

THE PROLOGUE OF JOHN
 Clare Priory
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1. INTRODUCTION TO JOHN

Programme

- ▶ **Introduction to John**
- ▶ The history of the Prologue
- ▶ John the Baptist
- ▶ Background in Wisdom and Philosophy
- ▶ Commentary I
- ▶ Commentary II

Sequence

- ▶ Your experience of the Fourth Gospel
- ▶ Curiosities
- ▶ Relationship to the Synoptic traditions
- ▶ Production
- ▶ The Community
- ▶ The Synagogue
- ▶ Location
- ▶ Manuscripts
- ▶ Final edition

Curiosities

- ▶ The Gospel tells the story of Jesus of Nazareth, whose parents are known, who live in Galilee, was crucified in Jerusalem and was buried.
- ▶ The Gospel adds the perspective of the pre-existent Word, who was made flesh. His death was his return to the Father.
- ▶ The Gospel adds into the story the later experience of the community; in particular the separation from the synagogue.

- ▶ Who baptised? 4:2 and 3:22
- ▶ When is an ending not an ending? 20:30-31 + 21:24-25
- ▶ How long is the last speech? 14:31 signals an end but it resumes!
- ▶ Wrong sequence: 11:2 - a story not told until ch.12

- ▶ Misplaced story: 7:53-8:11; added text: 5:3b-4
- ▶ Location: ch.4 (Galilee), ch.5 (Jerusalem), ch.6 (Galilee)
- ▶ Added "bits": 3:31-36; 12:44-50; 13:6-11 / 12:12-20.
- ▶ Glosses: e.g., 4:2, 4:44; 7:39b; 12:16 and so forth.
- ▶ Big addition: ch.21

Synoptic Tradition

- ▶ No birth stories
- ▶ No parables
- ▶ Long symbolic tableaux
- ▶ Long, involved speeches
- ▶ One-to-one encounters
- ▶ Unique characters / characters with special emphasis

- ▶ Three year ministry
- ▶ Five visits to Jerusalem
- ▶ Three Passovers
- ▶ The Twelve are not important

- ▶ The Beloved Disciple is more important than Peter
- ▶ The miracles are more dramatic

- ▶ No parables...but
- ▶ I am the good shepherd
- ▶ I am the true vine
- ▶ I am the light of the world
- ▶ Plus: always in dialogue with the Hebrew Bible

Production

- ▶ Key: John 21
- ▶ Origin of the Tradition: the beloved disciple
- ▶ Origin of the Gospel: evangelist / redactors
- ▶ Origin of the present text: reception history

- ▶ **Stage One**
- ▶ The tradition of words and works of Jesus originating with the BD whom Brown originally identified with John the son of Zebedee in an attempt to combine the tradition of authorship with the evidence of the gospel.
- ▶ Later Brown move from this position, concluding that the internal and external evidence should not be harmonized and that the BD was an outsider from the group of best known disciples.
- ▶ Brown suggests that the BD might have been one of the unnamed disciples of Jn 21:2 originally mentioned as the unnamed disciples of John the Baptist who follows Jesus in Jn 1:35ff.

- ▶ **Stage Two**
- ▶ This stage saw the development of the oral tradition into its distinctive Johannine form.
- ▶ through its use in the teaching and preaching of the Johannine school.
- ▶ under the influence of a leading figure whom we may call the evangelist.

- ▶ **Stage Three**
- ▶ This stage involved the production of a written Gospel by the evangelist.
- ▶ This process involved a limited selection from available oral tradition.
- ▶ The traditions seems to have contained multiple versions of various traditions as well as traditions not included by the evangelist.

- ▶ **Stage Four**
- ▶ This stage was a second edition, also by the evangelist.
- ▶ Indeed there might have been successive editions to meet specific needs such as difficulties posed by the continuance of the disciples of the Baptist and the secret believers within the synagogue.

- ▶ **Stage Five**
- ▶ This saw the edition of the gospel by another hand, as is indicated by Jn 21:24.
- ▶ The intention was, consistent with the Johannine school, not to lose tradition developed in stage two and to meet new problems that had emerged.
- ▶ Such problems relate, e.g., to the death of the BD and the relation of the Johannine Christians to the Petrine group ("Catholic" Christians).

The Community

- ▶ The **first** phase began when a group of disciples of the Baptist became believers and conclude when the believers were excluded from the synagogue. It includes stages one and two in the development of the tradition.
- ▶ The **second** phase saw the writing of the Gospel by the evangelist about 90 CE and stages three and four in the development of the tradition.

- ▶ The **third** phase included the redaction of the Gospel and the writing of the Epistles in about 100 CE. It involved a schism within the community. This corresponds to stage five in the development of the tradition.
- ▶ The **final phase** concluded some time in the second century when the Johannine community and the schismatics both disappeared, absorbed into into the emerging great church or Docetism, Gnosticism and Montanism.

The Synagogue

- ▶ John 9:22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.
- ▶ John 12:42 Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;
- ▶ John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.
- ▶ Writing ca. 200 C.E. Tertullian noted, “the Jews call us Nazarenos” (Against Marcion 4. 8).
- ▶ A century later Eusebius switched to past tense: “We who are now called Christians received in the past the name Nazarenoi”.
- ▶ Writing about 375 C.E. Epiphanius condemns the Nazoraioi, who are not a newly founded group, as a heresy (Panarion 29). Jerome followed Epiphanius: “... since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians” (Epistle 112.13 to Augustine).
- ▶ Epiphanius and Jerome also provide the first clear accounts of the practice in some ancient synagogues of condemning the Nosrim in the blessing or curse on heretics (birkat ha-minim): “... may the Nosrim and Minim speedily perish ...” (according to Cairo Genizah manuscripts).

Location

- ▶ The synagogue is important and powerful
- ▶ Marginal Judaism may flourish
- ▶ JB’s disciples may honour their mentor
- ▶ A place where “gnosis” might develop
- ▶ Greek is spoken
- ▶ A place where Peter and Thomas are prominent
- ▶ Syria fulfils all the conditions
- ▶ The final redaction may have happened in Asia Minor

Manuscripts

- ▶ Most ancient: Papyrus 52 (125 AD)
- ▶ Earliest most complete: Papyrus 66 (2nd century)
- ▶ Also: the great codices (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Beza etc.)
- ▶ P 66
- ▶ Codex Sinaiticus

Final edition

- ▶ A very considered text
- ▶ Two Parts
- ▶ 1-12: The Book of Signs
- ▶ 13-21: The Book of Glory

Prologue	Book of Signs	Book of Glory	Epilogue
1:1-18	1:19-12:50	13:1-20:31	21:1-25

Conversation

2. THE HISTORY OF THE PROLOGUE

Sequence

- ▶ Criteria
- ▶ Prose and poetry
- ▶ Unease with John
- ▶ Original Hymn?
- ▶ Modifications and additions
- ▶ Why the new version?

Criteria

- ▶ Narrative insertions in the poetry
- ▶ Whatever disturbs the rhythm
- ▶ Adjustments to the original which are not part of Johannine theology
- ▶ Adjustments which fit exactly the Evangelist's theology

Prose and poetry

3b and without him not one thing came into being.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 12c who believed in his name 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

Unease with John

- ▶ John the Baptist caused anxiety because:
- ▶ John baptised Jesus
- ▶ Jesus was originally a disciples of John
- ▶ Followers of John the Baptist are significant right up to the end of the NT period
- ▶ They still exist today: the Mandeans.

The Prologue Hymn Source	Wisdom Parallels
¹ In the beginning as <i>Wisdom</i> and <i>Wisdom</i> was with <i>God</i> and <i>God</i> (divine) was <i>Wisdom</i>	Prov 8:22-23; Wis 6:22; Sir 24:9 Pro 8:23.30; Wis 9:4.9
² The same (She) was in the beginning with <i>God</i>	
^{3a} All things through her <i>became</i> (ἐγένετο)	Prov 3:19; 8:30; Wis 7:21-27; 8:1;9:12; 1QS X.11
⁴ What <i>became</i> in her was <i>life</i> And the <i>life</i> was the <i>light</i> of men	Prov 3:18; 8:35 Wis 7:26; Prov 6:23; Test Levi 14:4; (Sir 17:11)
⁵ And the <i>light</i> in the <i>darkness</i> shines And the <i>darkness</i> did not extinguish it (οὐ κατέλαβεν)	Wis 7:29-30
¹⁰ In the <i>world</i> she was and the <i>world</i> through her became (ἐγένετο)	Wis 8:1; Sir 24:6
And the <i>world</i> did not know her.	Prov 1:29; Bar 3:23.28.31
¹¹ Unto her <i>own</i> (τὰ ἴδια) she came, And her <i>own</i> (οἱ ἴδιοι) did not <i>receive</i> (οὐ παρέλαβον) her	Sir 24:8-12; 1 Enoch 42:1-2.

^{12a} But as many as <i>received</i> (ἔλαβον) her,	
^{12b} She gave them authority children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ) to become (γενέσθαι)	Wis 7:14.27; Sir 6:20-22; 15:7
^{14a/b} And Wisdom tabernacled among us (nb. ἐκσῆνωσεν)	Sir 24:8.10 (nb. σκηνή); Wis 9:10; Bar 3:37 (cf. Prov 8:31)
^{14c} and we beheld her glory.	(cf. Sir 24:23); Ba 4:1.

An original hymn to Wisdom?

1	In the beginning was Wisdom and Wisdom was with God and God (divine) was Wisdom
2	The same (She) was in the beginning with God
3a	All things through her became (<i>egeneto</i>)
4	What became in her was life And the life was the light of humans
5	And the light in the darkness shines And the darkness did not extinguish it (<i>ou katelaben</i>)
10	In the world she was and the world through her became (<i>egeneto</i>) And the world did not know her.
11	Unto her own (<i>ta idia</i>) she came, And her own (oi idioi) did not receive (<i>ou parelabon</i>) her
12a	But as many as received (<i>elabon</i>) her,
12b	She gave them authority children of God (<i>tekna theou</i>) to become (<i>genesthai</i>)
14a/b	And Wisdom tabernacled among us

Modifications and additions

- ▶ There is a concentration of non-Johannine vocabulary in 14e, 16-18.
- ▶ The evangelist's addition of 15 severs 14 from 16, where the "we" confession is continued, indicating that the evangelist was editing a pre-existing ext.
- ▶ The Law-Grace antithesis is not Johannine but Pauline, indicating that this editorial material was added in a Hellenistic community where the Pauline antithesis was known and affirmed.

Hence, it is thought that the Hellenistic version of the hymn added 14e, 16-17, and thus identified Christ with Wisdom. The text would then further read:

14e	full of grace and truth.
16	From her fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
17	The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

- ▶ The big insertions are:
- ▶ The Logos Christology;
- ▶ The exclusion of any dualism;
- ▶ The Baptist as witness to the light - in two places

Possible outlines

- ▶ STROPHE 1: The pre-existence of the Word
- ▶ STROPHE 2: From creation through the history of Israel
- ▶ INTERPOLATION: John the Baptist's announcement
- ▶ STROPHE 3: The Incarnation
- ▶ STROPHE 4: The response of the community

1-2	18 The Word with God
3	17 What came through the Word
4-5	16 What was received from the Word
6-8	15 John announces the Word
9-10	14 The Word enters the world
11	13 The Word and his own people
12a	12c The Word is accepted
	12b The Word's gift to those who accepted him

In this scheme, the heart is becoming "children of God". This would have been especially important in discussion with the synagogue. The community claimed to be the true children of God. A descent/ascent model coheres with the Gospel.

Why the new version?

- ▶ The reason for the Logos Christology
- ▶ opposition to Wisdom/Torah ideology
- ▶ opposition to a defective wisdom Christology.
- ▶ Logos serves to unite important themes - creation (by word), prophecy (word) and incarnation in the person of Jesus (word).
- ▶ There is a powerful contrast between JB and Christ.

Conversation

3. JOHN THE BAPTIST

Sequence

- ▶ How is John presented in the Prologue?
- ▶ History
- ▶ Gospel portraits
- ▶ John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel
- ▶ Commentary
- ▶ Conversation

John the Prologue

John 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'")

History

- ▶ JB was a 1st cent. Jewish prophet, proclaiming an eschatological message with some apocalyptic traits.
- ▶ His message was imminent judgement and the way to avoid that was by repentance, illustrated by his baptism.
- ▶ There is an implied critique of the adequacy of the Temple worship.
- ▶ The differences between JB and Qumran are greater than the similarities.
- ▶ He anticipated "the coming one", but it is difficult to be more precise than that - an angel? the messiah? a heavenly figure? God himself?
- ▶ He had a big influence in his day - as the need to execute him illustrates. Still, any idea of a revolt is due to Herod's paranoia rather than to anything JB actually said.
- ▶ The relationship between Jesus and John is hotly disputed - e.g. did Jesus follow his "mentor's" example and baptise?

Gospel Portraits: Mark

- ▶ Galilee
- ▶ 1:4.6.9.14 Preaching/Baptism
- ▶ 2:18 Fasting, disciples
- ▶ 6:14.16-18.20.24.25 Preaching/Death - Herodian marriages!!
- ▶ 8:28 Identity of Jesus
- ▶ 9:11-13 Has Elijah come?
- ▶ Jerusalem 11:30-32 John's authority

Matthew

- ▶ 3:1.4.6.13.16 Preaching, Baptism [diff. wording]
- ▶ 4:12 Timing of Jesus' ministry
- ▶ 9:14 Fasting, disciples
- ▶ 11:2.4.7.11-13.18 John's inquiries [only in Mt/Lk]
- ▶ 14:2.3.4.8.10.13 Death of John, Timing of Jesus retreat
- ▶ 16:14 Identity of Jesus
- ▶ 17:10-13 JB = Elijah [not in Lk/ v.13 is unique]
- ▶ 21:25.26.32 Authority of Jesus/John
- ▶ 28:19 Baptism ordered (?)

Luke

- ▶ 1:13.17.60.63 Birth, Naming, like Elijah
- ▶ 3:2.15.16.20 Preaching (against Herod), Baptism, is he the Christ?
- ▶ 3:21 John in prison
- ▶ 3:21 Jesus' Baptism reported by participle

- ▶ 5:33 Fasting, John's disciples
- ▶ 7:18-20.22.24.28-29.33 John's inquiry, John's identity
- ▶ 9:7-9.19 John's death abbreviated (!) [omit/history]
- ▶ 11:1 Jesus' prayer - cf. John (!)
- ▶ 16:16 Exact position of John
- ▶ 20:4.6 Authority of John and Jesus

Mark	Q	Matthew	Luke	John	GN
-	-	-	birth -	-	-
(Elijah)	?	Elijah! ?		"best man"	
baptises	passive	uneasy	relegates	Not Elijah	-
-	Mid-time?	OT End	Mid-time	omits	refuses
Death	prison	Death	omits	Voice -	
disciples	disciples	disciples/		omits -	
	unbelief			disciples/	
				converted	-
baptism	baptism	baptism	(baptism)	(baptism)	
repent	repent	repent	repent	omits	
forgiveness	judgement	kingdom	forgiveness	omits	
fierce		fierce	reasonable		

Fourth Gospel

- ▶ 1:6-8.15 Prologue: comparisons [only in Jn]
- ▶ :19-23 Witness of John: not Elijah/ prophet
- ▶ :24-28 The "voice" [= citation]
- ▶ :29-34 Reports descent of the Spirit [= report]
- ▶ :35-42 Jesus "detaches" John's disciples
- ▶ 3:22-27 Jesus baptising (!); JB not in prison [4:1]
- ▶ 4:1-2 Jesus did/did not baptise; makes more disciples than John [tension!]
- ▶ 5:33-36 Jesus is greater than John
- ▶ 10:40-42 Jesus goes back to where John had been

John 1:19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"

as the prophet Isaiah said.

John 1:24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 They asked him, "Why then are you baptising if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26 John answered them, "I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27 the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." 28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptising.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him; but I came baptising with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it

remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

John 1:35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 42 He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

John 3:22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptised. 23 John also was baptising at Aenon near Salim because water was abundant there; and people kept coming and were being baptised 24 —John, of course, had not yet been thrown into prison.

John 3:25 Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew. 26 They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him." 27 John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. 28 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him.' 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease."

John 4:1 Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptising more disciples than John" 2 —although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptised— 3 he left Judea and started back to Galilee. 4 But he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

John 5:31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. 33 You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. 34 Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. 36 But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. 37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

John 10:40 He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. 41 Many came to him, and they were saying, "John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." 42 And many believed in him there.

Religious Epilogue

- ▶ Mandeans
- ▶ One God; baptism, Sunday, a prophet called John
- ▶ Dualistic and Gnostic: "Manda" = "wisdom"

- ▶ Heavily influenced by Judaism
- ▶ The Baptist is a greater prophet than Jesus
- ▶ Baptism is celebrated repeatedly

Commentary

John 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'")

Conversation

4. BACKGROUND IN WISDOM AND PHILOSOPHY

Sequence

- ▶ Wisdom Literature
- ▶ Lady Wisdom
- ▶ Stoicism and the Logos
- ▶ Philo of Alexandria
- ▶ Benefits for reading the Prologue
- ▶ Conversation

Wisdom Literature

- ▶ (a) WL as a wide phenomenon

<i>Bible</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Source</i>
Proverbs	Mesopotamia	Story of Ahiqar	ANET 427-430
Job	Mesopotamia	Bab. Theodicy	ANET 601-604
Proverbs	Egypt	various	ANET 504-524
Qoheleth	Egypt	Dispute over Suicide	ANET 405-7

▶ The characteristics of wisdom books of the Bible

- a) a minimum of interest in salvation history (Torah and prophets)
- b) little interest in Israel as a nation or in its history
- c) a questioning attitude to the problems of life: suffering, inequality, death etc.
- d) a search for how to master life and understand how humans should behave before God;
- e) a great interest in the universal human experiences which affect all people and not just believers in YHWH.
- f) A joy in the contemplation of creation and God as Creator.
- g) shift of interest from the community to the individual.

Lady Wisdom

- ▶ *Proverbial and Tractate Wisdom*
- ▶ Job 28
- ▶ Prov 1-9
- ▶ Sir 24
- ▶ Avot 1:2
- ▶ Baruch 3:9-44
- ▶ Wisdom 7:7-9:18

Job 28

- Job 28:1** "Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold to be refined.
- 2** Iron is taken out of the earth,
and copper is smelted from ore.
- 3** Miners put an end to darkness,
and search out to the farthest bound
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.
- 4** They open shafts in a valley away from human habitation;
they are forgotten by travelers,
they sway suspended, remote from people.
- 5** As for the earth, out of it comes bread;
but underneath it is turned up as by fire.
- 6** Its stones are the place of sapphires,
and its dust contains gold.

- Job 28:7** "That path no bird of prey knows,
and the falcon's eye has not seen it.
- 8** The proud wild animals have not trodden it;
the lion has not passed over it.

Job 28:9 “They put their hand to the flinty rock,
and overturn mountains by the roots.
10 They cut out channels in the rocks,
and their eyes see every precious thing.
11 The sources of the rivers they probe;
hidden things they bring to light.

Job 28:12 “But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
13 Mortals do not know the way to it,
and it is not found in the land of the living.
14 The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’
and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’
15 It cannot be gotten for gold,
and silver cannot be weighed out as its price.
16 It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,
in precious onyx or sapphire.
17 Gold and glass cannot equal it,
nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.
18 No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal;
the price of wisdom is above pearls.
19 The chrysolite of Ethiopia cannot compare with it,
nor can it be valued in pure gold.

Job 28:20 “Where then does wisdom come from?
And where is the place of understanding?
21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living,
and concealed from the birds of the air.
22 Abaddon and Death say,
‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’

Job 28:23 “God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place.
24 For he looks to the ends of the earth,
and sees everything under the heavens.
25 When he gave to the wind its weight,
and apportioned out the waters by measure;
26 when he made a decree for the rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt;
27 then he saw it and declared it;
he established it, and searched it out.
28 And he said to humankind,
‘Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding.’”

Proverbs 8:22-31

Prov 8:22 The LORD created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
23 Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
24 When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—
26 when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world’s first bits of soil.
27 When he established the heavens, I was there,

28 when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
 when he made firm the skies above,
 when he established the fountains of the deep,
 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
 so that the waters might not transgress his command,
 when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
 30 then I was beside him, like a master worker;
 and I was daily his delight,
 rejoicing before him always,
 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world
 and delighting in the human race.

Sirach 24

Sir 24:1 Wisdom praises herself,
 and tells of her glory in the midst of her people.
 2 In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth,
 and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory:
 3 "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High,
 and covered the earth like a mist.
 4 I dwelt in the highest heavens,
 and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.
 5 Alone I compassed the vault of heaven
 and traversed the depths of the abyss.
 6 Over waves of the sea, over all the earth,
 and over every people and nation I have held sway.
 7 Among all these I sought a resting place;
 in whose territory should I abide?
 8 "Then the Creator of all things gave me a command,
 and my Creator chose the place for my tent.
 He said, 'Make your dwelling in Jacob,
 and in Israel receive your inheritance.'
 9 Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me,
 and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.
 10 In the holy tent I ministered before him,
 and so I was established in Zion.
 11 Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place,
 and in Jerusalem was my domain.
 ...
 and those who work with me will not sin."
 23 All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God,
 the law that Moses commanded us
 as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.

Avot

Simeon the Righteous was one of the last survivors of the great assembly.
 He would say: "On three things does the world stand:

"On the Torah

"and on Temple service,
 "and on deeds of loving kindness

Baruch 3:9-4:4

Bar 3:9 Hear the commandments of life, O Israel;
 give ear, and learn wisdom!
 10 Why is it, O Israel, why is it that you are in the land of your enemies,
 that you are growing old in a foreign country,
 that you are defiled with the dead,
 11 that you are counted among those in Hades?

- 12 You have forsaken the fountain of wisdom.
 13 If you had walked in the way of God,
 you would be living in peace forever.
- 14 Learn where there is wisdom,
 where there is strength,
 where there is understanding,
 so that you may at the same time discern
 where there is length of days, and life,
 where there is light for the eyes, and peace.
- 15 Who has found her place?
 And who has entered her storehouses?
- 16 Where are the rulers of the nations,
 and those who lorded it over the animals on earth;
 17 those who made sport of the birds of the air,
 and who hoarded up silver and gold
 in which people trust,
 and there is no end to their getting;
 18 those who schemed to get silver, and were anxious,
 but there is no trace of their works?
- 19 They have vanished and gone down to Hades,
 and others have arisen in their place.
- 20 Later generations have seen the light of day,
 and have lived upon the earth;
 but they have not learned the way to knowledge,
 nor understood her paths,
 nor laid hold of her.
- 21 Their descendants have strayed far from her way.
 22 She has not been heard of in Canaan,
 or seen in Teman;
- 23 the descendants of Hagar, who seek for understanding on the earth,
 the merchants of Merran and Teman,
 the story-tellers and the seekers for understanding,
 have not learned the way to wisdom,
 or given thought to her paths.
- 24 O Israel, how great is the house of God,
 how vast the territory that he possesses!
- 25 It is great and has no bounds;
 it is high and immeasurable.
- 26 The giants were born there, who were famous of old,
 great in stature, expert in war.
- 27 God did not choose them,
 or give them the way to knowledge;
 28 so they perished because they had no wisdom,
 they perished through their folly.
- 29 Who has gone up into heaven, and taken her,
 and brought her down from the clouds?
- 30 Who has gone over the sea, and found her,
 and will buy her for pure gold?
- 31 No one knows the way to her,
 or is concerned about the path to her.
- 32 But the one who knows all things knows her,
 he found her by his understanding.
 The one who prepared the earth for all time
 filled it with four-footed creatures;
- 33 the one who sends forth the light, and it goes;
 he called it, and it obeyed him, trembling;
- 34 the stars shone in their watches, and were glad;
 he called them, and they said, "Here we are!"

- They shone with gladness for him who made them.
- 35 This is our God;
no other can be compared to him.
- 36 He found the whole way to knowledge,
and gave her to his servant Jacob
and to Israel, whom he loved.
- 37 Afterward she appeared on earth
and lived with humankind.
- Bar 4:1** She is the book of the commandments of God,
the law that endures forever.
All who hold her fast will live,
and those who forsake her will die.
- 2 Turn, O Jacob, and take her;
walk toward the shining of her light.
- 3 Do not give your glory to another,
or your advantages to an alien people.
- 4 Happy are we, O Israel,
for we know what is pleasing to God.

The Wisdom of Solomon

Preface: Praise of Wisdom: 6:1-21

Introduction: (6:22-25)

(2) Solomon's Speech (7:1-8:21)

(3) Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom (9:1-18)

(4) Transition Section: Wisdom saves her own.

Structure

- (a) Solomon like other humans (7:1-6)
- (b) Solomon. prayed and got W. and riches (7:7-12)
- (c) S. prays for eloquence about Wisdom. (7:13-22a)
- (d) The Nature of Wisdom (7:22b-8:1)
- (c*) S. sought Wisdom, source of knowledge (8:2-8)
- (b*) S. sought Wisdom. as counsellor and comfort (8:9-16)
- (a*) Solomon realises Wisdom. is a gift from God (8:17-21)

Wis 7:22b

- There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy,
unique, manifold, subtle,
mobile, clear, unpolluted,
distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen,
irresistible,
- 23 beneficent, humane,
steadfast, sure, free from anxiety,
all-powerful, overseeing all,
and penetrating through all spirits
that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle.
- 24 For wisdom is more mobile than any motion;
because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.
- 25 For she is a breath of the power of God,
and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty;
therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.
- 26 For she is a reflection of eternal light,

- a spotless mirror of the working of God,
and an image of his goodness.
- 27 Although she is but one, she can do all things,
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;
in every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them friends of God, and prophets;
- 28 for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.
- 29 She is more beautiful than the sun,
and excels every constellation of the stars.
Compared with the light she is found to be superior,
- 30 for it is succeeded by the night,
but against wisdom evil does not prevail.
- 8:1 She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other,
and she orders all things well.

Summary

- ▶ Wisdom has a divine origin
- ▶ She existed before creation and had a role in creation
- ▶ Wisdom is identified with the divine Spirit and is immanent in the world
- ▶ Wisdom grounds the coherence and permanence of the cosmos
- ▶ Wisdom has a special mission to human beings: revelation and blessing
- ▶ Wisdom is part of Israel: Shekinah / Torah/ Salvation history
- ▶ Wisdom is a gift, which calls for discipline
- ▶ Wisdom is personified as a woman, as complementary

Stoicism and the Logos

- ▶ Stoicism is an ancient philosophy, encompassing a spiritual view of the universe, the promotion of virtue and the practice of spiritual exercises.
- ▶ It became the most popular of the popular philosophies in antiquity.
- ▶ Many thoughtful people were adherents such as Cicero, Augustus, Seneca and, most famously of all, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, success to Hadrian.
- ▶ According to the Stoics, the universe is a material, reasoning substance, known as God or Nature, which the Stoics divided into two classes, the active and the passive. The passive substance is matter, which “lies sluggish, a substance ready for any use, but sure to remain unemployed if no one sets it in motion.”
- ▶ The active substance, which can be called Fate, or Universal Reason (**Logos**), is an intelligent aether or primordial fire, which acts on the passive matter.
- ▶ *The universe itself is God and the universal outpouring of its soul; it is this same world’s guiding principle, operating in mind and reason, together with the common nature of things and the totality that embraces all existence; then the foreordained might and necessity of the future; then fire and the principle of aether; then those elements whose natural state is one of flux and transition, such as water, earth, and air; then the sun, the moon, the stars; and the universal existence in which all things are contained.*
- ▶ Chrysippus, in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, i.39
- ▶ Stoic philosophy began with Zeno of Citium c. 300 BCE, in which the **logos** was the active reason pervading and animating the universe. It was conceived of as material, and is usually identified with God or Nature.
- ▶ The Stoics also referred to the seminal **logos** (“**logos spermatikos**”), or the law of generation in the universe, which was the principle of the active reason working in inanimate matter. Humans, too, each possess a portion of the divine **logos**.
- ▶ The Stoics took all activity to imply a **Logos**, or spiritual principle. As the operative principle of the world, the **Logos** was **anima mundi** to them, a concept which later influenced Philo of Alexandria, although he derived the contents of the term from Plato.

- ▶ The divine logos is both physical and spiritual.
- ▶ It does not stand transcendent outside of the material world, but imbues and deifies it, although in differing degrees of purity.
- ▶ By looking at the beauty and appropriate development of the world, it is possible to develop a natural perception of God.
- ▶ Their monotheistic pantheism led the Stoics also to acknowledge the cosmos and parts of it (e.g., the planets) as gods (in the sense of manifestations of the one deity) move in that direction.

Philo of Alexandria

- ▶ Philo of Alexandria
- ▶ Philo (20 BCE – 50 CE), a Hellenised Jew, used the term **Logos** to mean an intermediary divine being, or demiurge.
- ▶ Philo followed the Platonic distinction between imperfect matter and perfect Form, and therefore intermediary beings were necessary to bridge the enormous gap between God and the material world.
- ▶ The **Logos** was the highest of these intermediary beings, and was called by Philo “the first-born of God.” Philo also wrote that “**the Logos of the living God is the bond of everything, holding all things together and binding all the parts, and prevents them from being dissolved and separated.**”
- ▶ The Angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) was identified with the **Logos** by Philo, who also said that the **Logos** was God’s instrument in the creation of the universe.

Benefits for reading the Prologue

- ▶ The ancient hymn to **Wisdom** makes greater sense as the background to our present John 1:1-18.
- ▶ The use of **Logos** was already present in Judaism — as we see from Philo of Alexandria.
- ▶ **Logos** has a tremendous resonance for educated readers of the period.
- ▶ It helps us feel the shock of “**An the word became flesh**” — just as shocking as Paul’s “spiritual body” in 1 Cor 15.
- ▶ All this makes sense too of another text in the NT (next slide):

Col 1:11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Col 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers— all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Conversation

5. COMMENTARY I

Sequence

- ▶ Structure of the Prologue
- ▶ Roots in Jewish Wisdom
- ▶ Narrative sequence
- ▶ Contemporary reflection
- ▶ Prayer

Structure of the Prologue

A (vv. 1-5): The relation of the Logos/Word to God, to creation, to humans

B (vv. 6-8): The witness of John the Baptist

C (vv. 9-11) The coming of the Light/Logos and his/its rejection

D (vv. 12-13): The benefits of belief in the Logos/Word

C' (v. 14) The coming of the Logos and his reception

B' (v. 15): The witness of John the Baptist

A' (vv. 16-18): The relation of the Logos/Word to humans, to recreation, to God

<p>A vv. 1-5</p>	<p>A¹ vv. 16-18</p>
<p>John 1:1 <u>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God.</u> 2 <u>The Word was with God in the beginning.</u> 3 <u>All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.</u> 4 <u>In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind.</u> 5 <u>And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it.</u></p>	<p>John 1:16 <u>For we have all received from his fullness one gracious gift after another.</u> 17 <u>For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ.</u> 18 <u>No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known.</u></p>
<p>B vv. 6-8</p>	<p>B¹ v. 15</p>
<p>John 1:6 <u>A man came, sent from God, whose name was John.</u> 7 <u>He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might believe through him.</u> 8 <u>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.</u></p>	<p>John 1:15 <u>John testified about him and shouted out, "This one was the one about whom I said, 'He who comes after me is greater than I am, because he existed before me.'</u></p>
<p>C vv. 9-11</p>	<p>C¹ v. 14</p>
<p>John 1:9 <u>The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.</u> 10 <u>He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognise him.</u> 11 <u>He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him.</u></p>	<p>John 1:14 <u>Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory – the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.</u></p>

D

vv. 12-13

John 1:12 But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children **13**—children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God.

Roots in Jewish Wisdom

(1) Pre-existence is common to both the Johannine Logos and Jewish Wisdom (John 1:1: “In beginning was the Word” // Proverbs 8:22; “The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old”; Sirach 1:4: “Wisdom was created before all things”; 24:9: “From eternity, in the beginning, he created me”).

(2) Both are said to be “with God” (John 1:1: “and the Word was with God” // Proverbs 8:30: “then I was beside him, like a master workman”; Wisdom of Solomon 9:4: “the wisdom that sits by thy throne”).

(3) Both are said to be divine (John 1:1: “and the Word was God” // Wisdom of Solomon 7:25-26: “For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; ... she is a reflection of eternal light, ... and an image of his goodness”).

(4) Both are described as the instrument of creation (John 1:3: “All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” // Prov 8:30: “I was beside him like a master workman”; 3:19: “The LORD by wisdom founded the earth”; Wisdom of Solomon 7:22: “wisdom, the fashioner of all things”; 9:1-2: “who hast made all things by thy word, and by thy wisdom hast formed man”).

(5) Both are called the source of life (John 1:4: “In him was life” // Prov 8:35: “he who finds me finds life”; Baruch 4:1b: “All who hold her fast will live”) and light (John 1:4: “and the life was the light of men” // Wisdom of Solomon 7:26: “she is a reflection of eternal light”; Sirach 24:27: “It makes instruction shine forth like light”; Baruch 4:2: “walk toward the shining of her light”).

(6) Neither can be overcome by darkness/evil (John 1:5: “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it” // Wisdom of Solomon 7:29-30: “Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail”). The parallels settle the translation problem of 1:5. In this context *katelaben* means “overcome,” not “comprehend.”

(7) Both continually come into the world (John 1:9: “The true light which enlightens every person was continually coming [present tense, periphrastic participle] into the world” // Wisdom of Solomon 6:13, 16: “She hastens to make herself known ... she goes about seeking those worthy of her”; 7:27: “in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God”; Sirach 24:6-7: “in the whole earth, and in every people and nation, I have gotten a possession. Among all these I sought a resting place; I sought in whose territory I might lodge”; 1 Enoch 42:1: “Then Wisdom went out to dwell with the children of the people”) and are in the world (John 1:10: “He was in the world” // Wisdom of Solomon 8:1: “She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other”). The parallels, together with the present tense (continually coming) in 1:9, point to a general revelation to all people. This idea would be compatible with other early Christians from Paul (Rom 1:19-20) to Justin (1 Apology 5).

(8) Both are rejected by humans generally (John 1:10b: “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not”; 1:11b: “and his own people received him not” // 1 Enoch 42:2: “but she found no dwelling place. So Wisdom returned to her place and she settled permanently among the angels”; Baruch 3:20-21: “they have

not understood her paths, nor laid hold of her. Their children have strayed far from her way”).

(9) Both create a relation with God among those who are receptive (John 1:12-13: “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” // Wisdom of Solomon 7:27: “she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets, for God loves nothing so much as the man who lives with wisdom”; “because of her I shall have immortality”), saving humans (Wisdom of Solomon 9:18: “and were saved by wisdom”).

(10) Both appeared on earth and lived among humans, tabernacling among them (John 1:14a: “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” // Baruch 3:37: “she appeared upon earth and lived among humans”; Sirach 24:8, 11-12: “Then the Creator of all things gave me a commandment, and the one who created me assigned a place for my tent. And he said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob’... in the beloved city he gave me a resting place. So I took root in an honored people”).

(11) Both possess glory as monogenes/unique (John 1:14, 18: “we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only son [monogenes] from the Father ... the only [monogenes] Son/God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” // Wisdom of Solomon 7:22, 25: “Wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me. For in her there is a spirit that is ... unique [monogenes] For she is ... a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty”).

(12) Both know God and make him known (John 1:18: “No one has ever seen God; the only Son/God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” // Wisdom of Solomon 8:4: “For she is an initiate in the knowledge of God”; 9:9-10: “With thee is wisdom, who knows thy works and was present when thou didst make the world, and who understands what is pleasing in thy sight and what is right according to thy commandments. Send her forth ... that she may be with me ... and that I may learn what is pleasing to thee”).

- ▶ In antiquity, the same reality could be given different names.
- ▶ In ancient Judaism, Wisdom and the Word of God are sometimes used interchangeably for the same reality.
- ▶ Logos is masculine and it fits with Jesus as a male.
- ▶ Logos was shorthand for the Gospel in early Christianity.
- ▶ Logos aligns the Jesus event with creation.
- ▶ Logos brings Jesus closer to the prophet.

- ▶ Key question: to what or whom do these verses refer?
- ▶ John 1:9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognise him. 11 He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him.
- ▶ John 1:14 Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.

Narrative Sequence

A (vv. 1-5) and A' (vv. 16-18) should be read together. The pre-existent divine one who was the instrument of creation and the source of life and light (vv. 1-5) is also the revealer (the unique son, the divine one, the one who is in the bosom of the Father), the source of grace and truth from whom the Johannine community has received in abundance (vv. 16-18). For the prologue, the one who made you is the one who saves you. The Creator and the Redeemer are the same God.

B (vv. 6-8) and B' (v. 15) may also be read together. John the Baptist is not the light but is a witness to the light (vv. 6-8). His testimony is to the superiority of the Son, based upon the preexistence of the Son (v. 15).

C (vv. 9-11) and C' (v. 14) also need to be read together. Prior to the Incarnation, the Word was active in the world both in general revelation to all people (vv. 9-10; cf. Justin, 1 Apology 46; 2 Apology 10) and in special revelation to Israel (v. 11; cf. Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 126-28). In neither case did he find acceptance (vv. 10b, 11b). When the Word became flesh and tabernacled among humans, however, he found a positive response among a community that beheld his glory (v. 14; cf. 2:11), "glory as of a *monogenes*/only Son from the Father." For the prologue, revelation is general (to all people) and particular (to Israel before Jesus and in Jesus).

D (vv. 12-13) is the centrepiece of the prologue: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God." Are we to think of "receiving him" as encompassing all three forms of revelation (to all prior to the Incarnation; to Israel prior to the Incarnation; through Jesus in the Incarnation), or only a positive response to the Incarnation? In the Johannine literature, "believing in his name" is an activity of positive response to the Incarnate Word (John 3:18; 1 John 3:23; 5:13). This response results in a new birth from God (v. 13).

Contemporary Reflection

- ▶ Transcendent and immanence
- ▶ Closeness of God to human reality
- ▶ Who can "tell the story"?
- ▶ What is the story?

Prayer

We praise you, gracious God, for the glad tidings of peace, the good news of salvation: your Word became flesh and we have seen his glory. Let the radiance of that glory enlighten the lives of those who celebrate his birth.

Reveal to all the world the light no darkness can extinguish, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in the splendour of eternal light, God for ever and ever. Amen.

6. COMMENTARY II

Sequence

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ The Prologue as Introduction
- ▶ Incarnation
- ▶ Commentary
- ▶ Contemporary reflection
- ▶ Prayer

Introduction

- ▶ **Cicero**
- ▶ One's opening remarks, though they should always be carefully framed and pointed and epigrammatic and suitably expressed, must at the same time be appropriate to the case in hand; for the opening passage contains the first impression and the introduction of the speech, and this ought to charm and attract the hearer straight away. (De or. 2.315)
- ▶ **Kinds of language**
- ▶ The grand, or dignified, style (*grave*) stirs the emotions by making liberal use of figures of speech, rhythmic organisation, periodic construction, and devices such as impersonating the voice of the dead. It is most appropriate for ceremonial addresses, such as praise of a god or ancestors, and it allows the speaker to display the full range of his or her rhetorical skill.
- ▶ The middle style (*medium*), appropriate to deliberative speeches and narrative, aims to please and alternates use of plain language with more charming expressions such as metaphor or metonymy and figures of speech that play with word order.
- ▶ The plain style (*subtile*) seeks to teach with clarity, vividness, and persuasiveness. Its sentences tend to be staccato, and its vocabulary unadorned.
- ▶ **Encomium**
- ▶ An encomium is a composition in prose or poetry written to praise a human being, event, or idea. In the Greco-Roman traditions, encomia were often composed to celebrate the victory of an athlete or for recital at a funeral. The proper composition of the encomium is a common theme in the classical rhetorical handbooks. Aphthonius the Sophist includes the following subtopics:
 - ▶ Origins: nation, homeland, ancestors, and parents' city
 - ▶ Upbringing: habits, skills, and principles of conduct
 - ▶ Deeds: of mind (e.g., prudence), body (e.g., beauty), and fortune (e.g., friends)
 - ▶ Comparison: superiority to someone or something worthy of praise
 - ▶ Epilogue: something fitting a prayer (Progymn. 35–36)

The Prologue as Introduction

- ▶ At the literary level
 - (1) the Word was in the beginning (vv. 1-2; cf. 8:58);
 - (2) in him was life (v. 4a; cf. 5:26);
 - (3) the light of men (v. 4b; cf. 8:12 and ch. 9);
 - (4) John the Baptist (vv. 6-8, 15; cf. 3:27-30);
 - (5) the new birth (vv. 12-13; cf. 3:3, 5);
 - (6) disciples behold his glory (v. 14b; cf. 2:11; 17:24);
 - (7) only the Son who is divine has seen God and can make him known (v. 18; cf. 3:16; 6:46; 20:28).
- ▶ At the theological level
 - (1) The Creator and the Redeemer are the same God. This would have answered at least a potential problem near the time when John was put in its final form.

(2) The divine agent of creation, who has continually been attempting to communicate with creatures by means of general and special revelation but with little success, became flesh (*sarks egeneto*).

Incarnation

- ▶ What does this mean in a Johannine context
- ▶ When was it believed to have taken place?

Meaning

- ▶ In the Johannine epistles there was a recurring attempt to insure belief that Jesus Christ continued in the flesh even after the resurrection: e.g., 2 John 7 (the use of a present participle for “coming” in the flesh to imply continuation through time); 1 John 1:1 (the appeal to post-resurrection sight and touch to guarantee that the risen one was still flesh); 4:2 (the use of a perfect participle, “having come and remaining” in flesh); and 5:6-8 (the emphasis on water and blood as opposed to water only to insure that Jesus Christ’s coming extended through his death).
- ▶ In three of four cases, the attempt to guarantee that the Saviour’s coming in flesh extended through his passion and beyond is expressed by the use of the verb “come” in a variety of ways (2 John 7: present tense; 1 John 4:2: perfect tense; 5:6-8: by water and blood).

Timing

(1) at Jesus’ conception by the Spirit (so the textual variant at 1:13: “the one not born of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”

(2) At the Baptism, when the Spirit descended upon him.

(3) After Jesus’ glorification when his abiding presence indwells the community of his disciples.

- ▶ Canonical reading: at conception
- ▶ Narrative reading: at Baptism
- ▶ In any case, the Word enjoyed pre-existence up to the moment of “dwelling” among us.
- ▶ In any case, a reality of continued significance for believers.

Consequences

(1) The creator and the redeemer are the same God;

(2) the Incarnation implies a permanent union of pre-existent Word and the human Jesus (that took place probably in connection with the water of John’s baptism);

(3) since like is known only by like, the divine Revealer is able to make God known to creatures whom he has given the power to become children of God;

(4) the religion of the Johannine community is not a “cultural religion” but a highly thought-out prophetic and “sectarian” alternative.

Commentary

A vv. 1-5	Notes
<p>John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. 2 The Word was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 <i>In him was life</i>, and the life was the light of mankind. 5 And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning • Word • With (“pros”) • Life • Mastered

B vv. 6-8	Notes
John 1:6 A man came, sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent • Witness / testify • Believe • Not the light
C vv. 9-11	Notes
John 1:9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognise him. 11 He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming • In/into • Not recognise • His own • Receive
D vv. 12-13	Notes
John 1:12 But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children 13 —children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All • Received • God’s children • Not, or, or • by God
C ¹ v. 14	Notes
John 1:14 Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became • Flesh • Residence (<i>eskēnosen</i>) • Glory • Grace and Truth
B ¹ v. 15	Notes
John 1:15 John testified about him and shouted out, “This one was the one about whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is greater than I am, because he existed before me.’”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shouted out • After / greater • Existed • Before

A ¹ vv. 16-18	Notes
<p>John 1:16 For we have all received from his fullness one gracious gift after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fullness • Grace upon grace • Law through Moses • Grace and truth • No one • The only one • Made known

Contemporary Reflection

- ▶ Claims
- ▶ Shock then and now
- ▶ Uniquely Christian teaching
- ▶ Who is God?
- ▶ Who are we?
- ▶ Credibility today

Prayer

God most high, your only Son embraced the weakness of our flesh to give us the power to become your children; your eternal Word chose to dwell among us, that we might live in your presence.

Grant us a spirit of wisdom to know how rich is the glory you have made our own, and how great the hope to which we are called in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit in the splendour of eternal light God for ever and ever.