PROLOGUE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: A RHETO-PHILOSOPHICAL INTEPRETATION

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Abstract
Over the years, Biblical interpreters shunned the use of classical rhetoric to interpret the Bible. The major reason for this is that rhetoric is a philosophical method and hence considered unsuitable for biblical interpretation. However, the growing knowledge of how pervasive rhetoric was when mostof the books of the scripture were written and the difficulties scholars face while attempting to understand the Biblehave led to increasing interest in the rhetoric criticism. This study applies the rhetoric criticism to the prologue of the Gospel of John. The decision to do this is motivated bythe near consensus that the Gospel was written in a Roman province, possibly Ephesus where rhetoric was pervasive and the fact that interpreters of the prologue have used other methods without been able to reach agreement both on the relation between the prologue and the rest of the Gospel and the central message in both the prologue and the gospel. The study discovered that there are rhetorical elements in the text, strengthening the assumption that it can be approached rhetorically. Also, it discovered that the central message of the text is the sonship/messsiaship of Christ. Based on this, the paper concluded that the prologue makes more meaning when approached as a composition in Greco-Roman rhetoric. In addition, the fact that the prologue and classical rhetorical exordium bear a lot of similarities, provides insight for a better understanding of the extent of the influence of classical rhetoric not just on the rest of the gospel but on the whole scriptures itself.
Keywords: Prologue, John, Gospel, Rhetoric, Exordium, God, Greco-Roman

Introduction

Achieving success with any literary work is to a great extent enhanced by the literary techniques employed by the researcher. This is why biblical exegetes have always placed a lot of premium on methods in pursuing their understanding of the Bible. The discovery and application of the methods of historical and source criticisms underscored the indispensability of taking the historical context of the books of the Bible into cognizance in biblical interpretation and the methods have been applied with great successes. Another important idea that comes to the fore with the rise of source and historical criticisms is that biblical scholars have a lot to gain from comparing literary genres used in books of the bible with dominant literary genres in use when the books are written. For centuries scholars have believed that the Fourth Gospel, especial 1 vv. 1-18, known as the prologue is written to an audience that is not only made up of both Jews and Romans but that it is also decidedly influenced by Greco-Roman rhetoric. Unfortunately, scholars seem to be so engrossed in the debate over the original source of the prologue and whether the prologue is a prose or a hymn and the possible reconstruction of such

hymn that there has not been corresponding effort on what would be the result of comparing the prologue with Greco-Roman rhetorical handbook and what will be the possible outcome of such comparison. This is particularly the case in the quest to discover the central message of both the prologue and the entire Gospel as different scholars on account of the hymnal reconstruction tend to place the climax of the prologue on different verses.

The present study is an attempt to explore the outcome of such comparison. In the main, the study intends to investigate whether there is a structural similarity between the prologue and the exordiums of Greco-Roman rhetoric and if such structural similarities exist, whether it can enable us to grasp the central message of the prologue particularly the way it was advanced by its author and received by Christians of the first century.

Rhetorical Criticism

Cohen (1994, 69),observes that the past three decades have witnessed a remarkable resurgence of interest in rhetorical theory. This interest, however, has taken a number of distinct forms that it is almost impossible to describe a general method of rhetorical criticism. This is because the development of methods of rhetorical criticism is influenced by the development of rhetorical theories. Thus, Mack (1990, 19) acknowledges that there is no single network of scholars exchanging ideas about rhetorical criticism – no school, acknowledged master, or canon of methods. "Some theorists", Cohen (1994, 69) again avers, "…have sought to extend the traditional understanding of rhetoric as a methodology for the study of argument". Others have paid little heed to rhetoric's historical parameters since they have reconceptualised rhetoric as the analysis of fictional narrative. Due to this lack of a generally accepted method of rhetorical criticism underscored above, the present study will use rhetorical rules as found in Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks

How the Method will be applied in this Paper

To begin with, because our method derives from ancient rhetorical handbook which at present has no consensual formal principle or agreed upon procedure of application it will be helpful to develop the procedure we will be employing in this study by addressing two issues. The first issue is to decipher whether there is a structural and content similarities between Greco-Roman Exordium and the prologue of the fourth gospel and in so doing determine whether the central message of the prologue can be established. The second and last issue has to do with the question of demonstrating both from the prologue itself and from the rest of the gospel that the central message identified in the prologue is in accordance with the rules of Greco-Roman Exordium.

Rhetorical Elements for Comparing Greco-Roman Exordium and the Prologue of John

As briefly sketched above, the issue of the relationship of the first 18 verses of John to the remainder of the Gospel has long provided fodder for scholarly discourse. The essence of the debate focuses on the function of the prologue. There are essentially three categories under which theories concerning the function of the prologue fall:

1) The prologue introduces the Gospel by either preparing the readers for what follows or providing a summary of the Gospel's contents, a position exemplified by Von Harnack and E. C. Hoskyns (1947).

2) The opening verses provide the means by which the remainder of the Gospel may be interpreted. One sample illustration of this position is found in the work of J. A. T. Robinson (1963) who maintains that the prologue forces one to read the stories that follow as "timeless truths".

3) The last position, a catch-all category, includes all of those who do not believe the first 18 verses fall within the boundaries of 1 and 2. Generally this category includes those who do not necessarily believe the prologue is really a "prologue," positing instead that it is the mere "beginning" of the Gospel,(Haenchen, 1965) or those who believe the prologue may be interpreted on the basis of its own merit. Under this category one might include Ernst Käsemann(1969) who believes that neither positions 1 nor 2 do justice to the prologue, maintaining that the prologue maybe understood apart from the Gospel.

These discussions concerning the relationship of the prologue to the Gospel, amazingly, has generally overlooked one means by which some of the mist surrounding this question might be dissipated: determining whether or not the prologue indeed functions as a prologue by a comparison with prologues and prefaces in the Greco-Roman world. Such a comparison would yield, in the long run, not only information concerning whether or not verses 1-18 reflect the conventions of classical prologue writing, but also an understanding of the role such prologues were designed to assume. For instance, did ancient prologues really seek to provide an interpretative key with which a reader might unlock the appropriate understanding of the remainder of the text? Did they provide a summary of contents? Neither or both? Did they serve some other function? The absence of study in this direction, due perhaps to scholarship's preoccupation with reconstructing an underlying hymn, is one of the major issues that the present study intends to rectify.

Convention of Greco-Roman Speech Prologue

Classical orators observed conventions in the prologue, or exordium of a speech. Quintilian(Inst. Ort. 4.1.1), in his discussion on exordia, emphasises three subjects or tasks upon which the author must concentrate: his/her own character or ethos,

the attitudes of the judge, and an introduction of key points to be covered in the speech.Kennedy (1963, 274) describes the concept of ethos in Classical theory as:

> The credibility that the author or speaker is able to establish in his work. The audience is induced to trust what he says because they trust him, as a good man or an expert on the subject. In Aristotelian theory ethos is something entirely internal to a speech, but in practice the authority which the speaker brings to the occasion is an important factor.

The consequence of having established an ethos in which one is not only a good man, but an engaging speaker is that judges "give greater credence to those to whom they find it a pleasure to listen to" (Kennedy, 1963, 246).

The second artistic proof that is usually part of the exordium is pathos. Pathos regards the emotions of the judges and how rhetors may stimulate or manipulate their emotions, e.g., anger, fear, or love, to achieve their rhetorical goals. Another name for this second task is 'winning the good will of the judges' and it may be achieved in a variety of ways. One technique is to praise qualities possessed by the judge that it is hoped that esteemed person will employ to secure a favourable judgement. The last task of the exordium, the introduction of some of the key points the speaker wishes to address in his or her case. It behoves the orator to save the most important questions for introduction in the statement of facts.

But how does the Gospel of John stack up against the guidelines set out by the classical orators? May we in fact infer that 1: 1-18 is functioning like an exordium? The next section will analyse the prologue of John with respect to the three elements recommended for inclusion in an ancient rhetorical exordium - character, gaining the attention of the judges, and the introduction of key points.

Character of the Author, Questions of Authority and the Prologue

Aristotle (Rhetoric 1.2.4.), a predecessor to Quintilian, stated that a speech must be delivered in a way that renders the speaker worthy of confidence. For the ancient rhetoricians this endeavour was of the utmost importance as one's character constituted the "most effective means of proof" in a case. Cicero (1988), who studied Aristotle's works, was a master of establishing his ethos or character in ways that would dispose the audience in his own favour not to mention that of his client. Given this information, what may be said, on the basis of the prologue, concerning the author's ethos? First, one may say that the author appears to have a sound knowledge of the Septuagint. The fact that the author draws upon the Jewish Scriptures is exemplified by the vocabulary he chooses to employ in the commencement of his work. The first two words of the prologue, in particular, are reminiscent of the first words found in the Septuagint version of Genesis. "In the

beginning," Ἐνἀρχῇ. By calling to mind Genesis, accomplished not only with the words "in the beginning" but also with such key words as God, θεός (LXX Gen. 1.1; Jn. 1: 1), darkness σκοτία (LXX Gen. 1: 3; Jn. 1: 5) and light, φῶς (LXX Gen. 1: 4; Jn. 1: 4-5), the author is evoking, what may, at least for a Jewish or Christian audience, be an authoritative source.

A second observation concerning the author's ethos is that if the original readers knew the author or if the author' personal ethos had apparently been established at some time prior to the writing of the Gospel, the issue would not be required to be addressed in the prologue itself. This was a practice with which classical oratory could find no fault. Indeed Cicero does not necessarily include the establishment of one's ethos as requisite in an exordium. He assumes, perhaps to a lesser degree than Aristotle, that ethos may be asserted throughout the course of the speech as a whole. Even Quintilian (Inst. Ort. 3.8.6.), in discussing deliberative oratory, maintains that a formal opening is not required when an orator is known since whoever asks an orator for his opinion is already pre-disposed to him.To any other community of readers, however, the prologue must stand on its own. It reveals no details of the author save that he writes with authority; is acquainted with the Septuagint; and apparently believes the assertion he makes in verses 1: 14, 16 where he uses the first person plural.

Obtaining the Goodwill of the Judge or Audience

Now, various elements might induce an audience to listen attentively to a speech. The speaker, if of high ethos may draw in the audience, or the subject itself may be titillating enough to arouse interest. If these two aspects are absent, the orator may be faced with a variety of tasks. For instance, the speaker maybe required to disabuse a judge of predispositions toward an opponent. Sometimes, in order to win the goodwill of an audience, the orator might need to employ a variety of devices, such as creating "... the impression that we shall not keep them (the audience) long and intend to stick closely to the point" (Quintilian Inst. Ort. 4.1., 34.). Cicero (1965, 4-5) demonstrates his handling of a prejudiced judge in Pro Publio Quinctio. In that oration he assumes the judge, Aquilius, is predisposed to favour the prosecution, of a claimant of great influence in Rome. In this Oration, Cicero particularly stressed his client's own humble circumstances.

Both Cicero, in his orations against Catiline, and John, in his gospel, arouse attention by urging their respective audiences to focus on themselves or the commonweal. In this technique, the use of the pronoun "we," employed by both authors, serves to involve the audience in the particular discourse. John is marked by "liturgical structure" with the first person plural of 1: 14 "... we have seen his glory..." reflecting what may be regarded as a confession of faith.Cicero too, at one point in his second speech against Catiline, although expressing strong conviction rather than a confession of faith, dispenses with an address to the judge and resorts to plying the first person plural. By the use of "we" Cicero identifies the State, Senate, the people and himself as one, united in their judgement against Lucius

Catiline. Cicero, through the use of the first person plural was encouraging all auditors to become involved in his assertions, to lay claim to them, to allow Cicero to speak on their behalf. Specifically, he was using this device to invite his audience to join with him in condemning Catiline. John's use of the first person plural in 1: 14 is a technique that might be said to function in a similar manner. It too may serve to draw in the reader and invite him or her to join with the author in asserting a belief; to participate in the "in group" of the community.

In addition to the use of the first person plural, one might see another technique for gaining the attention of the reader that is employed in John's gospel. It is possible that the reader of the prologue is immediately made aware that the subject to be discussed is important - important enough to employ the first two words of the Septuagint and use the word θεός, God, three times in the first two verses. When one begins by speaking of something as important as the deity, the attention of the audience is likely to be arrested.In essence John's means of securing the good will of his audience would be acceptable to ancient orators.

Laying the Groundwork for the Remainder of the Oration

The observation may be made that a number of scholars have identified a "climax," "pivot" or "central affirmation" in the opening to John's Gospel. The wide variety of verses to which this honour has been ascribed, however is quite peculiar. The three verses most often championed are 12, 14, and 18 (O'Day, 1986, Culpepper, 1980, Ridderbos, 1966&Robinson, 1963).

> With regard to speech prologues, Cicero (1967, 2.,78) and Quintilian(4.1., 35.) do not speak of a single climax, pivot or central affirmation. Rather, they speak of opening remark, points, and the introduction of various questions as elements properly within the realm of "prologue."While it is conceivable that an orator might introduce a variety of points, one of which is superior to the others, the fact that there are three main claimants for the title "climax" in the Johannine prologue indicates that the author has introduced a number of issues into his prologue, none of which is necessarily dominant.

Quintilian,(Inst. Ort. 4.1. p. 35)in his advice concerning how one might "make the judge ready to receive instruction" from an orator, speaks concerning the practice of introducing the main points one intends to cover into an exordium. The opening verses of John's Gospel appear to reflect to this proscription. In a short prologue, the author introduces key concepts and vocabulary, briefly sets out the order of the Gospel's contents and states the main issue with which his narrative will be occupied. An exposition of the major units of the prologue: 1) the opening "hymn" (vv. 1-5); 2) a brief sketch of the Gospel's contents (w. 6-16); and 3) an

ipsiuscausae type "statement of the case" (vv. 16-18) will demonstrate this conformity.

The Prologue and Rheto-Philosophical Criticism
The Opening Hymn: Verses. 1-5

The assertion that verses 1-5 comprise the initial "unit" of the prologue is demonstrable on two fronts. First, in content its cosmic concerns differentiate this group of verses from those which follow. Verses 6-15, by contrast with the initial sentences of the prologue, refer to the world. This "worldly focus" is illustrated by the fact that verses 6-9 centre on the testimony given by a human; verses 10-13 on the light that is in the world; and verse 14 on the Word became flesh. Verse 15, in echoing verses 6-9 serves as an *inclusio*. Second, the fact that verses 1-5 are a theological unit is recognised by most scholars. Verse 6, for those seeking to construct an underlying source, is almost universally recognised as a break from verse 5. This break is often explained on the basis of an "editorial interpolation" (Robinson, 1963 122)of the underlying source.It signals a shift from the eternal and general concepts of Word, God, and Light to the recent historical and particular represented by John the Baptist. Verse 6, therefore, indicates the beginning of a new narrative unit.

The unit comprised of verses 1-5, in light of classical understandings of the "introductory" functions of ancient prologues, conforms with classical expectations. In form, these verses employ lofty and majestic language with which they describe their main subject, the Logos. Verse 1 is dominated by a rhythmic construction in which ἦν is the syllabic centre of each phrase. In turn, each phrase is balanced with the others with regard to the number of syllables: short – long - short. The construction may be illustrated:

1 2 3 Centre 3 2 1

Ἐνἀρχῇἦν ὁ λογός = total 7 syllabus

1 2 3 4 Centre 4 3 2 1

Κὰ ὁ λογόςἦν πρὸςτὸνθέον = total 9 syllabus

1 2 3 Centre 3 2 1

Κὰθέοςἦνὁλογός = total 7 syllabus

While Quintilian (Inst. Ort. 4.1., 1970, 59) would perhaps shudder at this opening sentence, declaring, "The old rule still holds good that no unusual word, no overbold metaphor, no phrase derived from the lumber-rooms of antiquity or from poetic licence should be detected in the exordium,"the author of the Gospel

remains oblivious to these strictures. He employs both a "poetic" tone, as exemplified by its balanced syllabic structure, and the phrase Ἐνἀρχὴ, derived from the lumber-room of the Septuagint. Cicero(*De Oratore* 2.79., 1967 320.), however, may not be as offended since he confirms that the opening may "possess some element of ornament and dignity." Indeed, Cicero himself on occasion began a speech with a poetic flourish, the better to obtain the attention of his audience. For instance, the opening words of *Pro Milone*constitute the resolution of an iambic trimeter that is cited by Quintilion (Ort. 9.4., 1970, 74) as an example of the use of poetry in orations.

With regard to poetic flourishes in an exordium it appears that Cicero's (*De Oratore* 2.79., 1967, 320) main concern was not whether ornament should or should not be used, but rather whether or not the opening of a speech was appropriate for the following case. "Just as a forecourt or entrance should be properly proportioned to the mansion or temple to which it belongs,so too should the prologue conform to the case at hand." Thus, the Evangelist's use of a "lofty" opening does not necessarily imply that, on the basis of style, it is so divergent from the Gospel that it must be dependent upon some underlying source. Rather, the style indicates that the author believed his narrative, the subject of which was an attempt to demonstrate that "Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God" (20: 3 1), was of the utmost importance. Consequently, it was a subject worthy of a grand introduction. In essence the very style of the opening serves to introduce the Gospel and alert the reader that what follows is deemed to have value.

In addition to the lofty style that is maintained until verse 5, if not with a balanced syllabic structure, at least through the use of stichwörter, the very words of these verses introduce concepts that occur in the remaining pages of the work. As Robinson (1963, 122) notes, it is as if "the themes of the Gospel are played over beforehand, as in the overture to an opera." For instance, φῶς, light, in 1: 4 and 1: 5 occurs not only later in the prologue itself (1: 7, 8, 9) but as a self-referential metaphor for Jesus in the "I am" and related statements of 8: 12, 9: 5, and 12: 46. The word is also used in Jesus' teachings 3: 19-21,751 1:9 -10 and 12:3 5-36, which, to some extent, have subtle self-referential import. Certainly both John the Baptist, who testifies to the light, and Jesus, who speaks of the light that has come into the world (3: 19), have paved the way for the association: Jesus/Light. Apart from the prologue, the word φῶς only occurs on the lips of Jesus.

Darkness, σκοτία, another term introduced in the prologue and contrasted with "the light" often occurs in these same passages-8: 12, 12: 35, 12: 40, 12: 46. Again, it is a word which, in the Gospel, is particular to the vocabulary of the character "Jesus." A third concept, ζωή, life, is also introduced in 1: 4 and features in "I am" statements: "I am the bread of life" (6: 35, 6: 48); "I am the resurrection and the life..." (11: 25); and "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14: 6). It also occurs in the teachings of Jesus, (i.e. 4: 14, 12: 50). All in all, the word "life" occurs 34 times in the Gospel as a whole and of those, only thrice is it not spoken by Jesus. These three exceptions are: by the narrator in the prologue 1: 4; in the

testimony of John 3: 36, 76 and in the verse that functions as a summary/peroration of the Gospel in 20: 31.

Thus, verses 1-5 function in an introductory capacity not only by means of their style, which indicates the importance the author attached to the subject, but also by introducing key terms. These key terms are both virtually unique to the vocabulary of Jesus himself in the remainder of the Gospel and are often included in his self-designations.The key term "light" occurs not only in verses 1-5, but also in the portion of the prologue that follows. While this creates a bridge between these two sections of the prologue, verses 6-15 have their own task in the prologue; they summarise the contents of the Gospel.

A Summary of Contents: Verses 6-15

The idea that there may be a "deliberate correspondence between the structure of the prologue and that of the Gospel" is not new. One individual who illustrates this understanding of the prologue is B. T. D. Smith (1912) whose exegesis is cited by Robinson (1963, 122-123) without critical comment. Smith proposes this structure:

Topic	**Prologue**	**Gospel**
Christ as agent of new creation	1: 3	1: 35-4: 42
Christ as life of world	1: 4	4: 43-6: 71
Christ as light of world	1: 4ff	7: 1-9: 41
His own received him not	1: 10	10: 1-12: 50
Became Children of God	1: 12	13: 1-20: 29

This scheme, when used to describe the relationship between the prologue and Gospel, has a multitude of difficulties that are manifest when the document is read as a narrative whole. For instance, why does a description of Christ as the "light of the world" end at 9: 41 when there is yet an important self-reference, "I have come as a light into the world" in 12: 46? Similarly, Christ as life of the world terminates arbitrarily at 6: 71 given the sayings of 11: 25 and 14: 6. Furthermore, verse 1: 12's relationship with 13: 1-20: 29 is not necessarily obvious to the reader, thereby defeating any summary or correspondence function verse 1:1 2 might possess in relation to those chapters.

An alternate and simpler relationship between the prologue and Gospel does exist. The connection depends on the following division of verses 6-15: vv. 6-9; vv. 10-13; v. 14; v. 15. Verses 6-9 form a unit comprised of the introduction of John the

Baptist and a summary of his testimony concerning the light. This segment of the prologue is differentiated from verse 10 in which the light is already present in the world. Thus, verses 7-8 are a vivid expression of John's purpose; verse 9 is the narrator's qualification that John himself was not the light; and verse 10 begins a new thought in which John is no longer in focus. Verses 6-9, then, clearly are centred upon the testifying activity of John, an activity with which the Gospel begins in verse 19. Indeed, καὶ αὕτηἐστίν ἡ μαρτυρία τῦοῦΙωάννου (1: 19) indicates that the business of the Gospel, summarised in 1: 6-9, has begun.

After the introduction of John the Baptist and a summary of his testimony in (vv. 6-9) a second idea is set forth in the prologue by the author. It is found in verses 10-13: The light, once in the world, was rejected by "his own" but rewards those who believe in his name. In essence, what is introduced here is a theme of conflict centred on rejection/acceptance of the light. This theme is played out in the narrative in the form of the machinations of "the Jews," as the writer characterises Jesus' opposition, and Jewish officials who do not acknowledge Jesus' identity. The conflict reaches its climax when Jesus' opponents ultimately succeed in obtaining his arrest and death.

The last major theme of the Gospel to be introduced in the prologue text is found in verse 14. It is the idea that the word became flesh and his glory was seen. This verse, one may maintain, refers to nothing less than the crucifixion (Parament, 1983).Only in Jesus' death is his fleshly mortal existence confirmed. Only at the point of death does the ironic confession "we have seen his glory" have its greatest impact. This is demonstrated by the fact that after the prologue, the narrator does not break into the text until 19: 35 where he implicitly identifies himself as an eye witness to the piercing of Jesus' side. The testimony to the piercing is the point at which "we have seen his glory" equals "we have seen his death" (and the sign of blood and water). Jesus himself indicates a relationship between his death and glorification in the prayer prior to his arrest (chap 17).

Identifying Christ's death as the last of the three "seminal allusions" to the content of the Gospel found in the prologue is supported by the fact that verse 15 returns to John the Baptist. Although verse 15 is often excluded from reconstructions of the "underlying hymn" and seen as a disruption described as Baptist material "quoted in an awkward manner," (Barret, 1972, 44) it is integral to the structure of the text. Specifically, verse 15 forms aninclusio with 1: 6-9 signalling to the reader that the summary of the Gospel's contents is at an end.

The inclusio of verse 15, with its discordant tone, does indicate the summary portion of the exordium has come to a close and points ahead to the testimony of John in verse 19. The intervening verses, 16-18, although part of the exordium are not part of the summary. Rather, they explicate why "testimony" is necessary by indicating the issue which is in question. Thus with verse 15, the author has completed his obligation, as Cicero directs, to prepare the ground for his audience. He has summarised the plot of his Gospel: Beginning (1: 6-9); Middle (1: 10-13);

End/Passion (1: 14). Furthermore, in his summary, the Evangelist has focused upon his central character in a way reminiscent of forensic rhetoric's focus upon the main client. Cicero (*De Oratore* 2.79. 1967, 321) states concerning opening summaries:

> points drawn from one's client - by clients I mean the persons concerned with the matter- are considerations showing him to be a man of high character, a gentleman, a victim of misfortune deserving of compassion, and any facts that will tell against a false charge.

If one were to keep Cicero's comment in mind while reading the Evangelist's summary, one might find the hint of a correlation. John the Baptist's testimony, the testimony of an unimpeachable witness sent by God, focuses upon the character of Jesus Christ, the light. Verses 10-13 might arouse compassion for the character—a character who suffers the unfortunate circumstances of being neither recognised nor accepted by his own. In verse 14 the reader sees in Christ's death not a vindication of his opponents, but his glorification, hinting that the crucifixion of Jesus was only a hollow or false victory for those who instigated it.In essence the observation has been made that verses 6-15 appear to conform to ancient expectations of speech prologues. Not unlike formal prologues, these verses introduce points to be covered in the body of the Gospel and end at an obvious place, the inclusio of verse 15. But what, then, is the significance of verses 16-18?

Verses 16-18: An Ipsius Causae(Statement of the Case)

The final verses of what has been described as the "prologue" to John are troublesome indeed. These verses, which are related to Exodus 33-34, contain a significant textual variant and, according to some scholars, have a questionable relationship with the previous verses of the prologue (Käsemann, 1969, 152).Verses 16-18 make use of the first person plural which is not employed by the Baptist in the remainder of chapter one. The fact that John the Baptist never uses the first person plural in the Gospel provides an argument against regarding vv. 16-18 as his continuing testimony. The Baptist is one who is unique, sent by God; one whose testimony in chapter 1: 29-34 is explicit and first hand,one who at the beginning of the Gospel stands alone and points to Jesus (1: 29). To include John in a corporate "we" is to reduce his individual significance, to depreciate his function as a prime witness.

Rather than serving as part of John's testimony or functioning as an epilogue to the preceding verses, 16-18, which have the Logos as their focus, are integral to the prologue's structure. They are connected with verses 1-15 yet form their own unit of thought. The close relationship between 16-18 with the preceding verses is exemplified by the vocabulary they share with verse 14. The following points of contact may be observed:

πλήρης (14) = πλρώματος (16)

χάριτος (14) = χάρινἀντὶχάριτος (16) χάρις (17)

αληθείας (14) = ἀλήθεία (17)

ἐγένετο (14) = ἐγένετο (17)

μονογενοῦς (14) = μονογενὴς (18)

πατρός (14) = πατρός (18)

The similarities in vocabulary between verse 14 and verses 16-18 raise the question of verse 15 serving as an "interruption" here, much as verses 6-8 are often regarded as an interruption after verse 5. In both cases the disruptive use of the Baptist material signals a shift of function in the verses of the prologue. Verse 6 marked the movement from the ornamental passage of vv. 1-5, a passage introducing its subject and the importance with which the Gospel is to be regarded, to the summary of contents in verses 6-14. Similarly, verse 15 informs the reader of the fact that although the verses that follow will be related to the subject at hand, the Logos, their function will no longer be one of "summarising." What is the function they serve? If one were to read the Fourth Gospel in its entirety as an extended trial, verses 16-18 indicate the point of contention concerning Jesus upon which a judgement must be rendered. In these verses one finds a few words analogous to the "statement of the case" in orations.

As one might recall, a speech often included five sections: a prologue, a statement of the case, the proof or *probatio,* a digression and an epilogue. Within the second portion (statement of the case), there are three distinct methods that might be employed. These are, the *expositio,* the *ipsiuscausae,* and the *narration*-the term by which the "statement of the case" became known (O'Banion, 1987, 79).The narratio and expositio have been clearly described by O'Bannon (Ibid., 350):

> *Expositio* was the case summarised, reduced to its parts and implication; *narratio* was the case enacted, embodied, the parts brought to life. *Narratio* was the case in narrative form, its meaning implied; *expositio*was the meaning, the narrative de-emphasised.

Verses 16-18 of John's text conform neither to *narratio* nor to the *expositio*. This is due to the fact not only that verses 16-18 are clearly not narrative in form, lacking a story line, plot and dialogue, but also because *narratio* and *expositio* are clearly set apart from the prologue of a speech. Cicero's orations often show a distinct transition between his prologue and his narration of events. Before

beginning his *narratio*in the *Pro SextoRoscioAmerino* for instance, he ends his exordium and employs this transition:

And that you may more readily understand, gentlemen, that the actual deeds are more outrageous than my description of them, we will put before you the course of events from the beginning; you will then find it easier to appreciate the misfortunes of this completely innocent man, the audacity of his enemies and the deplorable condition of the State (1967, 5., 14). Although not employing such an elaborate transition, an *expositio* was also regarded as a unit of speech separate from an exordium. Quintilian (*Inst. Ort*. 4.2.5 and 4.2., 1970 76.) asserts the independence of the *expositio* by observing that the exordium and the *expositio* are not integrally related. In some instances, an *expositio,* might be omitted altogether from the speech, leaving the prologue to stand on its own.

Verses 16-18 are not independent from the preceding verses of John's prologue. They do not contain a transition such as that of Cicero's *Pro Sexto*and they are too intimately related to the remainder of the prologue to be removed. Indeed, not only do these verses evidence similarities of vocabulary with verse 14, but verse 17 is the only one in this portion of John's text, where Jesus Christ is explicitly mentioned. Without verse 17 the prologue would be ineffective since the reader would not know the identity of the one described as the Logos, the one to whom John the Baptist testifies. Although the *narratio*and the *expositio* versions of a "statement of the case" are independent from the prologue and thus are not descriptive of verses 16-18, the *ipsiuscausae,* by contrast may occur within the exordium of a speech.

The ipsiuscausae or *propositio*, more accurately translated "the case itself" rather than "statement of the case", is a third concept discussed by Quintilian. He gives the following illustrations of statements that are sufficient for presenting the judge with an understanding of the case at hand:

> It may, for instance, suffice to say 'I claim repayment of a certain sum of money which was lent on certain conditions' or 'I claim a legacy in accordance with the terms of the will'... Again it is sometimes sufficient and expedient to summarise a case in one sentence such as 'I say Horatius killed his sister.' For the judge will understand the whole charge from this simple affirmation (Ibid.4, .2. , 6-7.).

Generally, a short statementconcerning the nature of the case at hand, the *ipsiuscausae,*mightoccurunderany of the followingcircumstances: wherethereis no necessity to explain the case; where the facts are alreadyknown; when the facts have been set out by the previous speaker; or whenitis impossible to deny or substantiate the charge - in cases of sacrilege, for instance (Ibid. 4, .2., 1-

3).Another unique characteristic of the *ipsiuscausae/propositio*isthat it may be employed by the orator at any juncture within a speech, be it in the exordium, proof, or some other place. With regard to this point Quintilian writes:

Even scholastic rhetoricians occasionally substitute a briefsummary (*propositio*) for the full statement of facts (*pro narratione*). For what statement of the case can be made when a wife is accusing a jealous husband of maltreating her, or a father is indicting his son turned Cynic before the censors for indecent behaviour? In both cases the charge canbesufficientlyindicated by one wordplaced in any part of the speech (Ibid. 4, .2.,30.). An *exordium* is a logical place to find a brief statement of the case itself as is apparent in Quintilian's handbook. He chastises those who assume that the judge knows the type of case that is to be presented prior to the utterance of a single syllable. The "bad" habit of not including a comment detailing the ipsiuscausae in the exordium was fostered by the schools of declamation where the case was set out by the instructor before the students might argue it (Ibid. 4.1. pp. 4-5).

In essence then, the statement of the *ipsiuscausae* might both occur in the *exordium* and be articulated briefly, qualifications that could be fulfilled by the last verses of John's prologue. But one might inquire, would the confessional tone of verse 16, implicit in the first person plural (ἡμεῖς πάντεςἐλάβομεν) be appropriate in a "statement of the case" - a portion of a speech generally concerned with bald facts rather than unsubstantiated belief? Quintilian (*Inst. Ort.* 4.2. p. 8).concedes that in some instances, especially those concerned with religious matters, where the charges cannot be substantiated or denied,confessions may be entirely appropriate. One may at least say that an assertion involving the use of a first person plural is permissible in a statement of the *ipsiuscausae.* Furthermore, "confession" is especially appropriate in cases involving religious matters, such as are present in the Gospel of John. Thus, one can conclude that verses 16-18 of John's prologue may be said to parallel rhetorical understandings of the *ipsiuscausae* in terms of position in the *exordium* and confessional form.

To assert that verses 16-18 are similar to a "statement of the case" in the form of an *ipsiuscausae* is not defensible merely on the grounds that such statements occur in the prologue and may make use of a first person pronoun. Rather, determining whether or not verses 16-18 do indeed reflect similarities with an *ipsiuscausae* rests in large part on the content of those verses. In those verses, does the author indicate a charge against Jesus or a point of law which will be disputed? Although not focusing on these particular verses, A. Trites(1977, 78) has asserted that the issue being debated in the Gospel of John is the messiahship and divine sonship of Jesus.This assertion will serve as the starting point for an analysis of verses 16-18. The investigation which will be embarked in next section will proceed within the boundaries of two considerations. First, is the issue of messiahship/divine sonship, the thesis articulated in verses 16-18? And Second, does the Gospel at large appear to be centrally concerned with the issue of Jesus' divine sonship/messiahship?

Statement of the Case in the Prologue
Question of Divine Sonship in VV. 16-18

With regard to the question of divine sonship/messiahship being manifested in verses 16-18 one may naturally begin with verse 18. Famous for its difficult textual variant in the second clause, this verse is integral to assertions regarding Jesus divine sonship. There are three possible readings of the text: ὁ μονογενετὴςυἱὸςθεοῦμονογενὴςθεός (ὁ μονογενγὴςθεός) and ὁ μονογενής. Of these readings, the second, in its anarthrous form, has the strongest manuscript support. Despite these three variants, the word, μονογενγὴς, which may be translated "only son" or "only descendant," (Kennema, 1977, 126-127), when combined with the statement that Jesus Christ is the only one with the ability to "make God known" (ἐξηγήσατο) v. 18, does lend credibility to the thesis that the divine sonship/messiahship of Jesus Christ is the issue that the Gospel writer wants the reader to have in the forefront of his or her mind at the close of the prologue (verse 18) and the beginning of the Gospel (verse 19).

Overall, by its content and focus, verse 18 passes the first consideration in testing Trites' claim that the issue being debated in the Gospel is the divine sonship of Jesus. In essence, it functions like a statement of the case. The true test for a "statement of the case", however, is whether or not the issue raised in it is indeed echoed throughout the remainder of the text. An investigation of whether this is the case will be explored in the next section,

Question of Divine Sonship the Rest of the Gospel

One other true test of whether vv. 16-18, of John's Gospel is the statement of the case is to consider whether the issue(s) raised in these verses is re-echoed throughout the gospel. However, to do this will require an in-depth analysis of Greco-Roman concept and use of *probatio* and walking through the length and breadth of John's gospel to identify where these rules is corroborated which obviously is outside the scope of this paper. Based on this, this section will creatively examine the most important exemplification of divine sonship occurrences in the Gospel in view of finding out whether these examples support the thesis that vv. 16-18 of the Gospel of John is statement of the case.

The Major Motif in John's Narrative

To begin, the question of Jesus' identity is a major motif in John's narrative. From the testimony of John the Baptist, who points to a particular individual as the Lamb of God (1: 29ff), to the pointed questions asked by Pilate (18: 33); from the ironic conversation with the Samaritan Woman (4: 1ff) to the disciples' not needing to inquire about Jesus' identity because it was known (21: 12), the identity of Jesus is

a primary concern of the Gospel's characters. Even Jesus' "I am" sayings may be included under the auspices of this identity motif. This motif, however, is integrally related to the question of Jesus' divine sonship. Jesus is to be identified as the Christ, the Son of God. A few brief observations must suffice to illustrate this point.

The Reason the Jews Wanted Jesus Killed

First, the fact that the Jews were seeking to put Jesus to death because he called God his own Father (5: 18), one of a variety of points upon which Jesus and the Jews were in conflict, supports the assertion that the question of Jesus' divine sonship was the factor contributing to his crucifixion. Turning over the table of the money changers earned Jesus no censorship in this narrative (3: 13-23). Healing on the Sabbath resulted only in persecution (5: 16). It is the claim of divine sonship that motivates the Jews to seek Jesus' death (5: 18). S. Pancaro (1975, 7-8) agrees with this assessment. Accordingly, he indicates that there are four charges levelled by the Jews against Jesus: 1) Violation of the Sabbath--5: 1-8, 9: 6-24. 2) Blasphemy--5: 17-18; 8: 58, 10: 24 38.3) Leading people astray through false teaching- 7: 14-18, 7: 45-49, 9: 24-34.4) Acting as an enemy of the Jewish Nation-11: 47-53. He asserts, however, that all four of these charges, which are connected with the law, may be reduced to one issue: Jesus claims to be the son of God (19: 7). The Jews' disapprobation of Jesus' claim to have a unique relationship with the Father is also the concern of 10: 31-39. Ultimately, it is Jesus' claim to divine sonship that the Jews reluctantly reveal as the central issue underlying their demand for Jesus' death at the hands of Pilate (19: 7).

The Witness of the Evangelist

The most convincing evidence, however, for supporting the assertion that Jesus' divine sonship is the point of contention and central issue of the Gospel is the author's own statement in verse 20: 31--that the Gospel had been written ινα πισευ(σ)ήτεοτίΙησουζεστιν ό Χριστος ό υιοζτουθεου. This verse unequivocally indicates that Jesus' divine sonship is the primary issue of the Gospel. Thus, the assertion that vv. 16-18 are in fact recognisable as analogous with an *ipsiuscausae* "statement of the case" appears reasonable in the light of this brief survey of points from the remainder of the Gospel.

Result and Implications

This study represents an experiment—an experiment in which the prologue of the Fourth Gospelwas analysed for possible similarities with the rules of classical rhetoric, a plausible task given the Gospel's likely prevalence in a Greco-Roman metropolis such as Ephesus. In a cosmopolitan city like Ephesus, public rhetorical displays would have been accessible to the author and an audience comprised, at least in part, of Gentiles. Furthermore, in such a centre of Roman provincial administration, the author of the gospel, though not abandoning his Jewish background in the text, might have composed his work in such a way to be comprehensible against the backdrop of the rhetorical context of the Roman provincial milieu in which it was written. Having now completed the task of

reading the prologue in light of classical rhetorical convention, and comparing various portions of the author's techniques and structures with the techniques, contents and structures of the prologue itself, one finds some support for the hypothesis that the prologue functions in a way analogues to the basic structural element of Greco-Roman exordium.

Generally, classical treatises usually contain five elements: a prologue, a statement of the case, the proof, an optional digression and a conclusion or peroration. Following the rules of ancient rhetoric, John's Gospel begins with a lofty prologue as would befit a majestic subject and includes in 1: 16-18 what may be identified as an *ipsiuscausae* statement of case. After introducing the*ipsiuscausae*issue of concern, Jesus' messiahship and divine sonship, the author sets out to provide proofs of Jesus' identity. Witnesses, arguments, scriptural allusionsandlogical proof, werecharacteristic of the evidence marshalled to support the author's assertion concerning Jesus identity.

In this regard, the investigation of the assumption made in this study is pursued from two perspectives. The first is an initial effort to show that the structure and content of the prologue bear close resemblance to exordium of classical rhetorical treatises and that in so doing the central theme of both the prologue and the entire gospel can be identified. The second part tries to see whether the messiahship and divine sonship of Jesus, identified as the central message of the prologue can be demonstrated through a study of vv. 16-18 and an overview of the entire gospel. These two level investigations seem to confirm direct and positive influence of classical rhetoric not only in the prologue but in the entire gospel.

If this view regarding the Gospel's context is plausible what then are some of the implications? Three immediately springs to mind. First, the theory that the structure of the prologue reflect a classical rhetorical exordium implies an intentional and careful composition on the part of the author or redactor. For instance, the question of which verse should constitute the climax of the prologue, an issue that has been a source disagreement and controversy for Johannine scholars, are explicable in terms of rhetorical *ipsiuscausae*. When seen as an*ipsiuscausae*, the textual and interpretative difficulties surrounding vv. 16-18, is not only avoided but the attempt to construct and reconstruct the prologue or the theories that these vv. 16-18, are addition by a later redactor or that a relatively untalented author or redactor has switched from the source he was employing to another or even his own words maybe downplayed. In essence, the structural composition and the presentation of the arguments in the prologue appears to evidence an author who has been exposed to classical rhetoric, whether through formal education or by merely absorbing its precepts from his cultural surroundings (Hengel, 1989, 102).

Another implication involves the relationship of the Fourth Gospel to the Synoptic Gospels. The distinctiveness of the fourth gospel when compared to the synoptic gospels is readily apparent. Various explanations for the differences have been

given. Some posit that the Synoptics are historical and the fourth gospel theological, or the other way around. Others account for the differences by describing the four gospels as "theological interpretations of history", thereby allowing the possibility that one interpretation might differ from the other (Barton, 1993, 300). The independence of the tradition upon which John was basing his source, and the observations that the process of redaction might account for the differences are additional explanations (Smalley, 1978, 143-145). In the light this thesis, however, another explanation becomes possible. Some of the differences between John and the Synopticmight simply indicate that the Fourth Gospel has been composed in a way that reflects the precepts of classical rhetoric. Thus, the differences may not be attributed so much to history or theology as structure and mode of argumentation. John's Gospel might be described as a Gospel echoing the conventions of rhetorically persuasive speech while the other Gospel may make use of conventions of history and biography.

Conclusion

The final indication is this: Given the fact that several periscopes in the prologue and part of the gospel of John were explicated with regard to classical rhetorical convention, it is apparent that the traditional approaches to the gospel of John may be expanded with new perspectives and materials drawn from classical context. For instance, within this paper, the assumption that the prologue has been composed under the influence classical rhetoric is supported by the fact that the prologue makes more meaning when interpreted in the context of this method. In addition, the fact that the prologue and classical rhetorical exordium bear a lot of structural and contents similarities provides insight for a better understanding of the extent of the influence of classical rhetoric on the rest of the gospel. The possibilities and potentialities of this new approach however, have yet to be fully explored and to do this may require an exploration of the whole gospel with the convention of classical rhetoric.

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