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PROLOGUE AS LEGITIMATION: CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 1:1-18

James F. McGrath

Abstract
Recent scholarship on the Fourth Gospel has suggested that this document was produced by a Christian community which was involved in an intense conflict with a local synagogue, the focus of which was christology. This study attempts to relate the Johannine prologue to this context, using Berger and Luckmann’s model of legitimation. John’s christological portrait of Jesus in the prologue is best understood in terms of the author’s use of traditions and imagery which were authoritative to both him and his opponents, in order to defend the legitimacy of his and his community’s beliefs. By looking at the prologue from this perspective, our understanding of the development of the distinctive Johannine portrait of Jesus is enhanced.

Conflict and Christology in the Fourth Gospel
If there are two conclusions concerning which there has been a growing consensus among Johannine scholars, these would have to be (1) that the Fourth Gospel was formed in a context of intense conflict between a group of Jewish Christians and the local synagogue of which they were a part (until they were excluded by the authorities), and (2) that a key issue in the conflict, if not the key issue, was christology. However, when the question is raised as to the origins of the Johannine ‘high’ christology, which resulted in its expulsion from the synagogue, this consensus breaks down incredibly quickly into uncertainty and confusion. Innumerable suggestions have been made, some playing down the differences between John and the Synoptics, others pointing out the differences as indicators that Johannine christology has been influenced by Samaritan or Gentile thought to a degree sufficient to have radically altered the Johannine

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Christians’ understanding of who Jesus is. More recently an alternative approach has been to regard the social setting of the Johannine community as explaining the distinctive Johannine christology. Elsewhere I have argued that this latter approach appears to provide a plausible and satisfying explanation of Johannine christological development, doing justice to both its continuity with earlier Christian christology and its distinctiveness

The sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann have shown how the process of worldview-maintenance which they call ‘legitimation’ moves a community to defend its beliefs in response to new issues and new threats by developing them, drawing out new implications from them, and so on. This process, which again I have summarized elsewhere, would appear to provide a plausible explanation of what stimulated the distinctive developments in Johannine christology, thus offering a solution to this aspect of the Johannine puzzle.

In this study we shall be looking at the Johannine prologue from the perspective of Berger and Luckmann’s model of legitimation. But before proceeding, there are certain preliminary matters that must be considered briefly. The prologue of John’s Gospel has been the focus of much intense research and discussion, and there can be said to be much disagreement, but also significant agreement, on many issues related to its character and background.

Background
Since Bultmann’s 1925 article, “Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium”, it has become generally accepted that the essential background to the prologue is to be found in the realm of Jewish

7 In EYXAPAPTHJON: Festschrift für H. Gunkel, ii, Gütersloh, 1925: 3-26, an abridged translation is given in John Ashton (editor), The Interpretation of John, London: SPCK, 1986, pp 18-35.
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Wisdom speculation. That this is correct can be demonstrated from a careful comparison with Jewish wisdom texts, as has frequently been done. The Johannine prologue also bears a close relationship to earlier Christian developments in the area of Wisdom Christology, as also becomes apparent through a comparison of texts.

Character

Attempts to find a single term to express exactly the function which this section performs in the context of the entire Gospel have not yet yielded a generally-accepted term, apart from the one which we have been using throughout our discussion thus far: prologue. This term is not perfect, but it for no other reason than its general acceptance will do for our purposes. More important for our purposes is the question of whether and to what extent John has used traditional material, such as a pre-Christian hymn to Wisdom or a Christian hymn, which he has subsequently edited in order to express his distinctive theology. The review of previous views on this subject which has recently been undertaken by Jürgen Habermann shows just how varied are the conclusions which have been reached on this subject. However, there does not seem to be any doubt that the language of the prologue is poetic or hymnic in nature, rather than prose.

One conclusion which seems quite firm is that the sections of the prologue relating to John the Baptist (1:6-8,15) are not all of a piece with the rest of the prologue. In the view of some, the hymnic part of the prologue is earlier, and the author or redactor of the Gospel has added the references to the Baptist. However, more recently it has been argued that the prose sections about the Baptist are earlier and were actually a part of the original Gospel, which were subsequently separated and woven into the fabric of the

Habermann, op.cit., 318-414 (eight pages (406-414) are needed simply to summarize, in chart form, the views set forth by scholars from Weisse in 1856 up until Hoffmann in 1982).

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14 For e.g. C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, pp.274f and Evans, op.cit., pp.83-94, it has not been deemed necessary to include such a display of parallels here.

15 Son of God (the eternal place of the Word with God being paralleled by the place of the υἱός), as I have understood the usual phrase and thus is the easier reading of the two. See D. J. de Jong in La Voix du Judaisme, (SBFA, 13), Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1991, p.34, and also his Brown, Gospel, p.36; Habermann, op.cit., p.400.

16 The reading υἱός of the prologue when it was added to the Gospel. This latter option seems to be the more likely of the two. The key argument in favour of this position is the fact that John 1:19 presupposes that the identity of 'John' is already known, suggesting that the original Gospel contained material prior to 1:19. This is further supported by the parallels with the beginning of Mark's Gospel.

John Ashton has written in a recent study of the prologue, "Any exegesis that depends upon a precisely accurate reconstruction of the Vorlage is open to suspicion. This is not because such a reconstruction would be unhelpful, but because it is virtually unattainable. Not one of the many different versions that have been proposed compels assent, and few are immune from the charge of special pleading. In general most of the purely stylistic arguments advanced in favour of one version or other of the hymn are too subjective to command a wide following. In view of the difficulties involved in distinguishing with certainty different layers of the hymn (other than those pertaining to John the Baptist), our focus here will be primarily on how John is using traditional Wisdom language, on the relationship between his use of such language and its use in other documents which are clearly pre-Johannine, and on how the Johannine use of Wisdom motifs in the prologue might have been relevant to the conflict setting in which we have suggested it was written.

Structure

It will also be important for our discussion to assess the structure of the prologue. In recent times a number of scholars have argued that the prologue actually has the structure of a chiasm or inverted parallelism. It appears almost certain that at the very least the beginning and end of the prologue form an inclusio (the eternal phrase of the Word with God being paralleled by the occurrence of the υἱός alongside God). However, the mediation of the
the Word or of Jesus in creation and salvation appear to parallel one another (v3-17), as do the references to the light coming unto the world (v9) and the Word becoming flesh (v14). A further convincing argument in favour of this structure is the way the final author or redactor has inserted the material concerning John the Baptist in what appear to be corresponding sections of the prologue. It thus appears likely that the prologue is intended to reflect a downward-upward motion on the part of the Word, a move from eternal existence alongside God to a return to the Father's side. The most important objection which has been raised against the suggestion that the prologue follows a chiastic structure is the failure of such a structure to place at the centre the climactic verse, 'And the Word became flesh' (Culpepper). Caught between the sides of the supposed chiastic structure, the prologue has been called 'asymmetrical' or 'chaotic' (e.g. Boismard). Culpepper considers that both Käsemann and Baltmann must be incorrect in regarding v14 as the climax of the prologue, for in his view, "It would be strange indeed if the evangelist (or redactor) gave careful enough attention to the structure of the prologue to create a beautiful chiasm, but failed to place the phrase he was most intent on emphasizing at its centre". Culpepper then devotes much effort to a discussion of what he considers the climax of the prologue, its central point or 'pivot', which refers to the giving of authority to become children of God. In our view, Culpepper is on the whole correct in his delineation of the prologue's structure, but wrong in his conclusion about where the climactic point is to be found. For one scholar who is very knowledgeable concerning the use of parallelism in Middle Eastern societies, Kenneth Bailey, is of the view that the 'turning point' of an inverted parallelism or chiasm tends to be immediately after the centre. 'Usually there is a "point of turning" just past the center of the structure. The second half is not redundant. Rather it introduces some crucial new element that resolves or completes the first half'. This means that, in the case of the prologue, the 'turning point' would be the decisive verse, 'The Word became flesh'.

Reference to Jesus, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992, pp.74-92. See also, however, the arguments of Margaret Davies, Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel (JSNTSup,69), 335-359, who argues that the addition of theoc is a result of the temptation for scribes to make to later doctrine of the church more plausible in the Bible (cf. e.40 below). If theoc is an original part of v18, this would make the parallelism with vv1-2 stronger, but the parallelism is still clear without it.

This objection has been made most recently by Ashton, op. cit., p.27. 


Chalpelle, op. cit., pp.17-31 This view concerning who is at the centre of the prologue's literary structure is one reason why de la Poerrie rejects a concentric structure (op. cit., p.356).

None of his objections really applies to the structure and reading proposed here.

The first verse of the Fourth Gospel takes up the opening words of Genesis 1:1, ‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth’. John’s decision to begin his Gospel in this way needs to be explained, since in no other New Testament document can this be dated earlier than the Fourth Gospel. With any degree of certainty is the story of Jesus introduced with a comparable affirmation of pre-existence. John is also frequently regarded as distinctive in his use of Logos rather than Sophia to refer to the pre-existent Christ. This is not entirely correct: the only actual reference to Jesus as Sophia in the New Testament is found in 1 Corinthians 1:24, which does not appear in the context of the hymnic language which is generally recognized as typical of the Wisdom hymns. There is thus no reason to believe that the pre-existent one who became incarnate in Christ had already been exclusively identified with Sophia, as opposed to say, Logos or Prelogos. It is thus possible that John is not making any significant replacement or change to the tradition, but rather is simply using one of several possible alternative terms available to him. His choice of Logos is probably due, not to the fact that it is masculine in contrast to feminine Sophia, but to the fact that Genesis 1, to which the author is alluding, refers to God speaking, and thus by implication to the Word of God.

What significance would introducing the Gospel with these words from the beginning of the Torah (and of the whole Hebrew Bible) have had in the context of the Johannine Christians’ conflict setting? Firstly, it would provide a definite sense of continuity with traditional Jewish beliefs. The author clearly intends to link the coming of Jesus Christ and the existence of revelation and creative and saving acts of God recorded in the Old Testament. This would be extremely important in the context of a worldview

in which it was generally accepted that that which is older is original, more authentic and thus more highly valued.

Another significant factor which may have influenced the author of this verse to use ‘Word’ rather than ‘Wisdom’ or any of the other alternatives may have been the use of the term ‘Word’ (Greek λόγος, Aramaic Memra) in Jewish thought. This use of ‘Word’, attested to in the works of Philo and in the Pentateuch, is parallel to the use of Wisdom, but is significantly different in that the Word is frequently used for appearances of God in the Old Testament, and on the whole is more definitely identified as being none other than God himself. Further, as is frequently noted by scholars, there is no clear statement to the effect that ‘Wisdom was God’ to be found in Jewish literature of this period, whereas in Philo the Logos is clearly identified as such. John, however, identified Jesus as such. John, in the context of the debate over the relationship between Christology and monotheism, the identification of Jesus as the Word made flesh (as opposed to Wisdom made flesh) would bear more weight as a justification of the exalted status attributed to Jesus and the honour given to him.

Before proceeding, some justification should be given to our use of the term Memra (‘Word’) and of similar turgonic terminology in our exegesis of the Johannine prologue, since C. K. Barrett’s view that Memra is a blind intermediary being, has been excluded from the biblical background of John’s logos doctrine is an opinion shared by numerous other scholars. The main reason which he gives for his conclusion is that Memra “was not truly a hypostasis but a means of speaking about God without using his name, and thus a means of avoiding the numerous anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament, whereas presumably in his view figures such as Wisdom or Philo’s λόγος were genuine hypostases”. However, such a conclusion is clearly questionable in the light of much of the recent research which has been undertaken in these areas. In particular, we may note the view of Dunn, who, after a discussion of Jewish texts relating to Wisdom, concludes that the Hellenistic Judaism of the LXX did not think of Wisdom as a hypostasis or intermediary being any more than did the OT writers and the rabbis. Wisdom, like the name, the
glory, the Spirit of Yahweh, was a way of asserting God's nearness, his involvement with his world, his concern for his people\textsuperscript{33}. It is a personification and is not conceived of as a separate entity alongside God. The same is true of Philo's Logos.\textsuperscript{34} This reference, and that found in John \[3:23 and Luh 16:22f. Beasley-Murray,} it is widely recognized as polemical. Then, we have a reference to the exalted place of Jesus, which we know from several passages later on in the Gospel was problematic for many Jews. Lastly, we have a reference to Jesus as the revealer of God. We shall treat each of these points in turn.

The assertion that no one has ever seen God clearly evokes reminiscences of the Old Testament\textsuperscript{35}. In the Old Testament, although there are a number of ambiguous incidents, there is a clear teaching that no one could see God and live. This is true even of Moses\textsuperscript{36}, who is described as having spoken to God 'face to face'. Thus, on the one hand, the author of the prologue expresses his acceptance of this important tenet of Jewish belief, that no one has seen God. Yet on the other hand, the author emphasizes that the μονογενὴς - the Logos who was with God in the beginning, and who has now 'become flesh' - shares an incomparably intimate relationship with God, and thus can make God known in a way that no one who does not share this relationship (which means, effectively, no one else at all) is able to do\textsuperscript{37}.

structure. Thus, it is unlikely that any early Christian, hearing a reference to the Son 'at the Father's side', could fail to think of the present exalted place of Jesus. See further Martin Hengel, Studies in Early Christology, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995, p.225. Although the cross is not mentioned in the Prologue, this does not necessarily mean that John has no real place for the suffering and humiliation of Jesus, nor that the Prologue does not end with the post-resurrection exaltation of Jesus ( comer Kyriak, op.cit., pp.352).

In the recent argument of I. de la Potterie (\textit{La finale du prologue johannique}, Bibliola 69 (1988), pp.340-370) that \textit{épistolaire} used without a predicate bears more naturally the sense of 'opening the way' has failed to convince the present author, not because of any lack in de la Potterie's lexicographic arguments, but because he has failed to make sense of the phrase in its context in the prologue. The reference to no one having seen God seems to anticipate a reference to revelation. At any rate, if the meaning is that the μονογενὴς has opened the way for people to see God in and through Jesus Christ, this is still essentially a reference to the revelation which Jesus brought and thus does not significantly affect our discussion.


\textsuperscript{35} Brown, \textit{op.cit.}, p.524. That this was the intended function of Memra becomes clear from the texts cited by McNamara, \textit{op.cit.}, p.98. This can also be seen from the view expressed by R. Judah ben Ila's (2nd cent. C.E.) as a principle of translation: 'He who translates a verse literally is a liar, and he who adds to it is a blasphemer' (\textit{Meg 4.44}; b.Kiddushin 49a). To illustrate the point he adduces Ex 24:10, and says that to render literally is to lie, because no one can be said to have seen God, but to add 'angel' is to blaspheme, and substitute a creature for the Creator. The proper rendering according to R.Judah is: 'They saw the glory of God of itself, which is substantially how the text is rendered in all the Targums (The verse of this saying cited by Dunn, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.120 is given without reference, but is most likely a later form, since it may well be concerned with the specifically Christian arguments from Scripture for Trinitarian doctrine). This reference, and that found in Meg 4.9, are also significant inasmuch as they show that Targumic traditions relevant to our discussion were already current by the second century C.E. at the latest.

\textsuperscript{36} In the language of means 'seated (in the place of honour) alongside', as can be seen from John 13:23 and Luke 16:22f. Beasley-Murray, \textit{op.cit.}, p.4, is of the view that the prologue does not end with the exaltation of the redeemer, in contrast with most other New Testament hymns, and this is one reason why he does not accept Cave's proposal concerning its chaotic

\textsuperscript{37} For the view that there is an implied contrast with Moses here, see Hooker, \textit{op.cit.}, p.54.

\textit{The Logos as 'God revealed' is particularly close to Philo's thought}}
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The reference to Jesus 'in the bosom of the Father', or, in other words, at God's right hand, is a reference to the exalted status of Jesus, as we have already pointed out. The claim that Jesus had been exalted to a status alongside God was objectionable to many Jews even in the pre-Johannine period. In the Johannine community at least, this came to be even more of a key issue, and one that provoked intense Jewish opposition. In this context, there is a clear significance to the fact that John parallels the pre-existent status of the Word with the exalted post-existent status of Jesus. It appears that the author would have us find the justification for the exalted status of Jesus in the eternal glory and position of the Logos. We have already noted in our discussion of the opening verses of the prologue how certain elements in the author's choice of expression would have relevance to any attempt to justify the attribution to Jesus of a status akin to that of God, and in light of the parallelism which exists between the beginning and end of the prologue, it would appear that this was precisely what the author was concerned to do. Jesus may rightly occupy this exalted position, because the Word eternally occupied it, and Jesus it the person in and as whom the Word has 'become flesh'.

Also important in this verse is the reference to Jesus as the one who has made God known. This bears obvious relation to one of the key themes of the conflict between the Johannine Christians and the synagogue, namely the question of Jesus' qualifications to be the revealer. Since the reference is ostensibly to the exalted, post-resurrection Jesus, it could be suggested that Jesus is presented as being the revealer precisely in his present exalted state. However, the prose tense ἐγένετο makes clear that the author is thinking primarily (although perhaps not exclusively) of the ministry of the earthly Jesus: it was then that 'we beheld his glory'. In relation to this issue the parallel with the opening of the prologue is also relevant. Jesus is able to be the revealer because he is the incarnation of the pre-existent Word. In the Targums, it is frequently the Word (or alternatively the Spirit) who spoke to Moses. The Word or Wisdom is also frequently identified with the Torah.

Thus the one with whom Moses spoke, and whose will or wisdom was embodied in the revelation given to Moses, had now actually appeared on the scene as a human being. The fact that the one who 'became flesh' in and as Jesus was one who shared in pre-existence with God also has direct relevance to the question of Jesus' qualifications as revealer. As we have noted earlier, in many streams of Jewish thought Moses was believed to have ascended to heaven in order to receive the Torah. In contrast to Moses' knowledge of heavenly things as at most a brief visitor to heaven, which was all that any human being could ever hope to become, the Son has an eternal knowledge of God, which provides a basis for revelation far superior to that of any other.

vv 3-5) In these verses, referring primarily to the pre-incarnate Logos' work in creation, we again find clear allusions to the role of Wisdom in many Jewish writings. A number of scholars have noted the important parallel which is to be found in IQS 11:1-14. This part of the Community Rule says of God, 'All things come to pass by His knowledge; He establishes all things by His design and without Him nothing is done'. If this verse gives us any insight into the meaning of John 1:3, then we should not render ἐγένετο as 'to create' but rather as 'to happen', as Ashton and several others have suggested. In favour of this suggestion is the fact that parallels in the Wisdom literature normally use the verb κτάω to express creation, or alternatively ἐπιλάβομαι. However, this would be to choose between two equally valid renderings of a Greek word which may legitimately carry both meanings. Given the parallels of language between this part of the prologue and so many instances in Jewish literature concerning Wisdom, where Wisdom is described as the mediator of creation, it would appear both unwise and unnecessary to exclude the idea of creation here. Perhaps this term was chosen because of its ambiguity, allowing the same phrase to refer to God's action of both creation and salvation. In the Hebrew Bible, and much subsequent Jewish theology, the motifs and imagery of creation and
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salvation were inextricably linked. This was also true of Christian theology prior to John, where we find a similar logic being followed through in connection with the christological use of Wisdom language. A prime example is the hymnic passage of Col. 1:15-20, where Wisdom language is used to parallel the role of Christ in creation and in the new creation. The working through of some of the logical implications of the role attributed to Christ by Christians in the restoration of God's plan for creation had apparently begun already in the pre-Johannine period.

In terms of the conflict setting we have posited, would these verses have had any particular relevance? The reference to the light shining in the darkness, but not being understood or overcome by it, is clearly intended to reflect the hostile reception which the Logos received in the world, even from 'his own'. The rejection of Jesus - the Logos incarnate - could not have been far from the author's mind. It is in no way problematic to suggest this, even if the view is taken that these verses refer primarily to the period before the incarnation; in fact, it actually helps to show the relevance of these verses to the Johannine work of legitimation. In many places in the New Testament, Christian writers justify the rejection of the Jews to believe, and to respond positively to Jesus or the early Christians, by pointing out the failure of Israel throughout its history to respond to God (or to his appointed prophets or leaders) as they should. It seems likely that the references to light and darkness in the present verses are an attempt by the Fourth Evangelist to present the rejection of Jesus - and presumably also the Johannine community - in a similar way. The coming of God's Word into the world had from the very beginning of creation caused there to be a division, a separation between light and darkness. Throughout Israel's history this pattern continued, with only a remnant remaining faithful to Yahweh, and

82 For example, one may think of the Exodus language, where language which traditionally related to the defeat of the sea monster as creation was taken up to refer to the 'defeat of the sea' in order for Israel to cross the Sea of Reeds and be redeemed. This influenced Israel's creation stories and hymns, which in turn influenced Second Isaiah's portrait of the return of Israel from exile as a 'second Exodus' and 'new creation'.

83 See the helpful discussion in G. B. Caird, Paul's Letters from Prison, Oxford: Clarendon, 1979, ad loc.

84 As the present tense of 

85 As the present tense of 

86 As the present tense of 

87 See the earlier Jewish use of this idea in 1 Enoch 42:1-3, Bar. 3:12.

88 This point is also to the fore in v11. See our discussion below.

89 Bousman (op.cit., p.98) considers vv3 and vv17 to parallel one another, referring to these verses under the respective headings, "Rôle du Logos dans la création" and "Rôle de l'unique-Engendré dans la re-creation".

90 Schnackenburg (op.cit., p.275) rightly concludes that the term σπλάνναγμος "has certainly nothing to do with Gnostic speculations on the pleroma. One is rather reminded of the quite ordinary expression in the O.T., "the fullness" - of God's grace, Ps 5:8, of his grace, Ps 106:45, of his mercy, Ps 51:3, 69:17; so too 2QS 4.4, "the fullness of his grace".


92 This is a further reason for our hesitation to accept the structural proposal of Culpepper and Bousman to separate these verses in their proposed chiasm.

93 So e.g Bousman, op.cit., p.104.

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vv16-17) These verses, which refer to the activity of the Logos in salvation history, appear to parallel vv3-5, a point which would seem to confirm our suggestion that the unity of creation and redemption is important for the author of the prologue, as for many Jews and Jewish Christians. That the author believes that we have all received from the fullness of his grace is quite clear. However, the relationship of this χαράς to another χαράς, described through the use of the preposition σπλαννά, is much more ambiguous. There is increasing agreement that this phrase does not support the meaning which has often been attributed to it, namely 'grace upon grace'. The preposition σπλαννά normally denotes the idea of 'replacement', and since what is being replaced is also described as 'grace', the idea must be something along the lines of 'one grace being replaced by another, even greater grace'. This difficult phrase should not be interpreted in isolation from the verse which follows, in which the giving of the Law through Moses is related to the appearance of grace and truth on the scene of human history through Jesus Christ. The parallelism between Moses and Jesus here is frequently described as antithetic. However, given the fact that Moses is a positive witness to Christ, and that the grace of the Old Testament period was genuine grace, the view of those scholars who feel that the contrast is between the 'giving' of grace in and through the Law and the 'coming' of
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grace as an actual human person, where both are genuinely the grace of God but the latter is a superior expression of that grace, appears a much more satisfactory understanding of the author's meaning. Yet to speak of the parallelism as 'synthetic' may also be misleading, since there can be no doubt that a contrast is implied between the Mosaic dispensation and that of Jesus the Messiah. The author of the prologue would probably not have agreed with the view, expressed in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, that Moses and Jesus are equally bringers of salvation, the one for Jews, the other for Gentiles. Although there is no polemism against Torah observance, presumably because the Johannine Christians, as part of their local synagogue, had not had anything like the huge influx of Gentile converts which the Pauline churches experienced, it would seem legitimate to conclude that the Johannine view is still in many ways closer to the Pauline view than to that of the *Homilies*: the Mosaic covenant was not valueless, but cannot be regarded in the same way once one has come to know the surpassing glory manifested in Jesus Christ. Belief in Moses is not contrasted with belief in Christ in the Fourth Gospel, rather, the one who has truly believed Moses should find it a natural step to believe in Jesus Christ.

In the present passage a similar line of thought seems to be followed: we (primarily Jews) have experienced God's grace throughout history, and the adequate expression of grace as an actual human person, which is to be found in the Word-become-flesh, Jesus Christ.

Before moving on, we may note that here too there is an implicit Wisdom allusion, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is identified with the one the fullness of whose grace was manifested in various ways in the Old Testament and was expressed in the giving of the Law through Moses. As we have had occasion to note on several occasions, there are numerous passages from the intertestamental period which identify Wisdom and Torah. The identification of Jesus as the one whose grace is expressed, albeit partially, in Torah, presents him as one who is superior to it, and who is thus to be taken with the utmost of seriousness.

In verses 6-8, 15) In these verses we are confronted with the first mention of the person of John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel, and as we have already seen, it is quite probable that these verses once stood as the opening of the Gospel. It seems likely that there was at some stage in the community's history a debate with a continuing group of disciples of the Baptist. Although it is reasonable to relate the apparently polemical statement in v8 to such a setting, we have very little information upon which to reconstruct this conflict, and we have no way of knowing which side first claimed that its leader is 'the light'. In v15 we also have an explicit contrast between the Baptist and Jesus, and (as is frequently the case in the Fourth Gospel) the contrast is placed on the lips of John the Baptist himself.

The conflict with these followers of the Baptist was with another group which was probably of a size similar to or smaller than the Johannine Christians, whereas 'the Jews' represented the majority opinion in their community, and moreover the opinions of its leaders, and for this reason the controversy with the baptists has not left its mark on the present form of the Fourth Gospel to anything like the extent that the conflict with 'the Jews' has affected it. Yet it is still important that such passages as these, which relate to controversy with the baptists over the relationship between Jesus and John, be considered, if for no other reason that they give another clear indication of the fact that the development and formation of...
De la Potterie gives as one reason for rejecting the structure we have proposed for the prologue as the fact that the two halves of the structure are not really parallel, and an example which he gives is the difference in tenses used of John's witness is v6-8 (past) and v15 (present). This can be explained, however, as being due to the fact that John thinks of the Baptist standing on the border, as it were, between two ages. If we are correct in our view that the Fourth Evangelist understood the incarnation to have taken place at Jesus' baptism, then John can be said to have borne witness in both the pre-incarnation and post-incarnation periods. De la Potterie assumes that the coming of the Logos refers to the birth of Jesus, and thus has difficulty making sense of the Baptist's role in the prologue. At any rate, it is perhaps unwise to make too much of the different tenses used to refer to the Baptist's testimony.

vv9-11) V9 may be read in two main ways: (a) "He was the true light, who lightens every man coming into the world"; (b) "The true light, that lightens every man, was coming into the world". Neither possibility is without difficulties, and both have parallels which may lend support to them. The reason for the ambiguity is that the participle ἐλαμβάνων may be taken either with ὦν and φῶς to create a periphrastic construction, 'was coming', or with ἐλάμβανον. Modern commentators are almost unanimous in preferring reading (b). In favour of (a), there is the parallel which is found in Lev. R. 31:6, "Thou enlightenest those who are on high and those who are beneath". Although the apparent incongruity with the phrase immediately preceding ὦν καὶ ἔλαμβανον τῷ Φως... ἦν τῷ φῶς is an obvious difficulty, it is not impossible that the author or redactor did not notice that the ἔλαμβανον which opens v9 would most naturally v9 would most naturally refer back to John the Baptist, especially if he was splicing together two sources, a proto-Gospel and a hymnic or poetic composition. However, if the majority opinion of commentators is correct, and the phrase is intended to be read as a periphrastic construction, then this construction should not be taken (as in English) to mean 'was (on the point of) entering', since the Greek...
McGrath, Prologue as Legitimation, IBS 19, July 1997

accepted by some, both Jews and Gentiles.\(^{11}\) In the context of the conflict which lies in the background of the Fourth Gospel, John seeks to communicate that, as so many Jews would acknowledge, Israel had frequently rejected Wisdom. By presenting Israel's rejection of Jesus as simply one example of this wider phenomenon, the suggestion that this rejection somehow discredits Jesus' claims is undermined.

1(4) Over against a section which, however we translate v9, clearly refers to the rejection of the light by mankind as a whole and Israel in particular, in this verse we have a clear reference to the incarnation, and to the believing community ('we') which has welcomed the incarnate Word. The best rendering of the words δ λόγος σαρκίς, ἐγένετο is probably that suggested by Barrett, "the Word came on the (human) scene - as flesh, man.\(^{42}\) The point is that it is none other than the Wisdom or Word of God, the true light, which has appeared on the scene of human history in a decisive and distinctive way: as the man Christ Jesus. The identification between Jesus and the Word is important for various reasons which have already been mentioned.

This verse contains an almost overwhelming number of allusions to the Old Testament and Jewish traditions. The reference to 'tabernacling' is almost universally acknowledged to be an allusion to the wisdom tradition, such as is attested to in Sirach 24:8, where God commands Wisdom to pitch her tent in Israel.\(^{45}\) The term also recalls the Shekinah,\(^{46}\) and this, together with the appearance of the related terms Word (Aramaic Memra, Dibbura) and glory (Aramaic יְצַנְיָר, Hebrew kabōd), suggests that the author intends the reader to recall these Jewish traditions.\(^ {47}\)

\(^{11}\) On the Wisdom imagery underlying these verses see Talbert, op.cit., p.72; Ashton, op.cit., pp.15-17. The Johannine use of the motif appears to lie somewhere between the view that Wisdom was accessible to all and the view that Wisdom had found no dwelling on earth and so returned to heaven, where she was accessible only to a select few apocalyptic visionaries and mystics. For John, Wisdom appeared on earth in Jesus and has been made available to all, although the overall response to Wisdom's appearance was rejection. See further the parallels in 1 Enoch 42:2; Baruch 3:12 (cited Brown, op.cit., p.520).

\(^{42}\) Barrett, op.cit., p.65. Although Barrett's rendering avoids certain connotations which are difficult to evade when using the traditional translation, in our discussion we will still use the phrase 'became/becoming flesh', since alternative phrases, if perhaps more accurately conveying what the author probably intended, are often so convoluted as to make their use awkward.

\(^{45}\) For other OT parallels to this language see Brown, op.cit., pp.32f.

\(^{46}\) Not only do the roots of the two terms have essentially the same meaning, 'to dwell', but there is also a similarity of sound between the root לֶגֶר and John's term escheri.

\(^{47}\) The accumulation of so many terms of this sort in such a small space is hardly likely to be coincidental. On these terms see McNamara, op.cit., especially p.104. An Aramaic original has been proposed, on the basis of these translations, by A. Díaz Macho ('El Logos y el Espíritu Santo', in Academide 1 (1965), p.389), who is cited by McNamara.

\(^{40}\) We have already given our reasons for disagreeing with Culpepper's suggestion that the centre of the prologue must also be in climactic position.\(^{41}\) To call them 'attributes' would be too interpersonal, whereas to call them 'figures' might imply that they exist as separate entities from God. The intentional ambiguity of the terms must be retained. As McNamara writes, "The targumists...remove anthropomorphisms, substituting references to the 'Word' (Memra), 'Glory' (Yeqara, Sapir) or 'Presence' (Shekinah; Aramaic Shechina) of the Lord when speaking of his relations with the world. In communicating his will to man we read of 'the Holy Spirit' or the Dibbara (Word) rather than the Lord himself. For a Jew, of course, these were merely other ways of saying the Lord. They were conventional ways of speaking about the God of Israel" (McNamara, op.cit., p.98). Like Philo's λογος, these terms could be God or not God depending on what was felt to be theologically correct in a given context.

\(^{41}\) This is clearly the setting in which the opening narratives and discourses of the Fourth Gospel take place, even if, presumably for polemical reasons, the author does not actually mention that Jesus was baptized by John. See our "Johannine Christianity" (n.63 above). The Johannine omission of reference to Jesus' baptism in water by John does not affect our present point, since John still recounts the coming of the Spirit.

\(^{42}\) Dunn, op.cit., p.266. See also n.28 above.

widespread agreement in Judaism, and unanimous agreement in Christianity, that the Messiah was a figure in whom God's Spirit was present a decisive way. John could thus appeal to such traditions in order to support his claims concerning Jesus, by presenting Jesus as one so fully possessed by the Spirit or Word of God as to be wholly at one with it, so that that which is attributed to the Logos may also legitimately be attributed to Jesus. Also, Jesus, as the incarnation of the Word or Spirit which spoke to Moses would obviously bear a revelation superior to that brought by Moses. The importance of this is that we see here clearly that the author and his community did not simply make use of any and every tradition which might conceivably support their case, but appealed to Scriptures and traditions which they, and in most cases their opponents as well, regarded as both authoritative and also relevant to the issue at hand.

v12-13) This forms the central section of this passage, and although it cannot be said to be of central importance to the prologue, this should not be understood to mean that this section is of little significance. On the contrary, the idea of the righteous as children of God was of great significance in contemporary Jewish thought, as was the idea of Israel or the Israelites as God's son(s). Here the author is denying that natural birth or genealogical descent can make one a child of God. We are thus once again in the presence of an emphatic assertion that being an Israelite without believing God's messenger is of no value. Israel had frequently been punished because it failed to recognize God's messengers or appointed leaders for what they understood to mean that this section is of little significance.

The importance of this is that we see here clearly that the author and his community did not simply make use of any and every tradition which might conceivably support their case, but appealed to Scriptures and traditions which they, and in most cases their opponents as well, regarded as both authoritative and also relevant to the issue at hand.

...A point made unequivocally in v17.

...What is now generally termed as 'constitutional nominalism' is in view here. In addition to E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, London: SCM Press, 1977, see also Dunn, Romans 1:8.


...Moore was a particularly relevant example of such an instance, and throughout the first few centuries of Christian literature the fact that both Moses and Jesus were reputed by God's people, in spite of the signs which they did, was of great importance. See also Dale Allison, The New Moses, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993, pp.98-105. ...See also the similar argument in John 8:41-47. ...Cf e.g. Hooker, op.cit., p.51; Barrett, op.cit., p.156.

...Liddell and Scott note that the Greek term άποκάλυψις can mean both 'glory' in the sense of 'manifestation' or 'radiance', and also 'honour', 'reputation'. Although in the context of the manifestation of the one who is the Shekinah, the presence of God and the light, the former is obviously more relevant, 'honour' perhaps does better justice to the place of an only or beloved son in an ancient Mediterranean culture, although there is no English term which does justice to both meanings equally well. One may fruitfully compare the honour and dignity given to and value placed upon the paradigmatic πάτερ Ἰσακος, son of the Hebrew Bible, Isaac, although this is not to suggest that the author of the Fourth Gospel intended to make an allusion to Isaac here.
Jesus, validates his claims. The assertion that these were key issues for the Evangelist does not mean that the prologue is any less an exalted christological statement aimed at honouring and praising the incarnate and exalted Lord and the God whom he revealed. It is simply to point out that this appears to have been done in a context in which such christological statements and beliefs were controversial, and the author is thus concerned not only to state his christology, but also to defend it, and he does this by attempting to show the continuity of his beliefs with the authoritative traditions and Scriptures of the Jews and the Christians, as well as the culpability of 'the Jews' for failing to recognize who it was that had appeared among them, who it was whose glory they failed to see. James F. McGrath

George K. Barr, The Structure of Revelation, IBS 19, July 1997

THE STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

by The Rev. Dr. GEORGE K. BARR

This article uses scalometric techniques to provide an alternative to A.Q. Morton's Cusum analysis of Revelation. The identification of internal scale changes must form an essential part of stylistic analysis, especially in the case of visionary material.

A.Q. Morton's stunning article on Revelation (IBS 19, 81-91) must shake us into reconsidering the structure of the work. His fitting together into codex form of the various sources which he has detected by Cusum analysis is little short of miraculous. It depends, of course, upon the validity of the Cusum method which he says "has been widely used and repeatedly validated". He does not provide any evidence in terms of Cusum data, and one must assume that Morton has followed the procedures described in Jill Farringdon's book1 to which he refers.

The Cusum Method

The method described therein involves the comparison between graphical traces based on variations in sentence length and similar traces based on the rate of occurrence of selected features. The most common feature used in the book is a combination of the occurrences of two- and three-letter words plus other words beginning with a vowel. Experiment shows that in Revelation these components taken separately behave erratically. In fact, both are scale-sensitive. Two- and three-letter words in Revelation are slightly high-scale sensitive as they tend to occur more often in longer sentences; initial vowel words are slightly low-scale sensitive as they tend to occur more often in shorter sentences. In combination, these tendencies substantially cancel each other out and the combination behaves more consistently than the components do separately. This combination (2/3w+ivw) has therefore been used in tests described below.

Implications for Revelation

To accept Morton's page plan for Revelation involves the acceptance of his alleged combination of sources, and there is a heavy price to pay in