The Structure of John’s Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel’s Narrative Structure

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Numerous scholars have investigated the problems revolving around the relationship of the prologue to the rest of the Fourth Gospel, but nearly all of these studies have concentrated on the questions from a theological perspective.\(^1\) NT research has tended to focus on such issues as the views of revelation and salvation found in the prologue and the subsequent narrative, or on their respective uses of symbolism, rather than on questions of their possible interrelationship at the level of literary structure. David Deeks’s article is about the only one that addresses the latter issue.\(^2\) However, Deeks’s thesis that the “four subsections into which the prologue naturally falls \([1:1-5,6-8,9-13,14-18]\)” provide summaries of the contents of the four main sections of the gospel \([1:1-18; 1:19-4:54; 5:1-12:50; 13:1-20:31]\)”\(^3\) is described in such general terms ("cosmological section," “witness of John,” “coming of the Light,” and “economy of salvation”) that his argument ultimately fails to


\(^3\) Ibid., 110.
convince. Charles Talbert's attempt to relate the mythic structure of the prologue to a mythic narrative structure encompassing the entire Gospel is much more provocative.

However, my investigation of the relationship between the structure of the prologue and the structure of the subsequent Gospel narrative will take a different slant. My purpose is not to show that the same theological or symbolic structures run through prologue and Gospel narrative, although this could be shown; nor shall I try to prove that the prologue of the Fourth Gospel is a summary of the story to follow. Rather, it will be my contention that just as the first strophe of the prologue sets the tone for the symmetrical, rhythmic shape of the entire prologue, so also the symmetrical shape of the prologue sets the tone for the structure of the narrative to follow.

Studies of the Fourth Gospel's narrative symmetry are not new. However, this investigation of the issue differs from previous studies in at least two very significant ways. First, it begins with a careful analysis of the prologue's structure before turning outward to look at the rest of the Gospel; and secondly, with insights gained from investigations into ancient Hebrew narrative art, the study shows how the Fourth Gospel's use of Leitwörter and direct speech interact with its narrative symmetry. This gives readers new insights into how the story and theology of John's Gospel develop.

In the following discussion I shall first set out the perimeters of the particular division of the Gospel to be studied, then point out its symmetrical structure. After this, I shall briefly discuss how the conventional use of direct speech and Leitwörter unify that narrative division and are related to the development of the story and theology of the Fourth Gospel as a whole.

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4 Deeks (ibid, 122) further complicates his initial thesis by arguing that a giant chias tic structure overlays this fourfold outline.


9 Alter (ibid, 93), quoting Martin Buber, defines Leitwort as "a word or word-root that recurs significantly in a text, in a continuum of texts or in a configuration of texts" by following...
The Structure of John 1:1-2

Ernst Haenchen, in his posthumously published commentary on John, writes that the opening phrases of the Gospel are among the most carefully constructed in the entire book. Its complex structure can be illustrated in at least two different ways:

(1)

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{(A)} \\
&\quad \begin{align*}
&\text{(a) } en \text{ archē} \\
&\text{(b) } \text{ēn} \\
&\text{(c) } \text{ho logos} \\
&\text{(b) } \text{ēn} \\
&\text{(c) } \text{kai ho logos} \\
&\text{(b) } \text{ēn} \\
&\text{(c) } \text{pros ton theon} \\
&\text{(b) } \text{kai theos} \\
&\text{(c) } \text{houtos} \\
&\text{(b) } \text{ēn} \\
&\text{(a) } en \text{ archē pros ton theon}
\end{align*}
\end{align*}
\]

(2)

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{(A)} \\
&\quad \text{en archē ho logos} \\
&\quad \text{ēn ho logos} \\
&\quad \text{kai ho logos en pros ton theon} \\
&\quad \text{kai theos en ho logos} \\
&\quad \text{houtos en archē pros ton theon}
\end{align*}
\]

The chiastic structure of these two verses is noted in both patterns by the outer capital letters which group together words and phrases into four complete sentences. In the first example these sentences in turn are shown to be made up of words and phrases which are arranged in a step pattern (abc, cbd, dbc, cba). The second example setting forth the chiastic structure of the verses is typical of what can be found in most commentaries. Here the emphasis is upon "how the second term reappears in the next clause as the lead word."

As R. A. Culpepper astutely notes, the symmetrical structure of these two verses "alerts one from the very beginning to look for repeated instances these repetitions, one is able to decipher or grasp a meaning of the text, or at any rate, the meaning will be revealed more strikingly."


13 Ibid.
of chiastic and multiple structures in the prologue."14 As he goes on to point out, the microstructure of these verses is also much like the macrostructure of the prologue, for there the word theos occurs three times in the first strophe, two times in the last, and two times in the middle strophes.15

The verb ἐν also appears four times in these verses and is used with three different nuances.16 Its repetition sets these first two verses apart from the next verse, where ginomai is used three times, and links it in a ring pattern17 with vv 4-5, where ἐν is used two more times. While these fluctuating repetitions separate the opening lines of the Gospel into three different units or "strophes," their overall ring-like pattern unites them at a deeper level to form the prologue's first major section. As we shall see below, the author's subsequent repetition of Leitwörter is coupled with a concentric form18 of narrative symmetry throughout the book and thus helps delimit the book's larger structural units. We shall also see that this delimiting feature in turn plays an important role in the development of the Fourth Gospel's theology.

The Structure of the Prologue 1:1-18

The formal characteristics of the prologue and its similarity to ancient poetic styles and literary structures have been a topic of study off and on throughout the twentieth century, and it is not our purpose here to compare and contrast the various proposals put forward by different scholars.19 Rather, we shall simply set forth the symmetrical structure of the prologue as we see

14 Culpepper, "Pivot," 10 See further Alter's definition (Art. 47) of "convention" as "an elaborate set of tacit agreements between artist and audience about the ordering of the work of art..." See also his "How Convention Helps Us Read The Case of the Bible's Annunciation Type-Scene," Prooftexts 3 (1983) 115-30 This narrative symmetry, with the author's use of Leitworter and the interplay of narration and direct speech discussed below, are all social reading conventions (see further Alter, Art. 88-113)
15 Culpepper, "Pivot," 10 In these first two verses theos appears in the middle and at the end of the structure. The use of theou in v 6, however, does not fit into the pattern
17 Bar-Efrat ("Observations," 170) defines "ring pattern" as the structure A X A'
18 Bar-Efrat (ibid) defines the "concentric pattern" as a variation of chiasm A B X B' A'
it and then follow this up with arguments for dividing it the way we have. According to our analysis, then, the prologue can be grouped into lines and strophes, and the strophes can be grouped into larger sections of a chiasm in the following manner:

A (vv 1-5)

en archē en ho logos,
kai ho logos en pros ton theon,
kai theos en ho logos.
houtos en en archē pros ton theon.
panta di' autou egeneto,
kai chōris autou egeneto
oude hen ho geganon.
en autō zōē ōn,
kai hē zōē ōn to phōs tôn anthropōn;
kai to phōs en tē skotía phainei,
kai hē skotia auto ou katelaben.

B (vv 6-8)

egeneto anthropos
apestalmenos para theou,
onoma autō Ioannēs.
houtos elthen eis martyrian,
hina martyrēsē peri tou phōtos,
hina pantes pisteusōsin di' autou.
ouk en ekeinos to phōs,
all' hina martyrēsē peri tou phōtos.

C (vv 9-11)

ēn to phōs to alēthihon,
ho phōtizei panta anthropōpon,
erchomenon eis ton kosmon.
en tē kosmōn ōn,
kai ho kosmos di' autou egeneto,
kai ho kosmos auton ouk egnō.

(“The Logos Hymn: A New View,” NTS 29 [1983] 552-60), which rejects any overall sense of structure or unity in the prologue.

20 My interest in the structure of the prologue is focused upon the text’s final, received form. Thus, issues related to those possible prose “dislocations” which introduce John the Baptist into the prologue’s poetic structure (Brown, John, 71; cf. 22, 27) lie beyond my immediate concern.

21 Although arrived at independently, my sections follow those of A. Jaubert (Lecture de l'évangile selon saint Jean [CahEv 17; Paris: Cerf, 1976] 19), as cited in Girard (“Analyse,” 10); see also the earlier work of M. E. Boismard (St. John’s Prologue [Westminster: Newman, 1957].
eis ta idia elthen,  
kai hoi idioi auton ou parelabon.

D (vv 12-13)  
hosoi de elabon auton,  
edoken autois exousian  
tekna theou genesthai,  
tois pisteuousin eis to onoma autou,  
hoi ouk ex haimaton  
oude ek thelematos sarkos  
oude ek thelematos andros  
all' ek theou egennethesan.

C' (v 14)  
kai ho logos sarx egeneto  
kai eskennosen en hēmin,  
kai etheasametha tēn doxan autou,  
doxan hōs monogenous para patros,  
plēres charitos kai alētheias.

B' (v 15)  
Iōannis martyr peri autou  
kai kekragen légōn,  
houtos ēn hon eipon,  
ho opisō mou erchomenos  
emprosthen mou gegonen,  
hoti prōtos mou ēn.

A' (vv 16-18)  
hoti ek tou plēromatos autou  
hēmeis pantes elabomen,  
kai charin anti charitos.  
hoti ho nomos dia Mōyseōs edothē,  
hē charis kai hē alētheia dia Iēsou Christou egeneto.  
theon oudeis heōraken pōpote;  
monogenēs theos ho ōn eis ton kolpon tou patros,  
ekeinos exégēsato.

(A) We have already noted how these first three strophes of eleven lines are tied together by their ring structure. But they are also drawn together by their focus on the Logos (the word logos is used in lines 1 and 3; autou, in lines 5 and 6; autō, in line 8). Through step parallelism, the qualities that
were predicated of the Logos at the beginning can be transferred to *phōs* at the end (lines 10 and 11).

(B) These three strophes, made up of eight lines, are drawn together by their focus on John (*anthrōpos*, line 1; *Iōannēs*, line 3; *houtos*, line 4; *ekeinos*, line 7).

(C) These three strophes, made up of eight lines, are related by their focus on *phōs*. The *phōs*, which through the step parallelism of strophes 1-3 was equated with the Logos, has now become personal (*phōs*, line 1; *ho*, line 2; *autou*, line 5; *auton*, lines 6 and 8). These three strophes are also related by their emphasis on the progressive stages of "the coming of the *phōs/logos*" ("coming into the world," line 3; "was in the world," line 4; "came to his own home," line 7).

(D) These two strophes, made up of eight lines, form the center of the prologue's chiastic structure. They are united by their common plural subject (*hosoi*, line 1; *hoi*, line 5), and by their use of a similar metaphor (*tekna theou genesthai*, line 3; *ek theou egennēthēsan*, line 8).

(C') This strophe of five lines is the complement of section C and is united by its common focus on the Logos. While no verbs of motion are used here, the coming that was described in three stages in section C progresses three steps further: from "becoming flesh" (line 1), to "dwelling among us" (line 2), to "we beheld his glory" (line 3). We also note the use of the first person plural verb, the use of the first person plural pronoun, and the use of "father" rather than God (part of an alliteration: *para patros plērēs*). This new, more personal emphasis22 is continued throughout the second half of the prologue (*eipon*, ν 15; *hēmeis*, ν 16; *mou*, (three times) ν 17; personal names [Moses and Jesus], ν 17); it reaches a climax of intimacy in the statement *ton kolpon tou patros* (ν 18).

(B') These two strophes of six lines are joined by their common focus on John. The first strophe consists of the narrator's description of John speaking, and the second consists of John's actual statement in direct speech. Whereas in its complement, section B, we only heard the narrator's description and commentary, now we hear John himself speak. He speaks in a prophetic riddle and each line ends with increasingly shorter verbs. The three verbs John uses to refer to "this one" are the same three important verbs used by the narrator in the first half of the prologue to describe the *logos/phōs* (*erchomai*, two times; *ginomai*, five times; *eimi*, seven times). Thus, in direct speech, John confirms three things which the narrator had said about the Logos and so proves to be a faithful witness (as the narrator had already noted).

22 Käsemann ("Aufbau," 98), quoting Harnack, notes this new, personal emphasis. However, both are only interested in discussing the personal emphasis in terms of ν 14.
(A') As is so often the case in Johannine narrative, it is difficult to know where direct speech ends and narration begins. This is the problem of vv 16-17. Because v 17 also begins with hoti and seems to be commentary rather than quote, and because v 16 appears to pick up the images of v 14, I maintain that only v 15 contains the direct speech of John. I shall argue that these three final strophes are also closely related to one another, even though this may not seem very obvious upon a first reading. M. E. Boismard’s observations are helpful at this point. To see the connection between these three strophes, Boismard takes us back to the three strophes with which the prologue began. There we see the Logos in relation to God (strophe 1), to creation (strophe 2), and to humankind (strophe 3).

If we start with the final strophe of the prologue, we note that, like the opening strophe, the emphasis is upon the relation of the Logos to God (cf. v 14, where monogenēs and the Logos are equated). The second strophe and second-to-last strophe of the prologue both contain the similar phrase, dipt autou egeneto/dia Iêsou Christou egeneto. The first emphasizes the relationship of the Logos to creation, the other, by mentioning the law and by using the title “Jesus Christ,” emphasizes the relationship of the Logos to “re-creation” or redemption. (One might also note that “grace and truth” are predicated of the Logos in v 14 and are used again in v 17.) The third strophe in the prologue emphasizes the Logos in relation to humankind (“and the life was the light of humankind”). The third to last strophe in the prologue elaborates this relationship by further defining it (“from his fullness we have all received”).

These final three strophes complement section A and must be similarly grouped together into one unit by their singular focus on the Logos: in relation to humankind, re-creation, and God. Now, however, they are put in reverse order to section A. Because of the strophes’ singular focus on the Logos, and because the two parallel groups of three strophes are separated from the other references to the Logos by John’s witness, I believe both Culpepper and Boismard are wrong in assuming these individual strophes of the complementary sections of the prologue are separate entities within its chiastic structure.

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24 See both references in the preceding note.
25 Boismard, Prologue, 77-81.
28 Ibid., 11-12.
29 Ibid., 3, 16; Boismard, Prologue, 77-81.
According to our analysis, then, the thematic, symmetrical structure of the prologue is as follows:

(A) The relationship of the Logos to vv 1-5
   1) God
   2) Creation
   3) Humankind

(B) The witness of John (negative) vv 6-8

(C) The journey of the Light/Logos (negative) vv 9-11

(D) The gift of empowerment (positive) vv 12-13

(C') The journey of the Logos (positive) v 14

(B') The witness of John (positive) v 15

(A') The relationship of the Logos to vv 16-18
   3) Humankind
   2) Re-creation
   1) God

Up to this point our study has shown the intricacy and variation of narrative symmetry in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel. We have also seen the way in which direct speech is used: it confirms the narrator’s voice by repeating the same words used by the narrator.

Finally, in order to address the issue of *Leitwörter* in the prologue, we note that the words *phōs* and *ginomai* recur quite often. Six out of the twenty occurrences of *phōs* are found in the prologue, or nearly 33% of its appearances in only 2% of the text. Similarly, the verb *ginomai* is used nine times in this section of the text, but only forty-two times in the rest of the book—almost 20% of the word’s occurrences in only 2% of the narrative. The word also occurs at least once in each section of the prologue’s chiastic structure, and so it becomes a major unifying component of the prologue.

The Implications of the Prologue’s Structure for Johannine Narrative Structure

*The First Ministry Tour: 1:19–3:36*

Most scholars begin their first major break in the narrative between 1:18 and 1:19, but very few see 3:36 as the end of this opening section. A. Feuillet and F. J. Maloney31 have written articles which are representative of the classic arguments for dividing the text after chap. 4, so we need not describe that position here. Like us, however, Matthias Rissi’s recent article also divides the text after 3:36, and he argues that the various units in the Gospel

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30 See Girard’s numerological gymnastics with the words *phōs* and *ginomai* (“Analyse,” 25).

are controlled by the sequence of Jesus' journeys: from Galilee or pagan territory to Jerusalem. While his emphasis on the role of Jesus' journeys in the story is well-placed, it is difficult to argue as he does that 1:19 should mark the starting point for his first division, when Jesus' journey from "pagan territory" does not begin until 1:43. Since the focus of attention in 1:19-42 and 3:25-36 is on John the Baptist, it would be more natural for one to view these two pericopes as the beginning and ending points of a concentric pattern; the points are followed by Jesus' journey in 1:43 and preceded by Jesus' journey in 3:22 respectively.

At this point let us recall the structure of the prologue. It began by defining the Logos in relation to God, the world, and humankind, and then went on to introduce the witness of John in the second section. This in turn was followed by the section dealing with the journey of the light to the world. We see now that the story proper (1:19-21:23) begins with the subject of that second section of the prologue—John the Baptist; and like the prologue, this is followed by a journey—this time, Jesus' journey to Galilee. Like the chiastic structure of the prologue, we find a repetition of these two features in chap. 3, for in ν 22 Jesus goes "into the Judean territory," and in ν 25 the focus returns once again to John the Baptist. Thus, the structures can be compared in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROLOGUE</th>
<th>SECTION I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The relationship of the Logos to God/creation/humankind (1:1-5)</td>
<td>The witness of John (1:19-42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The witness of John (1:6-8)</td>
<td>A journey of Jesus into Galilee (1:43-51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The journey of the Light (1:9-11)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>A journey of Jesus into Judean territory (3:22-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The journey of the Logos (1:14)</td>
<td>The witness of John (3:25-36)</td>
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<td>The witness of John (1:15)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship of the Logos to humankind/re-creation/God (1:16-18)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

32 "Der Aufbau des vierten Evangeliums," NTS 29 (1983) 48-54 Peter Ellis (The Genius of John. A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel [Collegeville Liturgical Press, 1984] 30-64) argues that the Fourth Gospel is constructed in five five-tiered chiasms and that John 1 19-4 3 is the first one of these. However, Ellis's failure to consider the possibility of a plot structure related to the chiastic symmetry of the book is a rejection of a narrative-critical approach and turns the Gospel into an incredible mosaic that makes reading virtually impossible (pp 10-18) It is noteworthy, however, that he and I arrived at a somewhat similar symmetrical, fivefold division of the Gospel independently of each other

33 There are very few undefined or broadly defined journeys in the Fourth Gospel, i.e.,
Finally, in another aspect of symmetry, all the stories in this unit take place in Judea, except for the central Galilean pericope. The pericopes found within the boundaries of the concentric pattern consist of Jesus’ first two acts of power and his first monologue.34

While it is clear that John 1:19–3:36 exhibits a symmetrical, concentric pattern whose sequencing of narrative episodes seems to be modeled on that of the prologue, one might well ask whether the unit defined by the outer limits of this concentric pattern is held together on any other level besides that of narrative design. When we look at the interplay between narration and direct speech within this section, we see that it does indeed form a tightly knit unit on this level also.35

A study of spatial relationships in the opening scene gives the critic some interesting insights into later developments of the Fourth Gospel’s plot and theology. When John the Baptist first speaks about Jesus, he describes him passively: “In your midst stands one whom you do not know.” On the next day, a verb of action is used with reference to Jesus. The narrator states that John sees Jesus coming to him. But on the following day John is described in passive terms. The narrator says that John stood and looked upon Jesus as he was walking. A careful reading of this opening scene reveals that up to ν 35, John has had the dominant role in the narrative and has described himself in active terms as “a voice crying in the wilderness” and as one “sent to baptize.” By comparison, Jesus has been mute and only begins to speak and take a major role in the story after ν 35. However, in John’s final appearance in the story (3:22-36), where the author allows him to speak again, John finally admits that his is the passive role. He says that he is now standing and listening (“the friend of the bridegroom, the one who stands and hears him,” ν 29).

The verb histēmi is used only three times in these first three chapters (1:26,35; 3:29),36 and only rarely in the subsequent narrative. In its first two usages, John and the narrator were describing Jesus’ and John’s respective where Jesus goes into general regions or territories. The narrator usually describes him as traveling to specific cities.

34 Cf. the central section of the prologue.
35 George A. Kennedy (New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984] 34) argues that the opening and closing sections of rhetorical units in biblical narrative are often determined by structures of inclusion: “One rhetorical unit may be enclosed within another, building up a structure which embraces the whole book.”
36 Some ancient mss read stēkei in 1:26.
spatial positions in the narrative world at a very mundane level. But when John picks up and repeats the word in 3:29, he uses it in a metaphorical context. This interplay between narration and direct speech reminds us of the way we saw them used in the prologue, where John picked up the narrator's major verbs and repeated them in a riddle-like formula. There, John was confirming in direct speech what the narrator had said about him: John was an accurate witness, but not the true light. Here now, for a second time, John picks up the narrator's "earthy" term and endows it with special meaning. In so doing, his own role in the story is brought to a conclusion, and his theological relationship to Jesus is reconfirmed to the reader.

From an analysis of both narrative symmetry and the interplay between direct speech and narration, we find that the unit 1:19-3:36 does indeed hold together cohesively. But it also maintains a cohesiveness in more ways than just this. In other aspects of plot development within this unit, we note first of all that both John and Jesus directly address a seemingly hostile group of people and carry on conversations with them (the priests and Levites, as well as "the Jews"). Secondly, whenever Jesus' disciples are mentioned, they are with him. As we shall see later, the relationship of these two groups of people to Jesus changes after chap. 4. Thirdly, Jesus never uses the first person pronoun ego in these three chapters; only John does. In Jesus' one extended monologue (3:11-21), he speaks of himself only in the third person or first person plural. This peculiarity also changes after chap. 4.

A more difficult matter to determine is whether there is any Leitwort which dominates this unit of narrative. Perhaps the word ouranos, its counterpart ge, and the associated ana-words could fit this category. We note that seven out of nineteen occurrences of ouranos are found scattered throughout

37 This phenomenon is similar to Alter's description (Art, 182) of the role of direct speech in ancient Hebrew narrative "Phrases or whole sentences first stated by the narrator do not reveal their full significance until they are repeated, whether faithfully or with distortions, in direct speech by one or more of the characters" Similarly, Umberto Eco (The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts [Bloomington Indiana University, 1979] 26) argues that "frequently a text establishes its topic by reiterating blatantly a series of sememes belonging to the same semantic field (key words) In this case these sememes are obsessively reiterated throughout the text At other times, on the contrary, these sememes cannot be statistically detected because, rather than being abundantly distributed, they are strategically located"

38 John, of course, does appear two more times in the text, but only retrospectively (5 33-36, 10 40-41)

39 Jesus' two uses of the pronoun mou (2 4,16) are significant exceptions to his general hesitancy in using any first person singular pronouns (mou is found in 1 43 and 2 4)
these chapters (37% of its occurrences in 19% of the text), as well as four out of eleven occurrences of γή (36% of its occurrences), and five out of nine ana-words (both the preposition and the related adverbs). The word-plays on ἀνόθεν (3:3-8) and ἐγείρω (2:19-22) are well-known, and both Jesus' and John the Baptist's subsequent monologues emphasize the heaven/earth contrast. This contrast is also found at the end of chap. 1, where Jesus sees Nathanael under the fig tree and then speaks of the heavens opening up. Ana-words also slip into the episodes of chap. 2, where we find that the water jars which Jesus tells the servants to fill "up to the brim" hold "up to two or three measures"; and after Jesus "upends" the moneychangers' tables in the temple, he talks about "raising a different temple." Thus ana-words can be understood as the Leitwörter of this first division, and the above/below contrast which begins to be emphasized here will go on to become a major motif of the Gospel.

The Second Ministry Tour: 4:1–6:71

As noted earlier, Rissi is one of the very few scholars who break the Gospel narrative between chap. 3 and chap. 4. But he does not include chap. 6 in his second narrative unit because he is enamored of the sequence of Jesus' journeys—Galilee to Jerusalem. He therefore divides the text again at the end of chap. 5. By breaking the text between chaps. 5 and 6, he preserves the sequence of Jesus' journeys, since in chap. 7 Jesus again goes up to Jerusalem after having been in Galilee. But as we shall see, this division, like so many others, misses the continuity between chaps. 4-6—a continuity that can be seen when one takes into account the conventions of Leitwörter, symmetry, and narration/direct speech.

This second narrative section of the Gospel begins with a journey of Jesus, and as the narrator makes clear on a number of occasions, Jesus again goes from Judea to Galilee (4:3, 46, 54). As Raymond Brown notes, v 54 emphasizes not that the second sign of Jesus was done in Cana, but that it was the second sign Jesus did "having come out of Judea into Galilee." Like the first journey of Jesus into Galilee, this one also seems to be a three-day trip (2:1; 4:43); and along with the journeys in 7:1-13 and 11:1-16, these four trips are the only ones in the Gospel which take any extended narrative time or story time. They are also the only journeys for which the narrator gives the reader an inside view of the mental activity or emotional state of Jesus. In 1:43 the narrator describes Jesus as "wanting to go into

40 Rissi, "Aufbau," 49; see also Brown, John, cxli; Schnackenburg, John, 477.
41 Brown, John, 192.
Galilee”; in 4:1-4, when “Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard [about his success] . . . he left Judea,” and “he had to pass through Samaria”; in 7:1, “Jesus did not want to walk in Judea”; and in 11:5-6, “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus . . . . then he remained in that place two days. Then after this, he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go again into Judea.’”

The temporal aspects and the mental/emotional modalities associated with these four journeys cause them to stand out from all the other movements of Jesus, and it is not without justification that many scholars have seen symbolic significance in them. As we shall show, it is precisely at 7:1-13 and 11:1-16, the points where these last two journeys begin, that we find another series of concentric episodes occurring which delimit the final two major divisions in the book.

Like the first narrative division which began and ended with John the Baptist (the second and second to last sections of the prologue), this second major narrative division begins and ends with a journey of Jesus (the third and third to last sections of the prologue). Within this opening journey (4:1-45), the discussion between Jesus and a Samaritan woman (4:7-38) picks up the theme of drink from the “wedding at Cana” pericope, which was the third section of the preceding division. To this it adds a discussion about food. In 6:22-59, immediately preceding another, more loosely defined journey (6:60-71), we find another discussion about food and drink. Here then, we have a second example of concentric symmetry similar to what we saw in Section I (1:19-3:36).

In regard to the symmetry of geographical locations in the section, we note that all the action takes place outside of Judea, except for the central pericope (chap. 5). In this respect it is the mirror-image of the preceding unit. In a pattern similar to the first division, the pericopes found within the boundaries of the concentric pattern consist of four acts of power which encircle Jesus’ second monologue. The first two acts of power are healings; the last two are nature miracles. But as in our earlier discussion, we must again pose the question: Does this concentric structure play any larger role in the narrative than a mere ornamental one? Once more the interplay between direct speech and narration allows us to answer this question affirmatively.

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In regard to plot structure, chap. 4 begins on an ominous note, with Jesus leaving Judea because of a rumor that the Pharisees had heard about his success (4:1). In v 2, the narrator tells the reader that, in fact, Jesus and his disciples were doing two different things (Jesus was not baptizing, but his disciples were); in v 8, the narrator states quite unobtrusively that the disciples had departed into the city to buy bread. This is the first time in the story that the narrator has said that the disciples are in a different place than Jesus, and it is only the second time that the verb aperchomai is used in the Gospel (the first time is at 4:3). Like Jesus’ opponents, the disciples are represented as misunderstanding him throughout chaps. 4 and 6; and in 6:16-21, they are again physically separated from him. This will not happen again until chap. 18. Finally, in 6:60-71, some of Jesus’ disciples stop following him. They are put off by his statement, “The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” Nevertheless, a smaller group of twelve disciples continues in his retinue; and when Jesus plaintively asks them if they too will depart, Peter says, “To whom shall we go [apeleusomethaji? You have the words of eternal life.”

This is the first time the verb aperchomai is used in direct speech in the Gospel; and like the narrator’s use of histëmi with John the Baptist in Section I, the narrator first uses this word to describe the disciples’ very normal, mundane activity (4:8). But when the word is picked up and used by the same character or characters in direct speech, it takes on a deeper, more metaphorical nuance and has a way of rounding out and confirming for the reader that person or group’s role in the story. A more intimate group of disciples has

43 This is the first time that Jesus says where he “remains.” In 6:59 the narrator notes that this statement by Jesus was made in a synagogue. Since the synagogue, with its weekly Torah readings, was the focal point of rabbinical life, it is not insignificant that Jesus’ first “in” words regarding the relationship of his disciples to himself should be spoken precisely in the place that, for so many Jews, physically represented devotion to the Torah. Through the conjunction of Jesus’ words and the narrator’s spatial notation, the author obliquely argues that Christian discipleship means replacing the old Torah—center of the synagogue—with Christ himself, the new Torah. See 2 Apoc. Bar. 77:12-16; see also Severino Pancaro, The Law in the Fourth Gospel. The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity according to John (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1975) 452-87.

44 A parallel to this phenomenon is the use of kopiaö in 4:6 and 38. In the first instance, the narrator chooses the word to describe Jesus’ very earthly, physical condition of being tired. But when Jesus speaks the word in 4:38, he uses it in a metaphorical sense. A deeper meaning is thus given to the word, and this reflects back upon the narrator’s choice of the term in v 6, endowing it, too, with a greater significance and bringing a sense of closure to the scene at the well. In 9:1,39, and 41 we find a somewhat similar strategy employed by the author. Again the narrator is the first to use the word typhlos (9:1); although other characters use the word in the subsequent plot developments, Jesus does not employ the expression until v 39. There again he gives the word a much deeper meaning than any of the other characters had given to it. This
now been formed which will remain with Jesus, and the tragic irony will be not only that this group will desert him but also that out of this group will come Jesus' very betrayer (6:71). Finally, in another aspect of plot structure, we note that nowhere in these three chapters do Jesus’ opponents directly address him. Jesus’ dramatic monologue in chap. 5 ends with no one on the scene, and in chap. 6 Jesus’ antagonists, although in his presence, only talk about him among themselves, in the third person.

The question of whether there are any Leitwörter unique to this section of the Gospel is not difficult to resolve. “Life” words are emphasized again and again within this unit: twelve out of the sixteen occurrences of the word zaō in the Fourth Gospel are found in these three chapters; twenty-one out of thirty-eight occurrences of zōē; all three occurrences of zōopoieō, besides nearly all the words associated with eating and drinking: arton, twenty-one out of twenty-four; esthiō, fourteen out of fifteen; pino, nine out of eleven. Examples could be multiplied. Like the plays on the ana-words in the previous section, there are significant plays on the eating-and-drinking Leitwörter (4:7-15,31-34; 6:22-59). They can be used to describe different qualities of the relationship between Jesus and his followers (4:13-14; 6:35,48,56) or his own understanding of his ergon (4:31-38).

Once again, it is clear that an awareness of specific literary conventions has helped us clarify a major division in the Gospel of John. This awareness has also made it possible for us to describe the inner unity of that section in terms of a narrative theology which endows seemingly minor developments of plot with metaphorical significance.

**The Third Ministry Tour: 7:1-10:42**

Like the previous section, this one also opens with one of Jesus’ journeys; this time, however, it is a journey to Jerusalem (7:1-13). Again, we also find a journey at the end of the section, when in 10:40-42 Jesus goes “back beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing.” The narrator’s reference to “where John was first baptizing” creates an inclusion between 1:19 and 10:42 and binds the first half of the Gospel together into a unit distinct from what is to follow (11:1-21:25).

reflects back upon the narrator’s innocuous use of the term in 9:1 and effects a strong sense of closure for the reader.

45 Brown, John, 414. Note also the juxtaposition of internal analepsis (10:40) with internal prolepsis (11:2); see further Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1980) 48-79. The analepsis and prolepsis pull the reader two different ways and effect a dramatic sense of disjunction from the author’s standpoint.
After the opening journey (7:1-13), Jesus goes up into the temple and begins to teach. He leaves the temple (8:57) and does not enter it again until 10:22-39, the episode immediately preceding the journey to the region “beyond the Jordan,” mentioned previously. Again, we find a concentric narrative pattern similar to the ones encountered earlier. Here, as in the second narrative division, the pattern begins with that third section of the prologue—“the journey”—which is followed by Jesus’ entrance into the temple, the fourth section of the second narrative division; it concludes with Jesus’ second entrance into the temple and a final journey beyond the Jordan. In terms of geographic symmetry, all the major action in this section takes place in the temple, except for the two pericopes that lie within the concentric pattern. As in the preceding divisions, these two pericopes again consist of Jesus’ act of power (the healing of the man born blind) and Jesus’ monologue (the discourse on the good shepherd).

In the previous two narrative divisions, we have noted how the narrator’s seemingly innocuous spatial notations mark the geographical locations of major characters in opening scenes. These same words are later picked up in the final scenes of the respective divisions and are used metaphorically in direct speech by the characters. In the opening scene of chap. 7, the narrator for the first time uses verbs of motion to describe Jesus as “in” places: Jesus was “walking about in Galilee, for he did not want to walk about in Judea” (7:1); in 7:14 the narrator states for the first time that Jesus goes into a building and eventually goes out of it again (8:59; cf. 10:23,39). As a matter of fact, in the whole Gospel the only building that the narrator explicitly says Jesus goes into is the temple; and it is only at 7:14 that he says this. (In 10:23 the narrator says “Jesus was walking in the temple, in Solomon’s portico.”)

In 10:38 Jesus makes his famous statement, “the Father [is] in me, and I [am] in the Father,” at which “they again sought to arrest him.” It is not

46 Cf. John 2:23-25; 6:59; 18:20; in neither one of the first two instances are pronouns used with the verbs ἐν and εἶπον. Cf. also 2:14; 5:14; no pronoun is used with ἑυρέσει in 2:14; and although Ἰησοῦς is used with ἑυρίσκει in 5:14, in both these places the narrator’s emphasis is on what or whom Jesus finds in the temple, not on Jesus being in the temple. Although Jesus obviously is in all the places referred to in these passages, the narrator is extremely reticent about explicitly stating that fact.

47 Cf. John 6:21 with Mark 6:51. In Mark, Jesus gets into the boat, but in John “the disciples want to take him into the boat,” and then they were at the shore! A brief comparison between Mark and John reveals that the narrator of the Fourth Gospel rarely describes Jesus’ exact location (cf. also John 4:44 with Mark 6:4). In John 8:35, we read that “the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains”—not “in the house forever”—but simply “forever” (cf. also 18:28-19:16). This way of talking about Jesus’ presence in the story is directly related to the Fourth Gospel’s theology, since Jesus really remains only in the Father or “in his bosom” (1:18; cf. 14:10-11).
insignificant that Jesus says this precisely in the place previously described by him as his Father's house (2:16), the place that also had given rise to the confusing body-as-temple metaphor. Furthermore, it is the same place where Jesus' opponents had first come into verbal contact with him (2:18-20), the place where they would finally address him a second time (8:25; cf. 8:22,48). Throughout this section of the Gospel, then, Jesus' spatial location in the story becomes a metaphor for the author's christology: Jesus is the new temple that replaces the old temple, the visible presence of God among his people (1:14; 14:2). Jesus' "in" statement thus completes that circle of narration/direct speech with which we are now becoming familiar, and this circle sets the stage for subsequent plot developments (11:41-42; 19:7-16).

With respect to major plot developments in this narrative section, we note that false accusations, attempts to arrest Jesus, and allusions to violent death recur with greater frequency and greater emotional intensity here than in any preceding or subsequent unit. References to excommunication and blasphemy, madness and demon possession, illegitimate birth and Samaritan ancestry, lying, deception, moral blindness and sinfulness, arresting, stoning, and killing show that antagonism to Jesus' teaching has reached its zenith. Even Jesus' "parable" of the good shepherd is interspersed with the violent motifs of thieves and robbers. Yet in the midst of this strife, the contrapuntal voice of the narrator reiterates the theme of belief (7:12,40,46; 8:30-31; 9:38; 10:21).

This section also contains the greatest concentration of teaching and direct speech outside of the farewell discourse (John 13–17), and 9:1-34 is virtually the only unit where narration predominates. Related to the theme of Jesus' teaching are the following Leitwörter: oida (twenty-six out of seventy-nine instances of the word are found in this section, or 33% of its occurrences in 21% of the text), ginoskō (eighteen out of fifty-five instances, or 33% of its occurrences), didaskō (six out of nine occurrences), and didachē (two out of three occurrences).

From an analysis of the narrative conventions of symmetry, Leitwörter, and narration/direct speech, we see that this unit, too, has about it an inner cohesiveness that is paralleled by plot and theology.

The Fourth Ministry Tour: 11:1–21:25

Rissi's insightful article on the structure of the Fourth Gospel is the only study that makes a major division in the narrative in the general area of 11:1,
rather than after 12:50. However, he, like Bultmann, believes that 10:40-42 is more closely connected with 11:1-21:25 than with the preceding chapter.\(^{50}\) This is not because of any source-critical theory (as is the case in Bultmann’s argument), but because, for Rissi, a division at 10:40 preserves the particular sequence of Jesus’ journeys for which he is arguing and thus preserves the journeys’ theological significance as well. While we believe Rissi’s narrative divisions are somewhat askew, he is correct in observing that the emphasis put on “the arrival of Jesus’ hour” is certainly misplaced in those commentaries which divide the text after 12:50; for the hour of Jesus arrives in 12:23, not in 13:1. He further notes that it is the resurrection of Lazarus which “das johanneische Passionsdrama unmittelbar in Bewegung setzt”; and the Passover referred to in 13:1, with all its deep theological implications for the writer of the Fourth Gospel, “wirft seine Schatten voraus” as early as 11:55 and 12:1.\(^{51}\) Furthermore, the resurrection of Lazarus is the first miracle in the Gospel where the narrator explicitly says the \textit{Ioudaioi} were present when it was performed (11:19,31,33,36,45).

The term \textit{Ioudaioi} is one which the reader has slowly been coming to associate with Jesus’ antagonists (1:19; 3:25; 5:10,16,18), and it is precisely because of their presence on the scene that Jesus prays to the Father (11:41-42; cf. 10:37-38). It is therefore this miracle, performed in the presence of his opponents with a public prayer witnessing to his Father’s role in the event, which sets in motion the final plot to do away with Jesus and gives rise to his farewell discourse. While chap. 13 begins with the narrator’s meta-historical summary of the story, it cannot represent the major turning point of the plot, since Jesus’ subsequent actions and words have no meaning apart from the significant turn of events which began with 11:1. This brief analysis shows that, on a story level, the interconnections between chap. 13 and the preceding scenes do not allow for the kind of major division that scholars frequently foist upon the text there. Moreover, the position that 13:1 cannot be the major dividing line in terms of the book’s theology can also be demonstrated from analyzing the story in light of the narrative conventions previously discussed.

Like the two preceding sections of the Gospel, this section also begins with a journey (11:1-16). As noted earlier, it is the final journey in a series of four journeys where story time is mentioned (v 6: “He stayed two days longer


\(^{51}\) Rissi, “Aufbau,” 51; see also R. A. Culpepper, \textit{Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design} (Foundations and Facets; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 40, 94-95; and Robert Kysar, \textit{John’s Story of Jesus} (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). Kysar seems to recognize the Lazarus pericope as the major turning point of the story, calling it the “penultimate climax” (p. 55), but he still makes his major narrative division at chap. 13 (pp. 22, 64).
Then after this (. . ."), where narrative time is drawn out, and where modality is expressed. The next event immediately following this journey in chap. 11 is the resurrection of Lazarus (11:17-44). The parallels between this pericope and the resurrection of Jesus have been documented by many scholars, and it is only natural that the resurrection of Jesus should leap to our minds when we recall the previous examples of concentric symmetry in the Fourth Gospel. The resurrection appearances of Jesus comprise the better part of the final two chapters in the book (20:1-21:14). By now, we are not at all surprised to find that these appearances are immediately followed by a final journey of Jesus and his disciples (21:15-23). Like the journey that ended the second narrative division of the Gospel, this journey is more metaphorical than real. Thus, the final concentric structure in the Gospel takes up nearly one-half of the entire narrative and is bounded by the journey/resurrection—resurrection/journey episodes. This does not mean, however, that there are not other important divisions within this section. Here we are in agreement with most scholars who see chaps. 11-12, 13-17, 18-19, and 20-21 as subdivisions within the last half of the Gospel.

At the level of geographical symmetry, the central stories that take place within the city of Jerusalem are framed by stories that take place outside Jerusalem (11:1-12:11; 21:1-25). Unlike the previous divisions, however, there are no acts of power within the central section bounded by the concentric pattern. Here those acts of power (which, like the ones previously narrated, . . .)


53 Our divisions of chaps 18-19 and 20-21, however, differ from those of most scholars, who put chaps 18-20 together and see chap 21 as an epilogue. Chaps 18-19, in fact, have a clearly defined chiastic structure (A) 18 1-8, "in a garden", (B) 18 9-27, "four prophecies fulfilled", (C) 18 28-19 5, "Jesus, King of the Jews", (D) 19 6-12, "Jesus, Son of God", (C') 19 13-23, "Jesus, King of the Jews", (B') 19 24-37, "four prophecies fulfilled", (A') 19 38-42, "in a garden". Against those who would see chap 21 only in terms of a later appended epilogue, we note that the division between chaps 20 and 21 is very similar to the division between chaps 5 and 6: both chaps 5 and 20 end with discussions about belief and written texts, both chaps 6 and 21 open with scenes at the sea of Galilee, both chaps 6 and 21 contain food miracles—in chap 6 the food is bread and fish (bread is emphasized), in chap 21 the food is fish and bread (fish is emphasized), both chapters contain night stories on the lake in which Jesus reveals himself to the disciples, and both chapters end with a discussion about leaving. Furthermore, chaps 20 and 21 have a chiastic structure which ties them together (A) 20 1-10, “Peter and the other disciple”, (B) 20 11-18, “Jesus and Mary’s devotion”, (C) 20 19-29, “Jesus and a group of the disciples”, (D) 20 30-31, “summation of the book”, (C') 21 1-14, “Jesus and a group of the disciples”, (B') 21 15-19, “Jesus and Peter’s devotion”, (A') 21 20-24, “Peter and the beloved disciple"
typify the gift of empowerment that was the theme of the central section of the prologue) now finally become part of the concentric pattern itself. Yet Jesus' major monologues are still to be found at the center of the concentric pattern (14:23-16:16; 17:1-26).

When we turn to look at the use of the narration/direct speech convention in this section, we find that the narrator has peculiarly juxtaposed the verb *agapaō* (11:5) with Mary and Martha's use of *phileō* in direct speech (11:3). For the first time in the Gospel the narrator has used the verb *agapaō*, and it is not until 21:15-17 that the two verbs are again immediately juxtaposed to each other, this time in the discussion between Jesus and Peter.

Once more, the particular nuances given to *agapaō* and *phileō*, when used in direct speech, reflect back onto the narrator's seemingly inconsequential choice of words in 11:3-5 and endue them with new theological significance. The love (*agapan*) that Jesus wishes Peter to have (21:15-17) is a love that the narrator associates with "glorifying God" in death (21:19). Likewise, it is precisely the narrator's intrusive description of Jesus' journey-delaying *agapan* (11:5-6) that ironically brings about Lazarus' death, his subsequent revivification, and sets in motion those plans eventually resulting in Jesus' own death and God's ultimate glory (11:4,16,50-52; 12:23-29,40-43; 17:15). Thus, in a very subtle but nevertheless distinctly observable manner, we see that the completed circle of the narration/direct speech convention plays a very significant role within the development of the Fourth Gospel's theology and story.

The use of the words *agapaō* and *phileō* in the narration/direct speech convention directly relates to the *Leitwörter* of this section. Within this unit we find thirty-five out of thirty-eight occurrences of the verb *agapaō* (twenty-three of them in chaps. 13-17); six out of seven occurrences of the noun *agapē* (all of them in chaps. 13-17); thirteen out of fourteen occurrences of *phileō* (three of them in chaps. 13-17); and five out of six occurrences of the noun *philos* (three of them in chaps. 13-17). Moreover, the narrator gives many more inner views of his characters (11:5,33,35; 12:6; 13:21), and the characters themselves expose their emotions more openly in direct speech (11:11,15; 12:27; 13:34).

Now for the first time in the story, the reader discovers from the voice of the narrator that Jesus loves individuals (11:3), and it is specifically because of his love for two women that he is drawn back to Judea for the final time—a journey that forebodes death (11:8,16). In contrast to the other

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54 This love has also taken on spatial dimensions (note the use of *menein* in 15:9,10; 17:26).
55 The role of women in the Fourth Gospel—its relationship to the Johannine portrayal of salvation and its implications for feminist theology—has not yet been adequately investigated
journeys of Jesus, this is one in which the disciples have an intimate share (11:7-16). The theme of personal intimacy which begins in the second half of the narrative will be developed further in the farewell discourses (chaps. 13-16) and in Jesus' final prayer (chap. 17), where he prepares the disciples for his ultimate exodus. It also reminds us of the movement of thought in the prologue: from a more abstract, impersonal tone in the first half to a more personal emphasis in the second half.

From an analysis of the two narrative conventions of the interplay between narration/direct speech and the use of Leitwörter, we find a metaphorical-theological cohesiveness within the division, which, as in the previous narrative divisions, corresponds to the story division delimited by the concentric symmetry.

Conclusion

Our study has shown that the Fourth Gospel exhibits a symmetrical, concentric structure which is built upon that of the prologue. By following this concentric structure throughout the book, we find that it divides the narrative neatly into five sections, each one larger than the one previous to it, and each one ending by climactically resolving some minor discordant story problem which opened the section. In the process of resolving these seemingly inconsequential issues of the plot, the author adapts the conventions of narration/direct speech and Leitwörter in his own unique way to order the metaphorical-theological structure of the Gospel—a structure centered around the journey motif.

In showing how closely minor plot developments are related to the metaphorical-theological structure of the book, our study also makes it clear that the student of NT narrative can no longer presume that the divisions in the text arrived at by previous scholarship on the basis of source-critical or redaction-critical studies necessarily follow the plot structure or theological

from a narrative-critical perspective, see Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 326-34, esp. her bibliographic references. The mother of Jesus is in some sense the impetus behind Jesus' first revelation of his glory (2:3-5) and a witness at the hour of his glory (19:25-27), the rich, symbolic overtones of these narratives are recognized by numerous scholars (e.g., Brown, John, 107-9) Furthermore, it is because of a woman's witness that the revelation first spreads outside strictly Jewish territory (4:27-30, 39-42). Moreover, it is the desperate plea of two women that sets in motion the events through which salvation will come to the world (11:4-5, cf. 12:1-8). Finally, it is to a woman that Jesus first appears after the resurrection, and it is to her that he gives an authoritative message (20:11-18). Women thus appear at decisive turning points of the plot and have a dominant role in the narrative's theology.
structure of books. Analyses of those divisions must also be undertaken using the tools of narrative criticism, and the result of such investigations may mean that we will have to reassess the way we do NT theology as well. We cannot overlook the peculiar issues which narrative raises for traditional ways of doing theology, and we must somehow address the problem of how story effects it.

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