or write, she or he was illiterate (ἀγράμματος) on this accounting if unable to read or write Greek and/or Latin.... In both the ancient and modern

worlds, literacy has various degrees and kinds, making definition a complex matter.... The minimal sign of literacy is signature literacy Others would define literacy in more demanding terms related to comprehension, requiring that a literate person be able, ‘with understanding to both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life.’... ‘a person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning’ To complete our range of definitions, we need to go beyond UNESCO’s concerns and add to these the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of literate as ‘learned or familiar with a specific canon of literature.’”¹

“Various authors ranging from classical Athens into the Christian period, portray the uneducated as categorically inferior, prone to deficiencies ranging from bad taste in music and poetry to defective opinions about divinity. Moral weakness is prominent among these shortcomings. Education, and especially philosophical education, is regarded throughout antiquity as the most important cause of virtue. Evidence is abundant, beginning with the very definitions of education. For Plato, it is ‘ἡ πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἐκ παιδῶν παιδεία’—training toward virtue from childhood—and Dio Chrysostom’s Socrates defines *paideia* similarly as ‘[learning] what one must know to be a good and noble person.’ These and other examples indicate that, from the perspective of the educated elite, the uneducated

¹ Allen Hilton, *Illiterate Apostles: Uneducated Early Christians and the Literates Who Loved Them* (2018), pp. 7, 11.

person is closed off from participation in the cultured and good life.”²

“For these authors, then, basic literacy is not the primary issue. Instead, they focus on three shortcomings to characterize the uneducated. First, they lack rhetorical skills. Both Origen and Justin discuss the expectation that Jesus and his apostles, respectively, should naturally be unable to make speeches. Second, and most commonly, critics assume that these uneducated Christians lack the skills to weigh arguments and discern truth.... The third failure of the uneducated that is implied in the criticisms we have read regards the deficit their booklessness inflicts on their morality.”³

“Because of the way they understood their own membership in the educated class, learned onlookers naturally assumed that the uneducated Christians would be,

- untrained to assess arguments, leaving them unable to tell truth from falsehood ...
- ill-equipped to make rhetorically sound speeches ...
- immoral, because not trained in virtue
- and woefully lacking equipment for the sort of philosophical pursuits to which they had pretense ...”⁴

² Ibid, p. 35.

³ Ibid, pp. 56, 57.

⁴ Ibid, p. 65.

Now let's stop here for a moment.

One who is educated, has the ability to discern truth, weigh arguments, and make sound speeches. The illiterate cannot do this, let alone do it with confident authority (*parresia*). Only the best educated can do that. That is the case Luke is making here.

Luke encases the event of these uneducated and untrained men before the Council as having what only the best educated of the day could possess. He uses the word *parresia* three times: once at the event and two times after it. In fact, many of the believers already had it.

Luke illustrates this in the story just before this one—Acts 3:11–26, Solomon's portico. There, Peter shows masterful command of key passages from the Old Testament to make his case for the kerygma—the gospel story.

Where did they get this ability?

- Luke gives us the key in Acts 4:13: “they recognized them as having been with Jesus.”
- This lays a huge foundation for understanding orality, literacy, and leadership development in the early churches.
- What are the implications of *being with Jesus* and developing a skillful confident authority?
- We will turn to Jesus in a moment. But listen to Hilton again as we attempt to answer the question: “How uneducated were they?”

We are dealing with two questions now:

- How illiterate were they?
- Where did they get this skilled confident authority from which they spoke? (*parresia*)

“Simon, the son of John, and John, the son of Zebedee, were probably illiterate and undoubtedly uneducated—at least by the standards of educated Greeks and Romans. Indeed, the search for two Homer-toting fishermen from first-century Galilee would have been a long and frustrating one. We can therefore almost surely trust the historical veracity of Luke’s characterization of them as ‘ἀγράμματοι καὶ ιδιώται.’

“For Luke’s social circles, illiteracy must have been a negative detail. With the possible exception of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Luke–Acts features the most refined Greek style of the New Testament. He also knows literate traditions, as evidenced by his quotations of and allusions to classical pagan authors in Acts. All of this helps us place him among the privileged on the educational hierarchy of antiquity.”⁵

“If Peter and John had displayed polished eloquence, the astonishment of the Judean rulers would make good sense. Their pause to marvel immediately follows Peter’s defense speech, and

⁵ Ibid, Hilton, p. 95.

elegant speechmaking would naturally require a rhetorical education that the apostles explicitly lack.

“Alternatively, the Sanhedrin might understandably have wondered had the uneducated apostles displayed amazing erudition. Within his speech, Peter has produced a quotation from Psalm 118, and such an appropriate citation from even a Hebrew poet should presumably also be beyond the reach of uneducated people. However, *παρρησία* never describes either eloquence or erudition, so Luke is not emphasizing that these *ιδιώται* are non-rhetoricians or non-rabbis. In fact, our best translation thus far for the term *παρρησία* has been “audacity,” an attribute that one would normally not reserve for the learned, either in Luke’s society or our own. What specific training do the apostles lack that *παρρησία* should require?”⁶

“Peter’s defiance, especially in his two ‘defense’ speeches, exceeds mere resistance. His tone might be described as baiting and even seems intended to provoke....

“In each trial, Peter states the principle behind his defiance.... These are uneducated, provincial, rural fishermen. While traditions about Socrates surely made their way beyond the classroom walls and into general educated conversation, Peter and John as illiterate and uneducated men should not have had access to them.... If educated

⁶ Ibid, pp. 133, 134.

people can manage to speak boldly after they have engaged in philosophical training and heard stories about worthy exemplars, Peter and John may even exceed their accomplishment by achieving the virtue without the education. The important point, however, is that their *παρορησία* is stamped with a Socratic seal of approval.”⁷

How illiterate were they?

Again we need to know a little more about the range of literacy in the Greco-Roman world.

Here Chris Keith’s work in chapter two of his book *Jesus’ Literacy* is a great beginning. Keith identifies “six characteristics of, or factors within, Second Temple Palestinian Judaism that are most pertinent to interpreting early Christian portrayals of Jesus’ literate status: widespread illiteracy, widespread textuality, literacy spectrums, scribal literacy, the acquisition of biblical knowledge, and the perception of literacy.”

⁷ Ibid, pp. 146, 147, 148.

6 Characteristics of Literacy in the Greco-Roman World of Jesus' and the Apostles' Day:

1. Widespread Illiteracy—an estimate of 90% had no recognized training.
2. Widespread Textuality—the knowledge, usage and appreciation of texts regardless of literacy skills.
3. Literacy Spectrums
 - A. *Semi-literacy*—write slowly and read only simple texts.
 - B. *Signature literacy*—sign your name and maybe a phrase or two.
 - C. *Illiterate yet textual*—could afford to have someone write texts for them.
 - D. *Illiterate and non-textual*—could not afford to have anyone write anything for them.
 - E. *Literate*—graduation of reading skills; graduation of writing skills; a spectrum of languages—Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew.
4. Scribal literacy and craftsman literacy: *scribal literacy*—able to function as authoritative interpreters of texts; *craftsman literacy*—skilled craftsmen's basic commerce language, not organized around a body of literature but a trade, as opposed to unskilled labor.
5. The acquisition of theological understanding—the home, the synagogue.
6. The social perception of literacy—such as all those with scribal-literature authority were of the same group.⁸

⁸ Adapted from Chris Keith, *Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), chapter 3 "Scribal Culture in the Time of Jesus," pp. 71–123.

“Jesus’ literate landscape was complex. Although almost all first-century Palestinian Jews were aware of texts and their power, and indeed organized their identity around (holy) texts, illiteracy was the rule of the day. There is no concrete evidence that literate education was typical for first-century Palestinian Jews (or the rest of antiquity). For those Jews who did receive an education, Torah reading was a prime focus, with writing instruction being reserved for later specialized scribal training. The various gradations of literacy, as well as the multilingual context, reveal literacy spectrums where a single person could hold different literate competencies in different languages. Importantly, however, scribal literacy in Palestine was based upon knowledge of the Hebrew holy texts.

“Craftsmen too may have been functionally literate, as were other bureaucratic scribes. But for those literates who specialized in transmitting and interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures, their literacy—scribal literacy—translated into significant scribal authority. Undoubtedly, manual laborers and others could acquire knowledge of the Scriptures, but that knowledge was not comparable to scribal literacy/authority. Furthermore, one must be aware of the manners in which these differing sections of Jesus’ literate landscape could have perceived the rhetorical deployment of literate skills in an interpretive situation—a single pedagogical event could suffice for convincing some audience members of one’s (scribal-) literate status (and thus

authority) while also convincing other members of one's lack of (scribal-) literate status (and thus lack of authority)."⁹

Let's go back to Acts 4:

“Then, as they observed the audacity (*παρρησία*) of Peter and John and yet realized (*καταλαβόμενοι*) that they were illiterate men (*ἀγράμματοι*) and not appropriately educated for this behavior (*καὶ ἰδιῶται*), they began to marvel (*ἐθαύμαζον*) and to recognize that the two had been with Jesus; and seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, the Sanhedrin could offer no refutation. (4:13–14)”¹⁰

Note: “they began to marvel and recognize that they had been with Jesus.”

WE ARE IDENTIFYING A VERY IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF “THE WAY OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.”

How illiterate were they?

1. It is clear they were craftsman literate not scribal literate.
2. And it is clear that they were not classically trained, so should not have been able to possess *παρρησία*¹¹; that the philosophers and scribal literate could recognize, but not truly attain themselves.

⁹ Ibid, Keith, p. 123.

¹⁰ Hilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 98–99.

¹¹ Ibid, Hilton, p. 99.

Again, let's turn to *Illiterate Apostles*:

“At last, the trade has been made. Though Peter and John lack formal education, they have somehow summoned the courage to speak with a *παρρησία* that is usually the province of the very educated.... Characters who speak prophetically in Luke–Acts do so, almost without exception, with the recognized assistance of the Holy Spirit.... In the book of Acts as well, the Spirit fills those characters who will speak the word of God.”¹²

“Interestingly, though, in this prayer, the gathered church asks specifically that God will help them to speak ‘with all boldness’ (*μετὰ παρρησίας πάσης*). More important than this, however, the Holy Spirit produces their *παρρησία*. The Christians do not ask to receive *παρρησία* through the Holy Spirit, but that is indeed the answer to their prayer. First, they are filled with the Holy Spirit (4:30); then, as a result, they begin speaking God’s word boldly (4:31). The same Holy Spirit that filled Peter before his bold speech now fills the rest of the company and supplies their bold speech ... *παρρησία*. This habit of speaking boldly endures throughout Paul’s ministry....”¹³

“Additionally, the *παρρησία* that proved so pivotal to Luke’s apologetic strategy assumes a new force in its connection to the

¹² Ibid, pp. 155, 157.

¹³ Ibid, p. 160.

larger theme of empowered speech. The apostles' noble *παροησία* becomes connected to a larger whole. As the motive force for the propagation of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit empowers Peter and Paul to speak boldly, whether that bold speech functions to defend or to proselytize.”¹⁴

Acts 4: “filled with the Spirit”—what does it really mean? Does it mean the Spirit will tell you what to say?

- They learned the teaching, the arguments, the OT verses; they had educated arguments.
- The Spirit filled them in the cultural circumstances to communicate what they knew boldly and spontaneously on the spot.

I have experienced this many times. I start with no notes and customize a 2-hour introduction on the spot, and leaders are amazed at the end of it. Why?

A special note here to our Global Pentecostal partners. Peter was filled and empowered. But he did not remain uneducated. Jesus educated him—the framework of all of his kerygmatic education was laid out on the road to Emmaus. We must master the kerygma and the didache (the Apostles' teaching) and then the Spirit will fill us situation by situation. The Word is the “sword of the Spirit.” If you do not master what Jesus delivered to the Apostles and to Paul, then your filling of the Spirit is only emotional motivation to act on

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 161.

your own ideas. You must study to be a master craftsman like Timothy!

We will come back to this idea.

Another important question now emerges. Was the *parresia*— skillful confident authority of Peter and John similar or different from the ideal Greek philosopher who could speak with eloquence?

Yes it was different. It was superior! This is Luke's point in everyone being amazed! The Greek PhD's could speak eloquently, but could not deliver in everyday culture.

This is Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5. He did not proclaim the gospel eloquently as the Greek PhD philosophers of the day, but with *parresia*— skillful confident authority.

Why? They all were shaped by Jesus!

Educated Luke

This is what is so brilliant about Jesus giving Luke to Paul to explain all this to the top Greco-Roman noble—Theophilus.

1:1 Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

Luke 1:1–4

The logic is very simple. Luke is writing to Theophilus, whom he identifies as “most excellent” (of noble status). In the Greco-Roman world, doctors were classically educated but a step down from philosophers. So Luke is addressing someone of high status, Theophilus, to make the case at the highest level for this uneducated Jesus and His uneducated band.¹⁵

¹⁵ On Luke’s education, see *Illiterate Apostles*, pp. 139–140 and 95–100.

Our situation: You might say Luke served a role for Paul that is similar to the role Steve Kemp, global dean of our Antioch School, plays for me. Steve gets “my stuff” accredited in the systems that are designed to discriminate against craftsman literacy.

Uneducated Jesus

Now, what about Jesus?

Was he illiterate? He never wrote anything—not a book, not a letter, not even a diary. Some believe he was. (Cossian)

Was he uneducated like Peter and John?

Was he scribal literate?

Let's quickly survey Luke's portrayal of Jesus' education.

⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him... ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.... ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.... ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.... 4:20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.... ³¹ He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee,

and was teaching them on the sabbath. ³² They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority.

Luke 2:40, 42, 47, 52; 4:20–22, 31–32

In the gospel of Luke, Luke is laying the foundation, through Jesus' "skillful confident authority," for what he will document in Acts through Peter and John and why being with Jesus was recognized by the stunned leaders in Jerusalem.

Jesus stunned everyone who heard him from 12 years old onward.

- He listened and discussed at 12 years.
- He mastered the Scriptures from ages 12–30.
- As He entered His ministry, He spoke with "skillful confident authority" even though uneducated—not scribal literate.

Jesus as synagogue teacher:

1. He is not like the scribes.

²² They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Mark 1:22

²⁹ for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. Matt 7:29

2. He is craftsman literate.

³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and
Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"

Mark 6:3

⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And
are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

Matt. 13:55

Again, we need a little more background.

"Eventually, the stream of Jesus-memory in which Jesus appears as a legitimate scribal-literate teacher predominated over the stream in which he is denied scribal literacy. The craftsman Jesus did not, of course, disappear. If nothing else, manuscripts of Mark's Gospel preserved the charge of the synagogue audience in Mark 6:3, to which scribes continued to respond by altering the text, as manuscripts from the third to sixth centuries indicate. In addition, Celsus appropriates this portrayal of Jesus in the late second century, as does Origen in his subsequent response. The image of Jesus as a scribal-literate teacher, however, became more prominent, spreading into (what would become) orthodox, apocryphal, and heretical Christian tradition"¹⁶

¹⁶ Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

“Jesus most likely did not hold scribal literacy. This alone, however, was not enough to keep some of his audiences, or members of his audiences, from concluding that he did. Although he was not a scribal-literate teacher, he was the type of teacher who was able to make people assume or conclude that he was. Therefore, within Jesus’ own lifetime there likely were contradictory and confused perceptions of his scribal-literate status.”¹⁷

What is the point of these quotes?

1. Luke makes a clear case that Jesus was not “scribal literate” but craftsman literate.
2. He spoke differently from the scribal literate; and even though they had official authority to interpret texts, Jesus spoke with real authority.
3. Luke’s memory is accurate (Luke 1:1–4), but the Jesus-memory of the Early Church recreated Jesus to satisfy the culture of the day.

Keith points out in his chapter entitled “Jesus Tradition, Memory and What Really Happened,” the importance of what he calls Jesus-memory-approach (based on social memory theory).

This is a very important concept. It actually replaces form criticism, just as Child’s canonical process replaces higher criticism. The critical reconstruction of books is not the final determinant of the official texts, but the acceptance of

¹⁷ Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

the people of God of the texts consistent with their collective social memory.

The issue is not a modern day scholar's recreation according to history predetermined from critical criteria, but what is the collective memory of those closest to the transformational events?

Was Jesus scribal literate?

1. Probably not, it appears he was craftsman literate.
2. He learned the Scriptures in his home and in the synagogues. He asked questions and spoke out as a young man in the synagogue.
3. In that environment, the Spirit of God worked, and He grew every day to a full understanding of the Scriptures, so when His ministry began, He spoke with a skillful authority no one had ever seen.

So do we accept Luke's account of Jesus, or the reconstructed social memory of the educated elite Christians after Jesus who eventually won out that Jesus was scribal literate? These educated Christians insisted that Jesus had a degree! (They even altered texts from the 3rd to the 6th centuries.¹⁸)

¹⁸ See *Jesus' Literacy*, pp. 156–163.

Uneducated Paul

We suggested that Luke was a gift to Paul. But what about Paul? Finally we have a key leader Jesus chose who was educated—a scribal-literate Greek, classically trained leader.

What do we really know about Paul? This is brief because of limited space in this encyclical.

In light of all we have established so far, here is my summary of where Paul fits into this whole orality, literacy, and leadership in the Greco-Roman world scene.

1. He was a Roman citizen and knew a lot of Greek literature.
2. He studied under Gamaliel and so had some scribal-literate training, and called himself a Pharisee.
3. Yet it appears he was more a zealot—an entrepreneur— than a scholar.
4. He read extensively, carried his books around with him and even amazed rulers with his knowledge.
5. Paul was trilingual—he could speak Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic.
6. Yet Paul was never identified as classically trained like Luke, nor, like Luke, a well known scribe, but a tentmaker.

7. In addition, he used an *amanuensis* (to assist in writing; not a professional but his companions) for all of his letters, common for the day, but an indication his reading skills may have been far greater than his writing skills.
8. He made a polemic argument (1 Corinthians 2:1–5) that he did not speak, make his case, or orate like the Greek philosophers of the day. Paul was an anomaly.

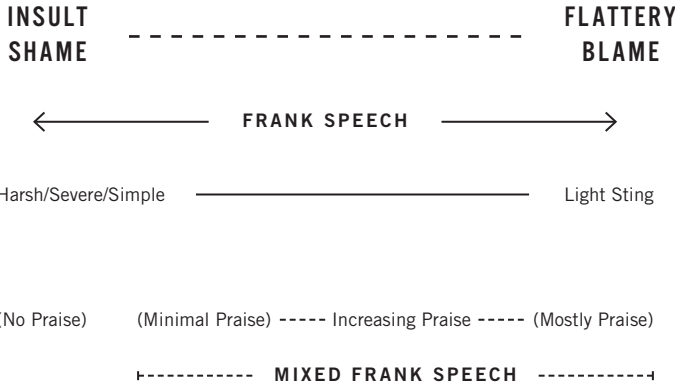
In chapter 12, “Paul and Frankness,” originally called “Paul and Frank Speech” (2003), Sampley talks of “Paul and *parresia*,” which he calls *frank speech*.

He makes 13 points:

1. *Parresia* and friendship
2. *Parresia* can lead to enmity
3. Appropriate *parresia*
4. *Parresia*—a call for changes, improvement
5. *Parresia* in all sorts of degrees
6. Harsher and gentler *parresia*
7. Flattery and insult are not *parresia*
8. The ethos of those who would use *parresia*
9. *Parresia* and good will

- 10. The response to *parresia*
- 11. The risk of *parresia*
- 12. *Parresia* and moral reasoning
- 13. Admonition, warning, instruction, reproof, and censure

THE PRACTICE OF PASTORAL CARE



J. Paul Sampley, *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), p. 296.

In the second part of his article, he deals with several examples of Paul's frank speech in his letters. This is so important!

- The letter to the Galatians
- 2 Corinthians 10–13
- Frankness in Philippians

I deal with frank speech extensively in my upcoming series (2019) on Paul's Early Letters.

This is so important because we live in a world I call “evangelical nice.” *Evangelical nice* is a term for the reality that evangelicals generally do not speak frankly and honestly to each other. It is not part of our evangelical culture. Evangelical nice is expected in an evangelical and professional respect at the seminary level, but is a curse on the Western Church. (See Appendix E for Seminal Books for Additional Reading.)

Orality, Literacy, and Leadership in the Early Church

Now let's put the picture together.

1. Jesus and His Apostles were all craftsmen literate—a carpenter, fishermen, a tentmaker.
2. That is to say they all were uneducated and considered illiterate by the elite of the Greco-Roman culture.

But they all spoke with a skillful confident authority that drove a movement that turned the Roman Empire upside down. How does this lay a foundation for understanding orality, literacy, and leadership in the Early Church and why it worked?

The Early Church was about 85% Greco-Roman illiterate on the lower level of the scale, maybe 10–15% craftsman literate, and probably only 1% classically trained like Luke or like the scribal-literate Jewish leaders. Yet in the churches they were one family—a family of families. How was this possible? How were the uneducated educated? Titus helps understand how this worked.

Remember, Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to fully establish the churches there.

I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

Titus 1:5

Who was Titus? He was a member of Paul's apostolic team. Paul had about 38 on his team, including highly educated like Luke and many benefactors. They mastered what Paul called the Teaching, the faith, the deposit, the sound doctrine—the kerygma and the didache—the essence of Jesus' teaching delivered to the Apostles, who were to establish the churches in it and then guard it.

His first task was to appoint qualified elders—good character, good reputation, good family, and . . .

⁹ He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. Titus 1:9

Three things are seen here:

- a firm grasp of the teaching
- the ability to teach it
- and the ability to defend it under attack

A big part of that in Titus is to set up the churches as a family of families:

1. Older men, younger men, older women, younger women...an orderly community
2. Older women helping the younger women with their individual homes

3. The whole healthy “family of families” engaging in good occupations and meeting pressing need in their cities, towns, and villages.

That means all of these elders and eventually every individual family and individuals themselves needed to be able to speak with “skillful, confident authority” (*parresia*).

This was the goal of those classically educated and was beyond reach of the uneducated and illiterates.

Listen to this quote from Hilton, in *Illiterate Apostles*:

“In his lecture entitled ‘That Women Too Should Study Philosophy,’ the Roman Stoic Musonius Rufus states his answer to a question that was widely debated among philosophers in antiquity.... When Rufus presents the virtues women would accrue by becoming philosophers, he reflects vividly the prominent values within the philosophical circles of his day, both in its continuation of prior philosophical tradition and in its newly Roman particularity. The virtues are roughly the “standard” set: the educated woman (γυνή ή πεπαιδευμένη), particularly the one who has studied philosophy (και ή φιλόσοφος), will manage her house well (οικονομικήν εἶναι), exhibit noble self-control (σωφρόνα εἶναι), embody justice (δικαία ... εἶη), and be more courageous than an uneducated woman (ἀνδρειότεραν εἶναι τῆς ιδιώτιδος).”¹⁹

¹⁹ Hilton, *Illiterate Apostles*, p. 131.

This quote is exactly what Paul lays out to Titus for women, only it does not come from Greek classical education or from the scribal literate, but from the apostolic teaching and the Holy Spirit at work in everyday, uneducated people.

²⁶ Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no one might boast in the presence of God. 1 Corinthians 1:26–29

What the Greek classical world idealized was actually accomplished by these uneducated town and village leaders and churches that eventually turned the world upside down.

Orality, Literacy, and Leadership in the 21st Century

As we turn our attention now to today's Western systems created by the educated to train the uneducated, we will see why they do not even understand "the way of Christ and His Apostles."

They cannot teach them to speak with skillful, confident authority (*parresia*) because they do not possess it.

I believe we can teach the simple village and town elders in the Global South to speak with a skillful confident authority that evades most of our theologians and theologically-literate pastors today.

Let's look at the way Western organizations have built their systems to train oral learners.

One fundamental assumption dominates everything: Uneducated village leaders, primarily oral learners, cannot reason like the literate—the educated. So they lump them all into one category and call them oral learners. (Keith's six literacy categories show the foolishness of that).

One book that summarizes the Western theological education approach to oral learners is *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*.

Making Disciples of Oral Learners, published by The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, originally a Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP, no. 54), is

a booklet that articulates the entire philosophy of the orality–literacy approach used by discipleship organizations and church-planting movements in India.

It is deeply flawed. As I have written before, in its 91 pages, I have counted 61 paces where I believe the assumptions are either partially or completely wrong.

Here is a brief summary of some of its basic assumptions:

- Only use narrative literature (stories).
- Non-literates cannot reason like literates.
- Select stories that fit the culture.
- Prioritize parables because they are easy to understand.
- Remove our interpretive remarks; keep stories pure.
- Just tell stories, let the local leaders deal with doctrinal issues.
- Usually 50–100 stories make up the curriculum.

What is wrong with these assumptions? Almost everything in light of what we have been studying so far!

1. When Paul writes his letters, he addresses the whole church and expects everyone to understand.
2. None of his letters are narratives; they are epistles. However, in another sense they are stories of the churches. Their problems are all set in the context of a larger narrative—Acts.

3. The uneducated were all to learn the teaching, and the elder mentioned in Titus was to be able to teach the sound doctrine and refute those who contradicted it. The teaching included everyone in the churches—85–90% illiterate.
4. What is there in Titus that any of the types on Keith's literary spectrum could not understand? Nothing. That is especially true if there is opportunity for discussion and clarification—interpretive comments as needed.
5. Just telling the stories and giving a few lessons without understanding the intent of the stories in the context of The Story (i.e. road to Emmaus) and Christ's unfolding plan means their whole worldview will be fragmented. They will not be able to think biblically.
6. The whole church needs to be one-minded and think biblically. That includes everyone on the literacy spectrum—including the 85% illiterate.
7. The idea of 50–100 stories, heavy on the Gospels and parables, is the worst possible way to build a curriculum for the illiterate. Jesus' straight forward teaching He delivered to the Apostles is in Acts and their letters, especially Paul's, and the Gospels were written after Acts and Paul's letters.
8. Our theological-literate today cannot speak with skillful confident authority because they lost it getting their degrees—they misunderstand Acts, Christ's plan, and the Gospels. So all they can do is pass on their professorial knowledge.

9. The stories should not be a set that “fit the culture” but carefully selected stories in the light of The Story (road to Emmaus) and integrated with Acts.
10. Leave doctrinal issues up to locals? Absurd! Paul said to make sure everyone understands the sound doctrine he delivered to the churches—no exceptions. After they have mastered the Apostles’ doctrine delivered to the churches, then they deal with the cultural implications.
11. CPMs—Church-Planting Movements and DMM—Disciple Making Movements are completely lost at this point, and unsustainable usually beyond 5 years.
12. In addition, oral learning principles are needed, even for highly literate people. We build that into our whole system as well.

I could go on with several other points, but let me go back to the Greek classical educational world again and visit the heart of modern day orality research in what is called “oral Socrates—literate Plato.”

Greek thought was designed to be one continuous idea or process—learning through dialogue and analytical and scientific means. The important thing is that all good education needed a Socratic discussion element. You can see this at the heart of both Jesus’ and Paul’s teaching processes.

Let’s delve into this important research—Socratic dialogue—missed by modern day missionary populists. First a return to Hilton’s *Illiterate Apostles*.

“Taking Plato’s decision to write prose instead of the poetic (and therefore, it is believed, oral) meter in which previous authors had expressed themselves, Eric Havelock located this shift from orality to literacy in the fifth century. Havelock concludes that a great divide in Greek culture had begun to occur, perhaps at the time when Plato was born or a little earlier, which separated an oralist society relying mainly on metrical and recited literature for the content of its cultural knowledge to a literate society that was to rely in the future on prose as the vehicle of serious reflection, research, and record.”²⁰

I have written on this previously in chapter 5 of *Teaching the Story*, “Teaching the Story in Global South, Oral Contexts.”

“To understand this we must go back to the origins of the oral-literate debate, encompassed in the phrase ‘from formal Socrates to literate Plato.’ You see the primary shift from oral to literate learning centers around Greek philosophical thought of Socrates and Plato. Socrates is known for educating people through Socratic dialogue and Plato through analytical and logical means. But the literate approach removed Socratic dialogue and replaced it with logical, scientific knowledge, systematically learned through abstract propositions. This is not how Greek thought (Socrates to Plato) was intended to develop. Plato’s literate knowledge assumes using Socrates’ process.

²⁰ Ibid, Hilton, p. 14.

Otherwise everything becomes academic.”²¹

“This is all developed by the two leading scholars who essentially founded modern orality–literacy research and discipline—Walter J. Ong and Eric A. Havelock. Both wrote very significant manifestos, if you will, laying the foundation for this emerging discipline: *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* by Ong (1958) and *Preface to Plato* by Havelock (1963), both Harvard University Press, which is why I call it “the Harvard school of thought.”²² See the note below.

²¹ Jeff Reed, *Teaching the Story* (Ames: BILD, 2016), pp. 71, 72.

²² Ibid. I have included here the longer section from *Teaching the Story* which traces this issue all the way through Western history: “Their research and idea is simply this: “Socrates and Plato were intended to be one complete, continuous system, Plato building on Socrates. But the Enlightenment separated it out and science replaced dialogue, removing qualitative for quantitative thought. The Renaissance attempted to bring back the qualitative thought, but scientific thought stamped it out. Modernism won, creating a secular society. For a brief time (in the first half of the 20th century), High Modernism tried to resurrect qualitative thought but lost, and postmodernism arose (in the last half of the 20th century). The only thing providing unity was secular science. This is why, by the way, our seminaries are academic, and theology is abstract and irrelevant to the churches today.

“So literate and non-literate learners need the same thing: both Socrates (Socratic discussion) and Plato (serious ordered learning). And they need to learn together in dialogue, just as they did in the Early Church. IMB (Southern Baptist’s International Mission Board) brought forward Ong’s book but no evangelical material exists today that reflects a real understanding of Ong because they all have been trained in Western seminaries and only personally understand literacy, not orality-literacy—“oral Socrates-literate Plato.” This is very sad indeed, because the entire first generation of oral learners all across the Global South will ‘know the stories’ but not

This is what has happened in our contemporary evangelical attempts at educating the illiterate or uneducated.

We have simply dumbed down our literate curriculum to give just the most basic knowledge and focused solely on stories. Stories are only part of the research. The core orality research is based in the need for Socratic dialogue as well as stories. But by focusing on stories and assuming no need for dialogue, we leave the illiterate and even the semi-literate or functional-illiterates with an inability to think biblically.

be able to think biblically. The really sad thing is that literate learners, who create the stories and teach them, cannot think biblically either. That is why both oral learners and literate learners need to learn together, in their churches, in dialogue together. This is all backed up by Gadamer' in *Truth and Method*, who finishes his manifesto in the last paragraph by asking the question: Which will bring about the best approximation of the truth in culture—a literate professor? or a group of mature oral-literate leaders in dialogue together? Paradigm paralysis (Kuhn) cannot see Socrates and misses beauty and relevance in community.

“An additional note: Both Jesus and Paul understood this reality. Jesus taught through dialogue. He told stories first (narrative) and taught principles (Sermon on the Mount), but used dialogue to bring partial understanding to His disciples; they understood more when the Spirit came to them. All of Paul's words for preaching and teaching contained a dialogical element to them. In 1 Corinthians 1:20–2:5, Paul makes it clear he does not use a philosopher's 'lofty words and wisdom,' those of a skilled oratory to teach and preach Christ” (Western homiletics). He put oral and literate learners together in dialogue.

“All of this is also confirmed by the research of the brilliant Latin American educator (a Marxist by the way) Paulo Freire in his two books *Education for Critical Consciousness* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He argues that you can develop critical consciousness (the ability to think critically, globally) in non-literate learners by problem posing to them (Socratic discussion) in an ordered learning approach (the BILD system).” Jeff Reed, *Teaching the Story*, pp. 72-73

But then again, even the theological literate of our day have mostly lost skillful, confident authority (*parresia*) and cannot think in terms of “the way of Christ and His Apostles.”

Let me throw in a little of my own experience here. I am, in this type of conversation, uneducated. It is true. And that is how I am often regarded by the contemporary “theological literate.” I understand that. Here are three examples of me being regarded as “uneducated.” I have many more.

- A traditional evangelical seminary. The professor appointed to be part of our D.Min. partnership took me aside before the first session and said the faculty voted 55–44 to allow me to teach, but only as a visiting lecturer—because I was not educated. I think the inference was I needed to behave and be humble.
- Ted Ward, one of my most significant mentors for over 20 years, who ran two doctoral programs at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and who had many of his graduates leading mission agencies and educational institutions, commented publicly one time about them not accepting his praise of what we were accomplishing. I was not “one of them”—not theological literate. (Ted completed his work in this life and went to be with the Lord, January 2016.)
- A third example is the Antioch School’s accrediting association. Steve, who works wonders with these associations, has stated that in both of our reviews, one of the dilemmas is not listing me as president, but that

I was also listed as faculty since I am uneducated—not theologically literate. Although the accrediting team assessed our curriculum, which I authored, and gave the BILD courses A's at a doctoral level.

- The issue is not that I am opposed to the contributions of professors of theological institutions or partnerships with institutions themselves. I have had significant advisors who were theologians of six of our major seminaries (usually at the top of their fields), and we have several theological institutional partnerships worldwide. These are not token. Advisers like Walt Kaiser and Ted Ward were advisors to me for 20–30 years. And when Steve Kemp left Moody as one of their three Vice Presidents and joined us as Global Dean, I pushed him to finish his PhD, making a third of his job description to enable him to finish it.

Here are a few of the events that have shaped my thinking on the orality–literacy issue and how we think about leadership training today.

- While conducting a seminar in Kathmandu, Nepal, for Nepali and Indian pastors in 1984, it became clear to me that the uneducated village pastors were better at Socratic discussion than highly educated pastors.
- We argued with a seminary when they would not give D.Min. degrees to two very mature accomplished Christian leaders who did not have theological masters (not theologically literate). We got that changed in our D.Min. program. I would prefer a secular masters with experience in the world of work!

- The general secretary of a major US mission agency in Nigeria stated publicly that they didn't need BILD Leadership courses. The context was an ongoing debate of BILD working directly with the Nigerians with a system outside the theological-literate formal system they we're building. (We were not one of them!)
- In partnerships between Western parachurch "orality" organizations and young, mostly South Indian church planters—neither would listen and have in some cases become hostile of these critiques.
- Uganda National Fellowship of Born Again Pentecostal Churches, a movement of 45,000 churches, are more alive than the denominational churches, and on their website they humbly state they are considered uneducated. By helping them develop the ability to speak with skillful, confident authority, their impact will be unlimited.
- The entire house church movement in China grew like Acts, partially because Mao threw out all the missionaries and other theological literate. The church grew to 100 million with incredible illustrations of leaders speaking with confident authority (*parresia*). They are now aware of the need for more training but have retreated from going the Western theological education route. We are excited about helping them fully mature with skillful, confident, authority.

All of these illustrations give us a picture of the huge paradigm struggle taking place in the emerging church of the Global South.

Thus this encyclical.

Orality, Literacy, and Leadership in the 21st Century

Where do we go from here?

I commented on the future and our endeavors in chapter 5 of *Teaching the Story*. In chapter 5, I give the core “paradigm framework.”

It should look more like this:

- Small churches/groups of believers/nonbelievers (both literate and non-literate) gathered together in a Socratic discussion style around the Word
- Led by a well trained leader (Socrates) with a carefully designed ordered learning system (Plato)
- Under the shepherding of a well-trained eldership
- In the context of a complex apostolic network with a sharp apostolic team

I also listed a few of our initiatives, especially in India. I want to build on that now, in a way that shapes the paradigm. I will do it through the window of our Global Center for Church-Based Theological Education (C-BTE). This is our attempt, based on 40 plus years of work, to solve these issues that are central to a unified leadership emerging as powerful as was the Early Church.

1. We need special packaging of the core teaching for all on the whole literate spectrum.

Special packaging of the BILD Institute for the mostly oral learners and craftsman-literate modal leaders in villages, towns, and cities:

- Oral editions of the kerygma–didache core: The First Principles, The Story, The Gospels Series
 - Easy English editions of the kerygma–didache core: The First Principles, The Story, The Gospels Series
 - Oral and written New Testaments in mother tongue languages
 - Accreditation for the BILD Institute to give an international standard B.Min., which is an appropriate level for craftsman-literate pastors, elders, and other leaders as needed
 - Developing or Urban degree programs for global shadow cities and North American inner cities
2. At the other end of the literacy spectrum, we need executive education programs for theological educators, denomination leaders, and parachurch, NGO, and marketplace leaders to rethink the orality–literacy paradigm, and to develop a strong *parresia* by mastering “the way of Christ and His Apostles” themselves.

3. We have developed 3 executive education programs

BILD Executive Education Programs:

- Marketplace Leaders Program
- Church Networks, Denominations, and NGO Leaders Program
- Theological Educators Program

4. We also need a new assessment-recognition process, one which makes a degree a subset of the recognition process. So whether you have a degree or not, commendation becomes a higher value in recognizing church leadership.

I am very excited about the potential of this. I have been working on it for almost exactly 30 years. In 1988, with Ted Ward's assistance, I produced a document called NACAMP—North American Council for the Assessment of Ministerial Preparation. It was the basis for our whole portfolio system.

In addition, in 1995, I produced many documents on the formation of The Center for C-BTE, which focused a lot on nonformal assessment.

By 2020, these two documents will help us release a global strategy to our partners worldwide through Global Centers

for C-BTE. This will change the whole pressure that the BILD system is not for you, if you cannot handle or want a degree. However, when you begin to reflect on the inner city/shadow city next generation, the urban center degrees are tremendous cultural currency.

We are well down the road on these initiatives. Here are a few examples:

- We have launched The Center—our Global C-BTE Resource Center network, under Michael Vos’s leadership, with the goal of full development between 2018–2020 and commitment from several foundations. Michael is our Executive Vice President.
- We are launching all 3 executive education programs at this 2018 BILD International Conference.
- I have appointed a core orality team to accomplish the orality package I described above.
- I am leading an orality D.Min. cohort in India, formed from a network of young leaders shared by Randy Kennedy at The Maclellan Foundation.
- Steve Kemp has been assigned to think through everything from international level accreditation of the BILD Institute to a new nonformal accreditation system through The Global Center for C-BTE.

When all is said and done, let's go back to a simple idea—the setting in order of the churches on the island of Crete by Titus. First priority: elders who . . .

- have a firm grasp of the teaching
- can teach it
- and refute those who contradict—most likely in debate

Let me end with two practical applications:

1. The grassroots, semi-literate leaders and churches in the Global South can all develop the ability to speak with confident authority.

He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. Titus 1:9

2. Leaders and all believers in our churches today can learn to speak with confident authority just as Peter and John did, who were like Jesus.

Why do you think international leaders are amazed when they have conversations with all of you in your homes, when you pick them up from the airport, and as you serve them every day in the kitchen, and building, etc.?

When you speak with authority based on being established in the kerygma and the didache, the Spirit is directing and filling you!

Finally, why do you think I said the seminary professor lost the ability to speak with true *parresia*—the skillful, confident authority of Peter and John—and Jesus?

Final note: I am just coming off of a four-week international trip, and it is clear to me that as we now are in the process of “crossing the chasm,” the “paradigm conflicts” are increasing everywhere.

At my first stop, 15 of our cohort of 45 left because of the pressure from associates that if they went the BILD direction rather than with Bible college or seminary, they would disassociate from them. Most of them said they left because they did not want to lose their friends.

At my second stop, it was reported to me that there is much opposition to BILD by American groups, who are calling us narrow. One orality leader told a BILD leader not to bring up BILD’s ideas and challenges of the existing orality system at any orality meeting, or he would no longer be welcome.

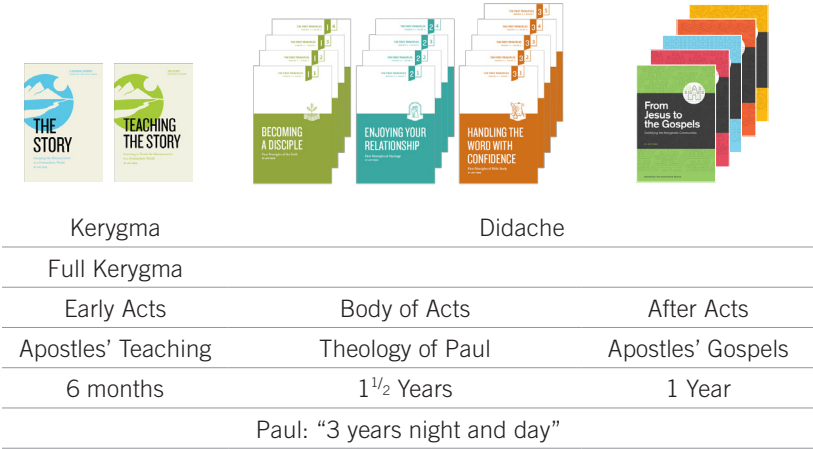
Third, we are in a serious conflict with one of our major India partners. They are communicating that BILD has very good ideas, but BILD does not understand India. Its programs are too hard for Indians, so go to them instead. They are giving degrees to village pastors who have not done their work, thus discounting their ability to handle the issues and truly develop the competencies.

I could mention others from just this trip. As a result, I am including several appendixes to this encyclical, to show how we are “crossing the chasm” from early adopters and the early majority to the larger majority group—shifting the whole paradigm.

Appendix A: Orality, Semi-Literate Package

The core of our “uneducated package” is built around this 3-year establishing process—which is almost exactly what Paul did for 3 years with the Ephesian elders.

Establishing Process—3 Years



As mentioned earlier, we are diligently working on special packaging of the core teaching for all on the whole literate spectrum.

- Special packaging of the BILD Institute for the mostly oral learners and craftsman literate modal leaders in village, towns, and cities.
- Oral editions of the kerygma-didache core: The First Principles, The Story, and The Gospels Series
- Easy English editions of the kerygma-didache core: The First Principles, The Story, and The Gospels Series
- Oral and written New Testaments in mother tongue languages
- Accreditation of the BILD Institute to give an international standard B.Min. that is an appropriate level for craftsman literate pastors, elders, and other leaders as needed
- Developing or Urban degree programs for global shadow cities and North American inner cities
- A new assessment-recognition system that is of higher value than degrees—a sort of multi-level “letter of commendation” system that equally acknowledges the educated and uneducated leaders in our churches

Appendix B: BILD Executive Education

BILD EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

A Toolset for “Crossing the Chasm”



BILD International has developed cutting-edge programs designed to bring global trends and strategies to Christian leaders who are involved in global enterprises in education and business, to position them to shape their enterprises for maximum global impact.



Theological Educators Program

This program is primarily for theological educators—seminarians and graduate school leaders. Seminaries and graduate schools of the future are going to have to become resource centers serving movements of churches and are going to have to rethink the Western theological encyclopedia. This program is for institution presidents, provosts, and department heads.



Church Networks, Denominations, and NGO Leaders Program

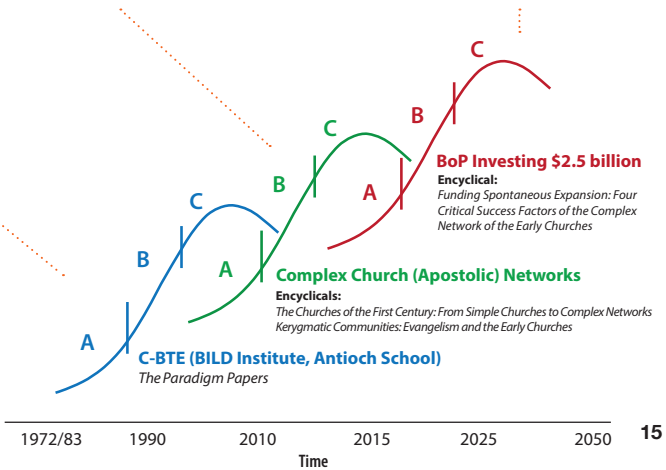
This program is primarily for church network and strategic NGO leaders. Church-planting movement leaders and leaders of church networks and denominations must rethink paradigms at every level for the church of the 21st Century.



Marketplace Leaders Program

This program is primarily for business men and women who are leaders in the global city marketplace. Paul first went to strategic cities, either to the marketplace or to the river banks, where the leading men and women of the city frequented. Participants include corporate leaders, successful business owners, outstanding professionals, and civic leaders.

PIONEERING UP "LINKED PARADIGM CURVES"



Appendix C: Paul's Early Letters

Paul's Early Letters Series, which will be released at the 2019 BILD International Conference, will deal with Paul's *parresia* in a very extensive manner. Paul's Early Letters, along with The Gospels Series, provides a very extensive treatment of the kerygma, as a complement to The First Principles Series—the didache.



Appendix D: NACAMP

I have included the NACAMP paper written in 1987 because it is our first document on the importance of assessment and recognition of ministerial preparation as a matter of churches and church leaders not theological institutions. While many ideas reflected in the document have been developed to a much higher level today, in our Global C-BTE Resource Centers we are intending on developing an assessment-recognition system for our partners that makes the degree secondary in the assessment process, which will ideally be built around letters of recommendation.

North American Council for Assessment of Ministerial Preparation A Prototype

The Quest for an Orderly and Responsible Pre-Ordination Assessment Process*

By Ted Ward and Jeff Reed

The biblical mandate calls for the church to play a central role in the recognition of qualified spiritual leaders. The Early Church laid on hands and sent out the first missionary team after their gifts and skills were recognized and tested. Paul instructed Timothy in the church order texts, the pastorals, to pass on the deposit to faithful men, and to see to it that leaders not lay their hands too quickly on other men aspiring to positions of leadership.

Within the last century, the responsibility for preparing pastors for church ministry has largely transferred from churches to educational institutions. Along with the responsibility to educate pastors, the church has delegated de facto much of the sacred responsibility of determining qualification for ordination. This state of affairs has been challenged for its contrast with biblical teachings regarding criteria and responsibilities for the selection of clerical and ministerial persons.

The issue is compounded by the fact that educational institutions typically evaluate their students and qualify their graduates in terms of scholarly and academic criteria rather than in terms of the matters of qualification for ministry. Although biblical emphasis is on gifts of the Holy Spirit and the personal-social-spiritual qualifications for ministry, the difficulty of evaluating such matters in the ordinary manner of academic assessment leads educational institutions to qualify their nominees for ordination and ministries in terms of more easily measured characteristics. Even those churches historically committed to maintaining pastoral care of their ministry students (e.g. “under the care of the presbytery”) tend now to discharge this responsibility in perfunctory ways, leaving substantial matters of overseeing to the educational institutions.

As the power and influence of the accrediting process has increased, most educational institutions have merged into institutional networks wherein impulses and the authority for “excellence” and competency of both the institution and its graduates come more from the institutional network, rather than from the churches served.

In no way does this observation deny the integrity of particular institutions nor the faculties and administrators who serve within them. The issue may be seen as abstract and theoretical—in terms of the churches delegating their responsibilities to educational institutions. Or it can be seen as a practical matter—in terms of the actual differences between concerns for ministry as held by churchmen in contrast with concerns for academic competencies held by educators.

To the credit of the integrity of the faculties and administrators of theological educational institutions, major reform has begun in the last decade. Entire departments have been formed in many seminaries around an attempt to involve the churches in the educating process and securing for their students a broader range of ministry experience before graduation.

Formal theological education for Christian ministry is a rather recent innovation. Much older and more accessible for many pastors-to-be are various forms of nonformal education which predate the contemporary collegiate environment of formal theological education. The last two decades have seen the reemergence of nonformal forms of theological education, the two most significant movements being theological education by extension (TEE) and what Walter Kaiser, academic dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, in his book *Toward an Exegetical Theology* has affectionately referred to as “house-seminaries,” extensive church-based ministerial training programs. This development further complicates the already complex job of assessing preparedness for ministry.

Whether assessing men prepared through formal, nonformal or informal means, the church today must look afresh at its commitment to the very sacred responsibility of assessing and recognizing qualified spiritual leaders. Today is a day of great ministry opportunity. Add to this the range of ministries for which men are preparing—from third world tribal and traditional societies to highly sophisticated Western technological metropolises—and the job of assessing preparedness for ministry seems more difficult than ever.

Toward assisting the churches in their vital role of assessing and recognizing qualified spiritual leaders, a number of leaders of both formal and nonformal ministerial education programs are considering the establishment of a cooperative venture for the assessment of ministerial education.

NORTH AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF MINISTERIAL EDUCATION PREPARATION (NACAMP)

- NORTH AMERICAN (serving churches in the U.S. & Canada)
- COUNCIL FOR (not an educational institution, but a church-based council)
- ASSESSMENT OF (not accrediting institutions, but assessing candidates)
- MINISTERIAL (concerned with competencies and knowledge directly related to effective ministry)
- PREPARATION (focused on readiness for ministry)

The NACAMP idea began as an adaptation of the widely heralded CAEL process. CAEL (Council for Assessment of Experiential Learning) has provided a means for determining the academic equivalency of experience in trades, professions, and life itself, for the benefit of persons returning to higher education after being out of school or college for a number of years. Similarly, NACAMP arose from the quest for responsible ways to conduct valuative assessment in nonformal ministerial preparation. The increasing number

of nonformal education programs of ministerial preparation has revealed a common need: since the burden of pre-ordination credentialing has fallen largely to the responsibility of educational institutions, the sorts of valuative procedures available are mostly geared to the academic accomplishments of students in such institutions. Further, despite the efforts of the Association of Theological Schools to encourage its constituent institutions to move in the direction of assessment of “readiness for ministry,” the institutions persist in the use of evaluations of their graduates in academic emphases. A new type of assessment is in order, one which places significant weight on call to the ministry skills, as well as on objective measures of knowledge and procedural skills in handling the Scriptures.

After the first consultation of several leaders of formal and nonformal educational programs in Newark on March 19, 1987, the basic idea was shifted from being an assessment tool for nonformal programs to use in gaining recognition to being a tool the church can use to aid them in assessing preparedness for ministry of all seeking ordination, regardless of whether that training has been accomplished through formal, nonformal, or informal means.

What NACAMP is intended to be:

- An orderly and responsible procedure for the assessment of readiness for ministry;
- Broad enough in scope to encompass the assessment of readiness for ministry of those trained by formal, nonformal, and informal means, consisting of four parts:
 1. A church-based Council for determining policy and standards of performance assessment, in terms of the actual needs of churches for effective ministry;
 2. An executive board and staff charged with establishing and maintaining an effective assessment procedure for the examination of persons who see themselves as having been adequately prepared for ministry;
 3. A set of evaluative instruments focused on the standards of effective ministry established by the churches of the NACAMP Council; the instruments range from objective tests of knowledge and information through various forms of self-assessment, each of which is coordinated with an “external assessment” procedure involving persons with whom the candidate has ministered and learned during preparation;
 4. A certification based upon the assessment that the candidate presents to the church or denominational body concerned with examination for ordination.

What NACAMP is not intended to be:

- a certification or accreditation of educational institutions;
- a procedure for measuring, assessing, or evaluating curriculum, institutional conditions or environment, academic credits, or the worth of given degrees;
- a substitute for church-based review and evaluation of ordination qualifications;
- an alternative to the processes of degree-granting for persons whose preparation for ministry has been in a formal theological seminary.

If the NACAMP process is to become available to those who seek alternative assessment, much cooperation is needed:

1. A variety of individual churches will be needed to constitute the first NACAMP Council.
2. Funds will be needed to develop the executive staff, the assessment instruments, and the data-handling capabilities.
3. Two or more church assemblies or denominations will be needed as the first “clients” of the new assessment process.
4. Five to ten formal and nonformal education programs will be needed as initial “subscribers” to NACAMP, in order to provide at least fifteen nominees per year for NACAMP assessment.

*This paper is the second draft written as a result of the first summit held in Newark, March 19, 1987, by those interested in the idea. It is only included here to inform other interested parties who might be aware of developments up to this point. This draft is presently being rewritten. For further information write:

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Appendix E: Seminal Books for Additional Reading

These books are key to this whole discussion of orality, literacy, and leadership in the early churches.

1. Allen R. Hilton, *Illiterate Apostles: Uneducated Early Christians and the Literates Who Loved Them* (New York: T&T Clark, 2018)
2. Chris Keith, *Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and The Teacher From Galilee*, (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011)
3. J. Paul Sampley, ed., *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook, Volumes 1 and 2* (T&T Clark, 2016)
 - “Paul and Frankness” ch. 12
 - “Paul and Literacy” ch. 18
4. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, (New York: Routledge, 2000, originally 1982). Ong and Eric A. Havelock have written very significant manifestos, if you will, laying the foundation for this emerging discipline.
5. *Walter J. Ong, S.J. Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958)
6. Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Harvard University Press, 1963), which is why I call it the Harvard school of thought.
7. Eric Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986)

Discussion Questions

The following questions are designed to be discussed after reading the entire encyclical. They can be used for a retreat, a small group gathering, or by church leaders at leadership meetings. A small group Bible study, a fellowship group, a cell church, or house church could easily spend four weeks, an issue each week, discussing an encyclical. It is recommended that the entire encyclical be read again before discussing each issue.

ISSUE 1: PETER AND JOHN AS UNEDUCATED AND UNTRAINED

Questions:

1. What does Luke mean when he states Peter and John were uneducated and untrained men?
2. What does he mean when he says they spoke with boldness? What did that look like?
3. Why were the Jewish leadership amazed when they heard them speak? What amazed them?
4. What did this all have to do with being identified as having been with Jesus?
5. What did it mean for the whole church to speak with boldness?

ISSUE 2: JESUS SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY**Questions:**

1. How did Jesus develop his mastery of the Scriptures? Did Jesus have *parresia*? How did He get it?
2. In what way was His teaching different from the scribal-literate of His day?
3. By the standards of His day, was Jesus considered uneducated?
4. Why do you think Jesus chose uneducated men of His day to be His Apostles? Why did He not chose the scribal-literate of His day? Or the classical educated like Luke?

ISSUE 3: PAUL AND FRANK SPEECH**Questions:**

1. Why do you think Paul used so much frank speech in his ministry? with his churches? with Peter and other Jewish leaders?
2. Would Paul have been considered uneducated in the culture of his day?
3. Why was this key to his skill in establishing churches?
4. Why is this kind of speech so lacking in our churches today? What would it look like if our leaders spoke like this today in our churches?

ISSUE 4: DEVELOPING SKILLFUL, CONFIDENT LEADERS CAN SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY FOR OUR CHURCHES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Questions:

1. How can we develop skillful, confident uneducated leaders who speak with authority today in our churches in the Global South?
2. Why is church-based theological education so key in developing a large number of key leaders for the churches in the Global South?
3. What is needed for our contemporary theological-literate leaders of there West to be relevant?
4. In what ways is the current Western missions philosophy and curriculum so deeply deeply flawed?
5. What kind of curriculum is needed for developing parresia in leaders of the 21st century?

THESE SEVEN ENCYCLICALS, WRITTEN BY **JEFF REED**,

serve as a modern-day set of papers intended to be widely circulated amongst churches, challenging them to return to New Testament principles—the way of Christ and His Apostles—in every aspect of the planting and establishing of churches around the world. The issues addressed in these encyclicals are of fundamental importance to seeing sustainable and thriving church networks and movements emerge as we see unparalleled growth and expansion of the gospel worldwide.

Nº **1** FROM JESUS TO THE GOSPELS

Nº **2** THE CHURCHES OF THE FIRST CENTURY

Nº **3** WOMEN AND THE SPONTANEOUS EXPANSION
OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Nº **4** KERYGMATIC COMMUNITIES

Nº **5** FUNDING SPONTANEOUS EXPANSION

Nº **6** SHEPHERDING, COUNSELING AND
SUSTAINABILITY

Nº **7** UNEDUCATED APOSTLES



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