

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

SOURCE CRITICISM AND THE NEW LITERARY CRITICISM

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CAMILLE FOCANT



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PROGYMNASTIC RHETORICAL COMPOSITION AND PRE-GOSPEL TRADITIONS A NEW APPROACH

During the last decade, a number of NT interpreters have reintroduced Hellenistic-Roman rhetorical treatises into the context of interpretation of the gospels, and some of this work is opening a remarkably new interpretational approach¹. For various reasons, however, the inner workings of this new approach have not become generally known and understood. The goal of this essay is to explain the potential of this kind of rhetorical criticism for analysis of pre-gospel traditions. Since it is impossible to explain the potential of the method with any success unless the reader understands the data in the ancient rhetorical treatises that provide the insights for the analysis, this essay attempts to perform two tasks.

First, this essay correlates key passages in Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata* (Preliminary Exercises), the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Hermogenes' *Progymnasmata* with passages in the gospels to exhibit the rationale for using insights from these documents in interpretation of New Testament gospels. Since the *ad Herennium* was written ca. 84 B.C.E., Theon's *Progymnasmata* 50-100 C.E., the gospels ca. 65-100 C.E., and Hermogenes' *Progymnasmata* late second century C.E.², all of these documents show us primary culture-transmitting activities in Mediterranean society prior to and during the beginnings of Christianity. Theon's *Progymnasmata*, written in Greek and directly contemporary with the gospels, is a central document for our new understanding. It is truly remarkable that a critical edition and English translation of this document has been made only recently and still is not readily available to interpreters of the gospels³.

Second, the essay uses insights from these rhetorical treatises to

1. See D.F. WATSON, *The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: A Bibliography*, in *JETS* 31/4 (1988) 465-472, pp. 469-470; *The New Testament and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: A Bibliographical Update*, in *JETS* 33/4 (1990) 513-524, pp. 517-520.

2. For the dates of Theon and Hermogenes, see R.F. HOCK - E.N. O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*. Volume I. *The Progymnasmata*, Atlanta, GA, Scholars, 1986, pp. 64, 156. For the date of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, see G.A. KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1984, p. 12.

3. Available in J. BUTTS, *The "Progymnasmata" of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary*, Ann Arbor, MI, University Microfilms International, 1987. Chapter 3 of Theon's treatise, on the Chreia, is available in HOCK-O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* (n. 2), pp. 61-112.

probe pre-gospel traditions. Perhaps it comes as a surprise to the reader that rhetorical criticism would have any goal other than interpretation of the final form of a text. The subject that occupies the *Progymnasmata*, however, is the "re-performance" of well-known traditions in Mediterranean society and culture⁴. While some of the traditions come from "well-known", that is orally transmitted, stories and sayings in the culture; others have been gleaned from specific authors and documents Theon cites. The topic of discussion and the examples the author has composed in the *Progymnasmata*, then, are based on written and oral sources, and this makes the treatise a gold mine for the interpreter of the New Testament gospels. Rhetorical critics who limit their analysis to "literary rhetoric", that is, rhetoric "restrained" by literary boundaries⁵, often have little or no interest in documents like this from antiquity. They bring social and cultural values and meanings to the gospel traditions intuitively and unconsciously from their own modern environment without programmatically investigating first century Mediterranean values and meanings. Rhetorical critics who are influenced by both ancient and modern rhetorical treatises and theories, in contrast, consciously "revalue" restrained literary rhetoric by exploring multiple dimensions of social and cultural meanings in the context in which the traditions were initially composed and recomposed. It is no surprise, then, that some recent rhetorical critics have gleaned insights from the *Progymnasmata* contemporary with the gospels to analyze pre-gospel traditions⁶. In turn, these treatises provide the basis for this author's willingness to address, at the *Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense* honoring Frans Neiryck (18-20 August 1992), the potential of rhetorical criticism for analysis of pre-gospel traditions.

The twofold undertaking in this essay unfolds in four sections. The first section explains the place of analysis of pre-gospel traditions and sources in the context of modern rhetorical analysis. The second section explains how a rhetorical understanding of gospel traditions differs decisively from an approach that juxtaposes oral culture with scribal culture, as literary-historical critics traditionally have done and still do. The third section describes the rhetorical nature of culture-transmitting tradition in three steps: (a) the inner rhetorical nature of traditional forms; (b) abbreviation, expansion, and addition to traditional forms;

4. See chapters I and II of Theon's *Progymnasmata*.

5. See B. VICKERS, *Introduction*, in ID. (ed.), *Rhetoric Revalued* (Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 19), Binghamton, NY, Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, 1982, pp. 13-39; cited by W. WUELLNER, *Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?*, in *CBQ* 49 (1987) 448-463, p. 453.

6. B.L. MACK, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1988; B.L. MACK - V.K. ROBBINS, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*, Sonoma, CA, Polebridge Press, 1989; and B.L. MACK, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, Minneapolis, MN, Fortress, 1990.

and (c) elaboration of traditional forms. The fourth section presents guidelines for analysis of pre-gospel traditions based on insights gleaned from the discussions and displays of progymnastic rhetorical composition in Hellenistic-Roman rhetorical treatises from late Mediterranean antiquity.

I. ANALYSIS OF PRE-GOSPEL TRADITIONS AND SOURCES AS INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The desire of interpreters to use rhetorical criticism to analyze pre-gospel traditions arises out of the confrontation between the literary-historical paradigm, which dominated the last half of the nineteenth century and the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, and the socio-rhetorical paradigm, which is grounded in modern sociolinguistics and cultural anthropology. The confrontation results from the privileging of sequential effect (diachrony) by the literary-historical paradigm versus the privileging of social and cultural interrelation (synchrony) by the socio-rhetorical paradigm. Each paradigm has an interest in the phenomena privileged by the other, but each paradigm embeds the privileged data of the other in the context of its own privileged data. To analyze pre-gospel traditions, literary-historical criticism engages first in source analysis; then it approaches the final text with a system of evaluation the interpreter develops in the context of a distinction between words that were reproduced from sources and words that were newly written to produce the final text. Socio-rhetorical criticism, in contrast, explores first the social and cultural argumentation in the final form of the text; then it approaches source analysis and sequential effect with a system of evaluation the interpreter develops in the context of the social and cultural meanings at work in the argumentation.

A socio-rhetorical critic approaches a text very much like a cultural anthropologist like Clifford Geertz approaches the interpretation of a village. The approach presupposes that a text, like culture, has "thickness" that results from complex webs of signification⁷. What one sees at first, or even later, is only part of the deeply-textured networks of signification that constitute that village or text. Another presupposition of the approach comes from sociolinguists like M.A.K. Halladay and Roger Fowler who perceive language to be a social product and tool⁸. Language functions in a context of utterance, a context of culture, and

7. C. GEERTZ, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books, 1973; *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York, Basic Books, 1983.

8. M.A.K. HALLADAY, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, University Park Press, 1978; R.M. FOWLER, *Literature as Social Discourse: the Practice of Linguistic Criticism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1981; R. HODGE - G. KRESS, *Social Semiotics*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1988.

a context of reference⁹. This means that words are always actively in dialogue with one another¹⁰. To restrain words to their "context of utterance", as traditional literary critics do, is an arbitrary restraint for particular ideological purposes. In contrast, socio-rhetorical critics "revalue" the words through multidimensional explorations of meanings and values in the context of their composition and transmission.

The metaphor of texture informs the socio-rhetorical critic as he or she pursues the "thickness" of texts. This metaphor guides the interpreter to four arenas of texture in texts: (a) inner texture; (b) intertexture; (c) social and cultural texture; and (d) ideological and theological texture¹¹. New Testament interpreters who have used modern literary criticism during the 1970's and 80's have focussed primarily on the inner texture of texts¹². In the same environment, however, new vitality has surged into the investigation of "intertexture" in texts¹³, and this pursuit has been supported by the turn of secular literary criticism to a "new historicism" informed by anthropological conceptions of literature¹⁴. From the perspective of postmodern literary criticism, source analysis is a form of intertextual analysis¹⁵. The

9. R.M. FOWLER, *Linguistic Criticism*, Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 85-101.

10. See V.K. ROBBINS, *The Reversed Contextualization of Psalm 22 in the Markan Crucifixion: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis*, in *The Four Gospels 1992. FS Frans Neirynck*, 2 (BETL, 100), Leuven, University Press, 1992, pp. 1191-1183, esp. 1181-1183.

11. V.K. ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, Paperback edition with a new introduction, Minneapolis, MN, Fortress, 1992, pp. xxvii-xxxviii.

12. V.K. ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher* (n. 11), pp. xxix-xxxviii. See D.O. VIA, Jr., *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1967; N. PERRIN, *What is Redaction Criticism?*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1969; W.A. BEARDSLEE, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1970; R.C. TANNERHILL, *The Sword of His Mouth* (SBL Semeia Supplements, 1), Philadelphia, PA, Fortress - Missoula, MT, Scholars, 1975; N.R. PETERSEN, Jr., *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1978; D. RHOADS - D. MICHIE, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1982; R.A. CULPEPPER, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1983; S.D. MOORE, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge*, New Haven, CT - London, Yale University Press, 1989; M.A. POWELL, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, Minneapolis, MN, Fortress, 1990.

13. E.g., H. KOESTER - J.M. ROBINSON, *Trajectories through Early Christianity*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1971; J.S. KLOPPENBORG, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1987; B.L. MACK, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1988; J.D. CROSSAN, *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative*, San Francisco, CA, Harper & Row, 1988.

14. L. PATTERSON, "Literary History", in F. LENTRICCHIA - T. McLAUGHLIN (eds.), *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, Chicago, IL - London, University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 250-262; D. SIMPSON, *Literary Criticism and the Return to 'History'*, in *Critical Inquiry* 14 (1988).

15. S. DRAISMA (ed.), *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings. Essays in honour of Bas van Iersel*, Kampen, Kok, 1989.

intertexture of the source analyst is restrained by the inner texture of the text itself and by texts that exist by dint of historical accident. Source critics may restrict their comparison to other extant texts to establish genetic relationships among them, or they may create source "intertexts" on the basis of boundaries they create in the inner texture of the text. Form and redaction critics expand this kind of analysis by creating more nuanced source boundaries, distinguishing certain wording in the text from other wording to create "written or oral" sources¹⁶. In both instances, a certain kind of "intertext" is created by the analyst and brought into the context of interpretation of the final text.

The socio-rhetorical critic not only expands the boundaries of intertextual analysis of the text but also programmatically investigates the social, cultural, and ideological texture of the text. The result is that, in a context where some New Testament critics perform "restrained" rhetorical analysis in the form of "New Critical" and formalist literary critical approaches¹⁷, socio-rhetorical critics are using culturally oriented approaches that are informed by postmodern literary criticism and "revalued" rhetorical criticism¹⁸. A socio-rhetorical critic programmatically brings social, cultural, and ideological meanings and issues into an environment of inner textual and intertextual analysis. The approach privileges the arguments in the final form (inner texture) of the text by going to them first; then the approach programmatically "revalues" the rhetoric through various kinds of intertextual, social, cultural and ideological forms of analysis.

The task in this essay, then, is to turn to pre-gospel traditions with insights from culturally informed literary and rhetorical approaches. We begin with matters of inner texture, in order to understand the context of utterance for the words in the text. Then we turn to intertexture, where the issue is the context of reference - those things to which the words purport to refer in relation to other people's referential use of the words. Literary-historical criticism contributes especially to the exploration of intertexture, but its boundaries are intentionally limited by "genetic" presuppositions. Socio-rhetorical criticism expands the boundaries to include texts that present meanings, values, and uses

16. See an excellent recent example in J. LAMBRECHT, *John and Jesus in Mark 1.1-15. Markan Redaction of Q?*, in *NTS* 38 (1992) 337-356.

17. E.g., R.C. TANNERHILL, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts. A Literary Interpretation*. Vol. 1: *The Gospel according to Luke*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1986; N.R. PETERSEN, Jr., *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1985; M.A. TOLBERT, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective*, Minneapolis, MN, Fortress, 1989.

18. E.g., MACK, *A Myth of Innocence* (n. 6); C. MYERS, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis, 1988; B.B. SCOTT, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*, Minneapolis, MN, Fortress, 1989.

of words in the cultural environment without proof of a genetic relation to the foregrounded text. The intertextual use of words opens the issue of the context of culture; thus the analysis moves next to the social and cultural texture of the text. To these contexts, which have been the special domain of sociolinguists, socio-rhetorical criticism adds the ideological texture of the text. In this context, approaches that emphasize socio-ideological perspectives in the text, in interpretation, and in the present interpreter – approaches that use terms like ideology, liberation, feminist, or African-American – contribute greatly to the exploration of the ideological texture of the text¹⁹.

II. RHETORICAL CULTURE

As an interpreter approaches a New Testament text, a foremost issue is the kind of “writing” culture the interpreter creates as a context for understanding the words in the document. Literary-historical criticism presupposes a polarity between oral culture and scribal culture for its context of analysis. In contrast, socio-rhetorical criticism presupposes that rhetorical culture dominated Mediterranean society during the first part of the common era and rhetorical culture provided the environment in which early Christians produced their first literature. One of the primary characteristics of a rhetorical culture is lively interaction between oral and written composition²⁰. Only during the last half of the second century did a scribal culture that resisted rhetorical composition as it reformed the gospel traditions begin to dominate the transmission of early Christian literature²¹. For this stage of transmission the prevailing literary-historical methods of analysis are highly informative. To impose such a scribal environment on the context in which the New Testament gospels initially were written and re-written is a fundamental error.

Source analysis in New Testament texts has been guided, and for the most part still is guided, by textual criticism that imagines a rhetorically disengaged scribal culture as the context for the production of the New Testament gospels. Such a scribal culture expects scribes to move their eyes back and forth from manuscript to manuscript as they copy word for word, intentionally modifying wording only for editorial purposes; or to write down what they hear as another person reads from a manuscript or performs a speech. This approach envisions the relation of texts to one another and to non-extant sources in an environment of

19. ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher* (n. 11), pp. xxiii-xxxviii.

20. T.M. LENTZ, *Orality and Literacy in Hellenic Greece*, Carbondale – Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.

21. H. KOESTER, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern* (TU, 65), Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1957; *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development*, Philadelphia, PA, Trinity Press International, 1990, pp. 31-43.

accurate copying of texts, and this is the context of culture imagined by literary-historical critics. This image of the context of writing has informed text, source, form, and redaction critics alike. Frans Neirynck, who is being honored in the context of the Colloquium for which this essay is being written, has contributed majestically from this point of view, and his contributions are so comprehensive that they are helping us to open a new era in Gospel analysis and interpretation²².

Wittingly or unwittingly, literary-historical criticism during the twentieth century has been based on a “printing press” mentality, a way of thinking about texts that presupposes a stability in their wording that emerges only when it is possible to produce a significant number of texts with the same exact wording. While Werner Kelber made this point almost a decade ago, the responses to his observations have been less than satisfactory, and he himself has not had a model to lead him out of this conceptuality as he has performed his own analysis²³. John Dominic Crossan has approached source criticism creatively during the last decade, combining “deconstructive” criticism with a postmodern “game” approach. His production of “text fragments”²⁴ and his reversal of genetic relationships between canonical and extracanonical gospels²⁵ have helped us to see deep weaknesses in traditional source analyses and to have glimpses of another mode of analysis²⁶. But his approach is not guided by a “pre-printing press” approach. Rather, it is guided by experiences in a technologically driven “information culture”. People in this kind of culture are in a context of “information saturation”. In an environment characterized by “the more information the better”, individuals and teams begin to play with information, juxtaposing fragments – “sound bites” – in a gamelike manner that makes rules from day to day that befit their socio-ideological location. This kind of cultural setting does share much in common with the rhetorical nature of first and second century Mediterranean society, but

22. See esp. F. NEIRYNCK, *Duality in Mark. Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction* (BETL, 31), Leuven, University Press, 1972, 21988 (revised edition, with Supplementary Notes, pp. 215-252); ID., in collaboration with T. HANSEN and F. VAN SEGBROECK, *The Minor Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark with a Cumulative List* (BETL, 37), Leuven, University Press, 1974; *Evangelica Gospel Studies – Études d'évangile. Collected Essays* (BETL, 60), Leuven, University Press - Peeters, 1982; *Evangelica II. 1982-1991. Collected Essays* (BETL, 99), Leuven, University Press - Peeters, 1991.

23. W.H. KELBER, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1983.

24. J.D. CROSSAN, *In Fragments. The Aphorisms of Jesus*, San Francisco, CA, Harper & Row, 1983.

25. J.D. CROSSAN, *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative*, San Francisco, CA, Harper & Row, 1988.

26. V.K. ROBBINS, *Picking Up the Fragments: From Crossan's Analysis to Rhetorical Analysis*, in *Forum* 1/2 (1985) 31-64.

there also are significant differences that must be incorporated into our approach to the New Testament gospels.

As Kelber has addressed Crossan's work, he has succumbed to Elizabeth Eisenstein's presupposition that our challenge is to grasp the intellectual and conceptual apparatus of the kind of scribal activity that intentionally refrains from rhetorical composition²⁷. Eisenstein's image emerges from medieval culture, not the Hellenistic-Roman period of late antiquity. Both Kelber and Crossan consider our task to be to understand the relation of oral culture to scribal culture. But this is not correct. Our challenge is to understand the kind of scribal activity that does not refrain from progymnastic rhetorical composition, that is, the level of rhetorical composition that re-performs written and oral sources and traditions in the manner we see in the *Progymnasmata*.

For our purposes, then, it is important to distinguish between an oral culture, a rhetorical culture, and a scribal culture. The differences are as follows: (a) an oral culture has no written literature in view; (b) a rhetorical culture is aware of written documents, uses written and oral language interactively, and composes both orally and scribally in a rhetorical manner²⁸; (c) a scribal culture focuses on "copying" and "editing" either oral statements or written texts²⁹. Our task is to interpret the composition and re-composition of the gospels in a rhetorical culture prior to the advent of the scribal culture in which they were transmitted from the third century onward.

III. PROGYMNASTIC RHETORICAL COMPOSITION

The purpose of this section is to introduce a new way of envisioning the relation of gospel accounts to one another. The rhetorical manuscripts entitled *Progymnasmata* (Preliminary Exercises), the first of which comes from the first century of our era, and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which comes from the first quarter of the first century B.C.E., are the most important ancient documents for helping us to develop this new approach³⁰. The rhetorical perspective of Aelius Theon of Alexandria, which comes from our earliest extant *Progymnasmata*, reveals three basic aspects of culture-transmitting tradition: (a) its inner rhetorical nature; (b) rhetorical recitation, expansion, and addition; and (c) rhetorical elaboration. Theon's discussion of the chreia reveals these aspects most vividly.

27. E. EISENSTEIN, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, Cambridge, University Press, 1979; W.H. KELBER, *From Aphorism to Sayings Gospel and from Parable to Narrative Gospel*, in *Forum* 1/1 (1985) 23-30.

28. LENTZ, *Orality and Literacy in Hellenic Greece* (n. 20).

29. V.K. ROBBINS, *Writing as a Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels*, in D.F. WATSON (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, Sheffield, JSOT, 1991, pp. 142-168.

30. HOCK-O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* (n. 2).

1. *The Inner Rhetorical Nature of Culture-Transmitting Tradition*

The chapter on the chreia (speech or action attributed to a specific personage) in the *Progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon of Alexandria gives special insight into the rhetorical nature of culture-transmitting tradition. First, culture-transmitting tradition uses specific personages for its context of communication. Oral and written recital of action and speech attributed to specific persons in the situations of their daily lives is a central medium for transmitting the data, values, attitudes, and concepts of Mediterranean culture. The widespread presence of this medium in extant early Christian literature shows that significant sectors of early Christianity transmitted Christian traditions in the forms of the public rhetorical media. Sectors of early Christianity that generated idiosyncratic forms of tradition – forms disconnected from attributed action and speech – found it difficult to get their traditions into "public" discourse. These traditions were "esoteric" rather than "public". The kinds of Christian traditions that "lived on" in the culture were attributed to important personages or linked to speech and action so attributed.

A second primary characteristic of culture-transmitting tradition was its argumentative nature. Theon discusses the argumentative qualities of the chreia, the fable (μῦθος), and the narrative (διήγημα) in three individual chapters after his discussion of introductory matters. Incidentally, there is no chapter on the maxim (γνώμη) in Theon's *Progymnasmata*. This is an error that persists among some New Testament interpreters, probably as a result of emphases in the works of Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann. Since Theon placed the chapter on the chreia first, he exhibited the argumentative nature of culture-transmitting tradition most fully in the chapter on the chreia and referred back to this chapter in the later chapters. For this reason, the chapter on the chreia has been given pride of place among New Testament interpreters who have been developing an approach to early Christian literature that uses insights from its discussions³¹.

From Theon's rhetorical perspective, argumentative aspects of culture-transmitting tradition are apparent from its manner of presentation. Chreiai, for example, can be expressed in the manner of: (a) a maxim; (b) an explanation; (c) a witty remark; (d) a syllogism; (e) an enthymeme; (f) an example; (g) a wish; (h) a symbol; (i) an ambiguous statement; (j) a change of subject; (k) or a combination of these. Since all of these are topics of discussion among ancient rhetoricians, the reader begins to see that even the smallest units of popular tradition are argumentative and the arguments cover a spectrum from the most basic

31. See the account and the bibliography in MACK, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (n. 6).

aspects of life to the most cognitive aspects of reflective thinking. Since these inner attributes of chreiai are pervasive in the gospels, Theon's discussion of the inner rhetorical nature of the chreia is highly important for analysis of the gospels and of pre-gospel traditions. The evidence for this has been produced at length in other contexts and is readily available³², so it will not be exhibited here.

2. *Recitation, Internal Composition, and Addition to Culture-Transmitting Tradition*

Another phenomenon Theon exhibits in his discussion of the chreia is the freedom, in fact the encouragement, in a rhetorical culture to use one's own wording when transmitting speech and action attributed to specific personages in the culture. Theon's first exercise with the chreia – the recitation (*ἀπαγγελία*) – reveals the manner in which a rhetorical environment presupposes that writing is thoroughly interactive with speaking. When a grammateus had gleaned attributed action or speech from written or oral tradition, he performed it orally as a chreia for his students and they wrote it “clearly in the same words or in others as well”³³. In this initial exercise, writers are encouraged to be comfortable transmitting as much or as little verbatim wording as they wish. The requirement is clarity, not verbatim repetition. This exercise exhibits an approach to tradition that is different from a “copying” environment. When writers have learned this exercise, they move their eyes and ears freely away from a “source” as they “compose the tradition anew” with as much or as little verbatim replication as they wish. The extensive word variation in our gospels, in a context of extensive verbatim replication, is to be explained by this approach in the culture³⁴.

A presupposition that culture-transmitting traditions invite, in fact require, continual reformulation, just like speaking does, guides the exercises with the chreia. Theon reveals this in his statement that “not any of the good elements of rhetoric are at all useful unless each one practises writing every day for himself”³⁵. The presupposition behind this is that people engage in oral argumentation each day. This argumentation contains significant repetition of previous statements in a context of significant variation. In order to learn to argue well, Theon says, a person should not only speak each day but also write each day. Performing oral and scribal activity in this way creates a rhetorical

32. V.K. ROBBINS, *The Chreia*, in D.E. AUNE (ed.), *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (SBL Sources in Biblical Study, 21), Atlanta, GA, Scholars, 1988, pp. 13-16; MACK-ROBBINS, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (n. 6); MACK, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (n. 6).

33. HOCK-O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* (n. 2), p. 95.

34. ROBBINS, *Writing as a Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels* (n. 29).

35. BUTTS, *The “Progymnasmata” of Theon* (n. 3), p. 107.

culture – one in which speech is influenced by writing and writing is influenced by speaking. Recitation, then, is the base of a rhetorical culture. People know that certain traditions exist in writing. They also know that all traditions, whether oral or written, need to be composed anew to meet the needs of the day. Each day as they spoke, they were interacting with written traditions; whenever they wrote, they were interacting with oral traditions. This interaction characterized their thinking, their speaking, and their writing.

After the recitation exercise, Theon presents exercises designed to cultivate skills for internal composition of the chreia and for addition of brief comments after the chreia. These exercises feature different inflections (cases and numbers), addition of comment, addition of objection, expansion, and abbreviation. These activities exhibit the manner in which a rhetorical culture can work creatively with the beginnings and endings of culture-transmitting traditions. The beginning may be modified to fit any context of speech, linking a tradition to subject, possessor, object, indirect object, person addressed, singular, dual, or plural (the inflection exercise). The ending may be extended by adding a comment after it that supports or objects to the argument in the chreia (the commentary and objection exercises). Then, the internal length of the chreia may be shortened as much as possible or expanded by amplifying the questions, responses, acts, and experiences in it (the abbreviation and expansion exercises)³⁶. These exercises introduce, cultivate, and nurture a consciousness of and a facility with the internal argumentative potential of culture-transmitting traditions and the effect of brief comments after them.

3. *Elaboration of Culture-Transmitting Tradition*

Theon reveals yet another possibility with culture-transmitting traditions – their rhetorical elaboration (*ἐργασία*). Elaboration “works” a tradition toward the form of an essay or speech that presents a complete argument. Theon's seventh and eighth exercises discuss a first level of elaboration that emerges closely out of the environment of internal composition and addition of a comment. This level of composition amplifies the comment after the chreia by providing arguments for each part of the chreia, using topics, amplifications, digressions, and character delineations as the opportunity arises. This approach to chreia elaboration expands the statement in the chreia without adding significantly new rhetorical figures to its argumentation.

An example of first-level elaboration exists in Mk 7,14-23. The key verses for understanding the nature of the elaboration are as follows:

36. ROBBINS, *The Chreia* (n. 32).

Setting

Introduction: 14 And he [Jesus] called the people to him again, and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand:

Chreia: 15 there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him".

Quaestio: 17 And when he had entered the house, and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable.

Argument for First Part of the Chreia

Character delineation: 18 And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that

Restatement of first part: whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him,

Rationale using a contrary: 19 since it enters, not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?"

Parenthetical comment (minor digression): Thus he declared all foods clean.

Argument for Second Part of the Chreia

Restatement of second part: 20 And he said, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man.

Rationale using amplification: 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, evil eye, slander, pride, foolishness.

Conclusion

23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man (RSV).

The progression of the elaboration from "each part of the chreia" and its use of "amplifications, digressions, and character delineations" reveal that this sequence is an instance of first-level elaboration. There is an initial recital of a chreia in 7,14-15. Then there is a restatement of the first part of the chreia in 7,18, followed by a rationale based on a contrary and a parenthetical comment in 7,19. After this, there is a restatement of the second part of the chreia in 7,20, followed by a rationale that uses amplification in 7,22 and a conclusion in 7,23. On the one hand, the comments after the initial chreia "rework" the chreia. On the other hand, elaboration does not add significantly new rhetorical figures to the initial chreia. The elaboration adds character delineations, rationales, a contrary, a brief digression, and an amplified list. All of this restates the thought in the initial abbreviated chreia in a mode closely related to the expansion of a chreia³⁷. The form elaborates the chreia rather than simply expanding it, however, since a chreia is stated initially, then the thought in the chreia is worked into a speech that contains a sequence of argumentative steps and a conclusion. An expanded chreia, in contrast, delays the completion of the chreia statement to the end, so that the statements between the beginning and the ending all are part of the expanded chreia statement. In Mk 7,23,

37. HOCK-O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* (n. 2), pp. 100-103.

the conclusion restates the final part of the initial chreia, much like a speech concludes a topic that has been introduced at the beginning and developed in the body of the speech. The elaboration has added to the chreia by amplifying the initial assertions in a context of rationale and restatement.

There is a second level of elaboration that does not limit itself to expansion but introduces artistic and inartistic arguments that support the initial statement. Burton Mack has discussed this second level of rhetorical elaboration in great detail, and this form was especially directive for the analyses throughout *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospel*³⁸. In this instance the elaboration develops the meaning of the chreia with distinctly additional rhetorical figures that move the reasoning toward a complete argument.

The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* contains two discussions and exhibitions of argumentation that present the procedure and goal of second-level elaboration exceptionally well. Since these texts appear not to be readily available to most New Testament interpreters, the texts are displayed here, both in Latin and English translation. The presence of these texts also will allow us to refer to aspects of rhetorical composition that otherwise are unfamiliar to interpreters trained in the disciplines of form and redaction criticism. The first selection displays the basic constituents of a complete argument. This means, an argument that is perceived by members of Hellenistic-Roman society to be persuasive because it gives an experience of having moved satisfactorily from a particular beginning point to a conclusion. There are specialized forms of argumentation in subcultures and minicultures; when the requirements for that kind of argumentation have been reached, the hearer considers the argument to have hit its target. If the arguments in the gospels have a significant relation to complete arguments as defined by Hellenistic-Roman rhetoricians, then the gospels were not functioning in an environment of specialized ethnic rhetoric, but in a wider cultural environment that included significant aspects of more generalized Hellenistic-Roman forms of argumentation. The text that presents the nature of the complete argument in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is as follows:

28 Ergo absolutissima et perfectissima est argumentatio ea quae in quinque partes est distributa: propositionem, rationem, rationis confirmationem, exornationem, complexionem. Propositio est per quam ostendimus summam quid sit quod probari volumus. Ratio est quae causam demonstrat verum esse id quod intendimus, brevi subiunctione. Rationis confirmatio est ea quae pluribus argumentis corroborat breviter expositam rationem. Exornatio est qua utimur rei honestandae et conlocupletandae causa,

38. MACK-ROBBINS, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (n. 6). Also see MACK, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (n. 6).

confirmata argumentatione. Complexio est quae concludit breviter, colligens partes argumentationis.

Hisce igitur quinque partibus ut absolutissime utamur, hoc modo tractabimus argumentationem:

XIX. "Causam ostendemus Ulixi fuisse quare interfecerit Aiacem.

"Inimicum enim acerrimum de medio tollere volebat, a quo sibi non iniuria summum periculum metuebat.

"Videbat illo incolumi se incolumem non futurum; sperabat illius morte se salutem sibi comparare; consueverat, si iure non potuerat, iniuria quavis inimico exitium machinari, cui rei mors indigna Palamedis testimonium dat. Ergo et metus periculi hortabatur eum interimere a quo supplicium verebatur, et consuetudo peccandi maleficii suscipiendi removebat dubitationem.

"Omnes enim cum minima peccata cum causa suscipiunt, tum vero illa quae multo maxima sunt maleficia aliquo certo emolumento inducti suscipere conantur. Si multos induxit in peccatum pecuniae spes, si conplures scelere se contaminarunt imperii cupiditate, si multi leve conpendium fraude maxima commutarunt, cui mirum videbitur istum a maleficio propter acerrimam formidinem non temperasse? Virum fortissimum, integerrimum, inimicitarum persequentissimum, iniuria lacessitum, ira exsuscitatum homo timidus, nocens, conscius sui peccati, insidiosus voluit interimere; acerrimum homo perfidiosus inimicum incolumem esse noluit. Cui tandem hoc mirum videbitur? Nam cum feras bestias videamus alacres et erectas vadere ut alteri bestiae noceant, non est incredibile putandum istius quoque animum ferum, crudelem atque inhumanum cupide ad inimici perniciem profectum, praesertim cum in bestiis nullam neque bonam neque malam rationem videamus, in isto plurimas et pessimas rationes semper fuisse intellegamus.

"Si ergo pollicitus sum me daturum causam qua inductus Ulixes accesserit ad maleficio, et si inimicitarum acerrimam rationem et periculum metum intercessisse demonstravi, non est dubium quin confiteatur causam maleficii fuisse". (*Rhet ad Her*, II.xviii.28-xix.30).

The most complete and perfect argument, then, is that which is comprised of five parts: the Proposition, the Reason, the Proof of the Reason, the Embellishment, and the Résumé. Through the Proposition we set forth summarily what we intend to prove. The Reason, by means of a brief explanation subjoined, sets forth the causal basis for the Proposition, establishing the truth of what we are urging. The Proof of the Reason corroborates, by means of additional arguments, the briefly presented Reason. Embellishment we use in order to adorn and enrich the argument, after the Proof has been established. The Résumé is a brief conclusion, drawing together the parts of the argument.

Hence, to make the most complete use of these five parts, we shall develop an argument as follows:

PROPOSITION

XIX "We shall show that Ulysses had a motive in killing Ajax.

RATIONALE

"Indeed he wished to rid himself of his bitterest enemy, from whom, with good cause, he feared extreme danger to himself.

CONFIRMATION OF THE RATIONALE

"He saw that, with Ajax alive, his own life would be unsafe; he hoped by the death of Ajax to secure his own safety; it was his habit to plan an enemy's destruction by whatsoever wrongful means, when he could not by rightful, as the undeserved death of Palamedes bears witness. Thus the fear of danger encouraged him to slay the man from whom he dreaded vengeance, and, in addition, the habit of wrong-doing robbed him of his scruples at undertaking the evil deed.

EMBELLISHMENT

29 "Now not only do all men have a motive even in their least peccadillos, but certainly they are attracted by some sure reward when they enter upon crimes which are by far the most heinous. If the hope of gaining money has led many a man to wrongdoing, if from greed for power not a few have tainted themselves with crime, if numerous men have trafficked for a paltry profit with arrant deceit, who will find it strange that Ulysses, when under stress of acute terror, did not refrain from crime? A hero most brave, most upright, most implacable against his foes, harassed by a wrong, roused to anger - him the frightened, malevolent, guilt-conscious, guileful man wished to destroy; the treacherous man did not wish his bitter enemy to stay alive. To whom, pray, will this seem strange? For when we see wild beasts rush eagerly and resolutely to attack one another, we must not think it incredible that this creature, too - a wild, cruel, inhuman spirit - set out passionately to destroy his enemy; especially since in beasts we see no reasoning, good or bad, while he, we know, always had designs, ever so many, and ever so base.

RÉSUMÉ

30 "If, then, I have promised to give the motive which impelled Ulysses to enter upon the crime, and if I have shown that the reckoning of a bitter enmity and the fear of danger were the factors, it must unquestionably be acknowledged that he had a motive for his crime. (*Rhet ad Her*, II.xviii.28-xix.30)³⁹.

A proposition plus a rationale presents an enthymeme (a syllogism with a premise). Therefore, the most complete and perfect argument, according to the *ad Herennium*, begins with enthymematic reasoning. The confirmation of the reason begins with a restatement of the rationale, presents an argument from the example of Palamedes, and ends with a conclusion. This makes the confirmation a complex rhetorical unit in and of itself. Without analyzing the embellishment in detail, we should notice that the final sentence in the unit introduces an argument from the analogy of wild beasts who rush eagerly and resolutely to attack one another. A concluding sentence then ends the argument.

39. [Cicero], *Ad C. Herennium* (LCL, 403), Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1954, pp. 106-113.

In addition to the way in which the argument proceeds, it is important to notice the comments immediately following the quotation. The author indicates that "there is a time when the *Résumé* should be dispensed with", "there is a situation, too, in which the Embellishment should be omitted", and "if the argument is brief and the matter also slight or insignificant, then both the Embellishment and the *Résumé* should be left out" (*Rhet ad Her*, II.xix.30). This means that a complete argument should have an enthymematic argument with some kind of confirmation of the rationale. If it seems appropriate, an embellishment and/or a conclusion may be added to the argument.

The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* also presents an elaboration of a theme in seven parts. It soon becomes clear that this elaboration exhibits additional figures that may be present in a complete argument:

Hoc modo igitur septem partibus tractabitur – ut ab eiusdem sententiae non recedamus exemplo, ut scire possis quam facile praeeptione rhetoricae res simplex multiplici ratione tractetur:

"Sapiens nullum pro re publica periculum vitabit ideo quod saepe, cum pro re publica perire noluerit, necesse erit cum re publica pereat; et quoniam omnia sunt commoda a patria accepta, nullum incommodum pro patria grave putandum est.

"Ergo qui fugiunt id periculum quod pro re publica subeundum est stulte faciunt; nam neque effugere incommoda possunt et ingrati in civitatem reperiuntur. At qui patriae pericula suo periculo expetunt, hi sapientes putandi sunt, cum et eum quem debent honorem rei publicae reddunt, et pro multis perire malunt quam cum multis. Etenim vehementer est iniquum vitam, quam a natura acceptam propter patriam conservaris, naturae cum cogat reddere, patriae cum roget non dare; et cum possis cum summa virtute et honore pro patria interire, malle per dedecus et ignaviam vivere; et cum pro amicis et parentibus et ceteris necessariis adire periculum velis, pro re publica, in qua et haec et illud sanctissimum patriae nomen continetur, nolle in discrimen venire.

"Ita uti contemnendus est qui in navigio non navem quam se mavult incolumem, item vituperandus qui in rei publicae discrimine suae plus quam communi saluti consulit. Navi enim fracta multi incolumes evaserunt; ex naufragio patriae salvus nemo potest enatare.

"Quod mihi bene videtur Decius intellexisse, qui se devovisse dicitur et pro legionibus in hostes immisisse medios. Amisit vitam, at non perdidit. Re enim vilissima certam et parva maximam redemit. Vitam dedit, accepit patriam; amisit animam, potitus est gloriam, quae cum summa laude prodita vetustate cotidie magis enitescit.

"Quodsi pro re publica decere accedere periculum et ratione demonstratum est et exemplo conprobatum, ii sapientes sunt existimandi qui nullum pro salute patriae periculum vitant". (*Rhet ad Her*, IV.xliii.56–xliv.57).

The following, then, will illustrate a treatment in seven parts – to continue the use of the same theme for my example, in order that you may know

how easily, by the precepts of rhetoric, a simple idea is developed in a multiple manner:

THEME

"The wise man will, on the republic's behalf, shun no peril,

RATIONALES

"because it may often happen that if a man has been loath to perish for his country it will be necessary for him to perish with her. Further, since it is from our country that we receive all our advantages, no disadvantage incurred on her behalf is to be regarded as severe.

RESTATEMENT OF THEME WITH RATIONALE

"I say, then, that they who flee from the peril to be undergone on behalf of the republic act foolishly, for they cannot avoid the disadvantages, and are found guilty of ingratitude towards the state.

CONTRARY

"But on the other hand they who, with peril to themselves, confront the perils of the fatherland, are to be considered wise, since they render to their country the homage due her, and prefer to die for many of their fellow citizens instead of with them. For it is extremely unjust to give back to nature, when she compels, the life you have received from nature, and not to give to your country, when she calls for it, the life you have preserved thanks to your country and when you can die for fatherland with the greatest manliness and honour, to prefer to live in disgrace and cowardice; and when you are willing to face danger for friends and parents and your other kin, to refuse to run the risk for the republic, which embraces all these and that most holy name of fatherland as well.

ANALOGY

"He who in a voyage prefers his own to his vessel's security, deserves contempt. No less blameworthy is he who in a crisis of the republic consults his own in preference to the common safety. For from the wreck of a ship many of those on board escape unharmed, but from the wreck of the fatherland no one can swim to safety.

EXAMPLE AND TESTIMONY OF ANTIQUITY

"It is this that, in my opinion, Decius well understood, who is said to have devoted himself to death, and, in order to save his legions, to have plunged into the midst of the enemy. He gave up his life, but did not throw it away; for at the cost of a very cheap good he redeemed a sure good, of a small good the greatest good. He gave his life, and received his country in exchange. He lost his life, and gained glory, which, transmitted with highest praise, shines more and more every day as time goes on.

CONCLUSION

"But if reason has shown and illustration confirmed that it is fitting to confront danger in defence of the republic, they are to be esteemed wise who do not shrink from any peril when the security of the fatherland is at stake". (*Rhet ad Her*, IV.xliii.56–xliv.57)⁴⁰.

In addition to the basic parts of the complete argument, this sequence

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 370-375.

explicitly adds arguments from the contrary, from analogy, and from example. As indicated in the notes to the text in the LCL, the argument from example serves also as a testimony from antiquity⁴¹. An interpreter becomes aware very soon, then, that a unit may serve more than one rhetorical function at a time.

Hermogenes' *Progymnasmata* adapts the elaboration of the theme to an elaboration of a chreia that approximates a complete argument⁴². This adaptation produces a kind of argumentation that is of great interest and importance to the interpreter of the gospels, since it begins with a saying attributed to a specific person. The text is as follows:

Ἄλλα νῦν ἐπὶ τὸ συνέχον χωρῶμεν, τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν ἡ ἐργασία. ἐργασία τοῖνυν οὕτως ἔστω· (1) πρῶτον ἐγκώμιον διὰ βραχέων τοῦ εἰπόντος ἢ πράξαντος, εἶτα (2) αὐτῆς τῆς χρείας παράφρασις, εἶτα (3) ἡ αἰτία.

Οἷον "Ἰσοκράτης ἔφησε τῆς παιδείας τὴν μὲν ρίζαν εἶναι πικράν, τὸν δὲ καρπὸν γλυκύν".

(1) "Ἐπαινος: "Ἰσοκράτης σοφὸς ἦν", καὶ πλατυνεῖς ἡρέμα τὸ χωρίον.

(2) Εἶθ' ἡ χρεία: "εἶπε τόδε", καὶ οὐ θήσεις αὐτὴν ψιλὴν ἀλλὰ πλατύνων τὴν ἔρμηνειαν.

(3) Εἶτα ἡ αἰτία: "τὰ γὰρ μέγιστα τῶν πραγμάτων ἐκ πόνων φιλεῖ κατορθοῦσθαι, κατορθωθέντα δὲ τὴν ἡδονὴν φέρει".

(4) Εἶτα κατὰ τὸ ἐναντίον: "τὰ μὲν γὰρ τυχόντα τῶν πραγμάτων οὐ δεῖτα πόνων καὶ τὸ τέλος ἀηδέστατον ἔχει, τὰ σπουδαῖα δὲ τοῦναντίον".

(5) Εἶτα ἐκ παραβολῆς: "ὥσπερ γὰρ τοὺς γεωργοὺς δεῖ πονήσαντας περὶ τὴν γῆν κομίζεσθαι τοὺς καρπούς, οὕτω καὶ περὶ τοὺς λόγους".

(6) Εἶτα ἐκ παραδείγματος: "Δημοσθένης καθείρξας ἑαυτὸν ἐν οἰκῆματι καὶ πολλὰ μοχθήσας ὕστερον ἐκομίζετο τοὺς καρπούς, στεφάνους καὶ ἀναρρήσεις".

(7) Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐκ κρίσεως ἐπιχειρῆσαι, οἷον "Ἡσίοδος μὲν γὰρ ἔφη (Op. 289)

τῆς δ'ἀρετῆς ἰδρῶτα θεοὶ προπάροιθεν ἔθηκαν,

ἄλλος δὲ ποιητῆς φησι (Epicharmus, Fr. 287 Kaibel)

τῶν πόνων πωλοῦσιν ἡμῖν πάντα τάγαθ' οἱ θεοί".

(8) Ἐν δὲ τῷ τέλει παράκλησιν προσθήσεις, ὅτι χρὴ πείθεσθαι τῷ εἰρηκότι ἢ πεποιηκότι.

Τοσαῦτα πρὸς τὸ παρόν· τὴν δὲ τελεωτέραν διδασκαλίαν ὕστερον εἶση.

(Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 1,10-8,14 [Rabe])

But now let us move on to the chief matter, and this is the elaboration. Accordingly, let the elaboration be as follows: (1) First, an encomium, in a few words, for the one who spoke or acted. Then (2) a paraphrase of the chreia itself; then (3) the rationale.

For example "Isocrates said that education's root is bitter, its fruit is sweet".

41. *Ibid.*, p. 373.

42. MACK-ROBBINS, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (n. 6), pp. 51-52.

(1) Praise: "Isocrates was wise", and you amplify the subject moderately.

(2) Then the chreia: "He said thus and so", and you are not to express it simply but rather by amplifying the presentation.

(3) Then the rationale: "For the most important affairs generally succeed because of toil, and once they have succeeded, they bring pleasure".

(4) Then the statement from the opposite: "For ordinary affairs do not need toil, and they have an outcome that is entirely without pleasure; but serious affairs have the opposite outcome".

(5) Then the statement from analogy: "For just as it is the lot of farmers to reap their fruits after working with the land, so also is it for those working with words".

(6) Then the statement from example: "Demosthenes, after locking himself in a room and toiling long, later reaped his fruits: wreaths and public acclamations".

(7) It is also possible to argue from the statement by an authority. For example, Hesiod said (Op. 289):

In front of virtue gods have ordained sweat.

And another poet says (Epicharmus, Fr. 287 Kaibel):

At the price of toil do the gods sell every good to us.

(8) At the end you are to add an exhortation to the effect that it is necessary to heed the one who has spoken or acted.

So much for the present; you will learn the more advanced instruction later⁴³.

After praising the originator of the chreia and introducing the chreia, the speaker or writer provides a rationale and contrary for the chreia. These rhetorical constituents produce an enthymematic beginning and clarify the argument through an initial articulation of what the thesis is and is not, and why. After this, the elaboration supports the statement in the chreia with arguments from analogy, paradigm, and authoritative testimony. These arguments add new rhetorical figures to the argumentative components in the chreia itself, in the manner in which a speech supports its initial thesis with artistic and inartistic data the speaker has created or gathered for this purpose. This level of elaboration may end with a brief exhortative conclusion, since its argumentation has been so carefully and thoroughly developed and reiterated along the way.

It is important for this essay to observe that virtually every unit in the elaboration is a reperformance of tradition. The saying attributed to Isocrates is a striking, succinct formulation that encapsulates the gist of Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* 45-47⁴⁴. The rationale and the contrary have been formulated in a similar manner. The remaining arguments that are

43. HOCK-O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* (n. 2), pp. 176-177.

44. *Isocrates I* (LCL, 209), Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1980, pp. 30-33; cf. *Diogenes Laertius* 5.18, see additional references in HOCK-O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* (n. 2), pp. 325-326.

based on farmers, Demosthenes, and quotations from Hesiod and Epicharmus come from outside the language field of the topic itself, and each is a reperformance of tradition generally known in Mediterranean society. This kind of writing has close analogies in the synoptic gospels.

An intriguing example of second-level elaboration exists in the account of Jesus' teaching in parables in Mark 4. An abbreviated display, based on Mack's analysis, looks as follows:

- (1) *Introduction* (4,1-2a): Jesus, the crowd, the sea, the boat
- (2) *Chreia or Fable* (4,2b-9): Parable of the Sower
- (3) *Rationale* (ἡ αἰτία)
 - Request for Rationale (4,10)
 - Rationale given as Direct Statement (4,11-12)
 - Rationale given as Paraphrase of the Parable (4,13-20)
- (4) *Contrary* (κατὰ τὸ ἐναντίον: 4,21-23)
 - And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a stand?
 - For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light.
 - If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear".
- (5) *Authoritative Judgment* (ἐκ κρίσεως: 4,24-25)
 - And he said to them, "Take heed what you hear. The measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given to you.
 - For to him who has will more be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away".
- (6) *Example* (ἐκ παραδείγματος: 4,26-29)
 - And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come".
- (7) *Analogy* (ἐκ παραβολῆς: 4,30-32)
 - And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade".
- (8) *Conclusion* (4,33-34)
 - With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything⁴⁵.

The elaboration develops an argument with a series of independent

45. Based on MACK-ROBBINS, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (n. 6), pp. 152-154.

rhetorical figures that secure meanings for the initial chreia that would not have been easy for hearers or readers to attain by themselves. While Mack refers to the recitation of the parable as a "chreia", it is possible that it would be better to refer to it as a "fable"⁴⁶. Instead of abbreviating the topic into a single saying, as Hermogenes' elaboration abbreviates Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* 45-49, Mk 4,1-12 presents the topic and its rationale in the form of a parable (fable), a request for a rationale (4,10), and Jesus' statement of the rationale (4,11-12). After this, Mk 4,13-20 presents a paraphrase of the parable, which follows a pattern of restatement of the theme and its rationale as it appears in the elaboration in *Rhet ad Her*, IV.xliii.57 (quoted above). After establishing the theme and rationale through statement and restatement, Mk 4,21-23 presents a contrary argument with its own rationale. The presence of the rationale with the contrary reminds one of the contrary in *Rhet ad Her*, IV.xliii.57, which also has a rationale (quoted above). The contrary and its rationale clarify and position the theme of mystery and inside/outside in the parable and its rationale. This argument also introduces a new analogical arena, namely the household, which supplements the arena of the field where people sow seeds. The authoritative judgment in Mk 4,24-25 also has a rationale to support it. The example and analogy, of course, do not have rationales. The conclusion reformulates the language about parables, speaking the word, being able to hear, and the privileged place of the disciples, providing a résumé of the argumentation in the elaboration. Mk 4,1-34, then, is a remarkable instance of second-level elaboration in the synoptic gospels.

In addition to the rhetorical treatises that aid the interpreter with the gospels, excellent contemporary literature exists where interpreters can see the kinds of procedures actually practiced by contemporaries of our New Testament writers. Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia* contain multiple accounts of anecdotal traditions, similar to the multiple accounts in the gospels⁴⁷. Also, some of these accounts exist in the writings of Dio Chrysostom, Arrian, the Cynic Epistles, and other literature. Using these literary *corpora*, an interpreter begins to see that gospel traditions were transmitted in a manner highly similar to the transmission of anecdotal traditions in Mediterranean culture⁴⁸.

46. Various members of the Seminar at the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense (19-20 August 1992) pressed for this modification of the analysis. Since the same exercises were performed with the chreia, fable, and narrative, this could be an appropriate modification.

47. ROBBINS, *Writing as a Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels* (n. 29). Also see ID., *Pronouncement Stories in Plutarch's Lives of Alexander and Julius Caesar*, in *SBL 1978 Seminar Papers*, pp. 31-38; *Laudation Stories in the Gospel of Luke and Plutarch's Alexander*, in *SBL 1981 Seminar Papers*, pp. 293-308; *Classifying Pronouncement Stories in Plutarch's Parallel Lives*, in *Semeia* 20 (1981) 29-52; *A Rhetorical Typology for Classifying and Analyzing Pronouncement Stories*, in *SBL 1984 Seminar Papers*, pp. 93-122; *Pronouncement Stories from a Rhetorical Perspective*, in *Forum* 4/2 (1988) 3-32.

48. V.K. ROBBINS, *Ancient Quotes and Anecdotes: From Crib to Crypt*, Sonoma, CA,

IV. GUIDELINES FOR RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF PRE-GOSPEL TRADITIONS

Application of insights from the progymnastic rhetorical treatises has opened a new door for interpretation of New Testament literature. If culture-transmitting tradition is argumentative, then individual traditions will be expanded and elaborated to make stronger, more explicit arguments. Certain traditions will be brought into the argumentation of other traditions as rationales, analogies, or authoritative statements to strengthen the argumentation. Actions and situations with various potential meanings will be focused in particular ways, and contextual statements which could be understood in different ways will be positioned with questions, rationales, and contraries. One of the major contributions is to help the interpreter exhibit the nature of argumentation in sections that have been considered to be patchwork compilations. Another aspect of its contribution applies to pre-gospel traditions. Since this essay is concerned with pre-gospel traditions, it will now turn to a number of New Testament passages in a context of principles that have arisen through analysis informed by progymnastic rhetorical procedures.

The quotations above from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Hermogenes' *Progymasmata* exhibit the rhetorical components and figures that appear again and again in culture-transmitting tradition. As is clear from the discussion in the *ad Herennium*, it is not necessary for an elaboration to contain all of the argumentative components that any rhetorician has produced as an example. Rather, culture-transmitting tradition has this range of components and figures at its disposal, and it selects and uses them in ways that the prior form of the tradition allows and invites. In and of itself, previous tradition in its social and cultural context exercises certain restraints on the use of certain components and figures at the same time that it invites other components and figures. Contexts of utterance, reference, and culture are the environment in which the selection and formulation occurs. The interpreter can expect, therefore, that a selection of components and figures will work together in the tradition in a manner that makes stronger and stronger "Christian" arguments.

This next section builds on the insights gained thus far in this essay on the nature of culture-transmitting tradition. The section works sequentially through the sequence of Hermogenes' elaboration, beginning with the presentation of settings, actions, and sayings that create the social and cultural context for sayings that lead to argumentation. The section continues with discussions of typical developments in the domain of propositions, rationales, and contraries in the gospels.

Polebridge, 1989 is a beginning place for exploring multiple accounts of traditions in Mediterranean culture, including the gospels.

The reader will soon become aware that the rhetorical critic analyzes features that many form critics have discussed, but that the analysis is concerned with the inner nature of the argumentation in a manner that form critics did not explicitly acknowledge and programmatically investigate. Perhaps the most unexpected aspect will be the analysis of "contexts of culture" in the arguments. The brevity of the discussion is likely to leave the reader dissatisfied, and perhaps unconvinced. The purpose of the discussion is not to convince but to provide insights into the nature of pre-gospel and gospel argumentation for those who are interested in looking for such things.

As the section works sequentially through the rhetorical components that appear in Hermogenes' elaboration, a threefold taxonomy of "contexts of culture" emerges: (a) social culture; (b) ideological culture; and (c) scriptural culture. This taxonomy provides an initial framework for analyzing cultural developments in early Christianity, and with its use a distinction begins to emerge between Christian "subcultures" and Christian "countercultures". For the purpose of this essay, a subculture is a subordinate culture that a group develops to sustain itself and nurture its well being in the context of another culture. A counterculture is a subculture that develops aggressive strategies to understand itself as an authentic alternative to a dominant culture, verbalizing attacks on various types of people in an alternative subculture or in the dominant culture.

In this section especially, then, the reader sees the import of the shift from a literary-historical to a socio-rhetorical paradigm of analysis. The goal in sight is a nuanced discussion of social and cultural interaction and developments in early Christianity, not a discussion of literary and historical influences on New Testament texts.

The first step in each section in this part of the essay will be to introduce a title that somehow relates to rhetorical components and figures in culture-transmitting tradition as we see it from discussions of the chreia in Hellenistic-Roman rhetorical treatises. Underneath the title appears one or more principles that emerge from analyses that rhetorical critics have performed thus far on early Christian gospel traditions. After a brief discussion and exhibition of some data from these analyses, the discussion moves to another heading and presentation. Again, the goal simply is to draw together some rhetorical analyses that have been discussing pre-gospel traditions in a manner that focuses on social and cultural dimensions of first century Christianity.

1. *Situations and Actions*

A. Analysis of gospels informed by progymnastic rhetorical procedures reveals that situations, actions, and speech developed interactively in early Christian tradition.

B. In other words, situations and actions are as important as speech in the tradition.

C. The privileging of speech over action and situation in pre-gospel tradition is an ideological bias of traditional interpretation that must be revised.

With the work of Rudolf Bultmann, situations and actions became secondary⁴⁹. The view arose that sayings were primary, and situations and actions were created out of and for sayings, to create a narrative context for them. In this form, such a presupposition is erroneous. A simple test of one's memory of an episode from the past will raise questions about such a procedure. Regularly, one's memory of a situation and of action in that situation is more precise than one's memory of words that were spoken. One of the reasons for this is that many different things may have been said, and the sequence of statements is often as important as the statements themselves. It is not difficult, of course, to create appropriate speech for a situation, as Thucydides knew very well. But appropriate speech is interpretive speech, and interpretation is always ideologically located and focused. Whenever a storyteller creates appropriate speech, the socio-ideological location of the storyteller contributes significantly to the selection and formulation of the topics in the speech. There are, to be sure, special circumstances when a person said something that was striking, like "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country". This is the circumstance on which both Bultmann and Dibelius had their eye. But situations and actions are as important as speech for characterizing Jesus in early Christian tradition, and New Testament interpreters must develop a method that gives equal voice to all three in the tradition.

Reference to action as well as speech in chreiai is a primary clue to the interactive nature of action, speech, and situation in first century culture-transmitting tradition. The interactive nature of situations, actions, and speech is well exhibited in the tradition of Jesus and the children. A socio-rhetorical analysis of all of the accounts in the gospels reveals two basic synoptic traditions: (a) one in which Jesus places a child before a group of people to make a point; and (b) one in which Jesus insists that children be allowed to be brought to him⁵⁰. The common synoptic wording in the two traditions is as follows:

49. R. BULTMANN, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, New York, Harper & Row, 1968 [from German 1958]. Also, with some variations, M. DIBELIUS, *From Tradition to Gospel*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935; see MACK-ROBBINS, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (n. 6), pp. 1-29.

50. This discussion is informed by V.K. ROBBINS, *Pronouncement Stories and Jesus' Blessing of the Children*, in *Semeia* 29 (1984) 43-74.

(1) Mt 18,1-5; Mk 9,33-37; Lk 9,46-48

τίς μείζων;	Who is greatest?
παιδίον	child
ἔστησεν αὐτὸ (ἐν μέσῳ/παρ' ἑαυτῶ)	he set it (in the midst/alongside himself)
καὶ εἶπεν	and he said
ὅς []άν δέξεται το[]ουτ[] παιδί(ο/ω)ν	Who ever receives (this/such a)
ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου	child in my name
ἐμὲ δέχεται.	receives me.

(2) Mt 19,13-15; Mk 10,13-16; Lk 18,15-17

προσ(έφερον/ἠνέχθησαν) αὐτῷ	They were bringing to him
ἵνα (αὐτῶν ἄ[ψ/πτ]ηται/τάς χεῖρας	in order that he might (touch/lay his hands
ἐπιθῆ αὐτοῖς)	on) them
οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς.	but the disciples rebuked them.
ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς (εἶπεν/λέγων)	But Jesus said,
ἄφετε τὰ παιδιά (ἔρχεσθαι/ἔλθεῖν)	Let the children come
πρὸς με,	to me,
μὴ κωλύετε αὐτά·	do not forbid them;
τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία	for to such belongs the kingdom of
(τοῦ θεοῦ/τῶν οὐρανῶν).	(God/the heavens).

It is clear from these accounts that "pre-gospel" tradition featured Jesus bringing children close to him for some purpose in a "public" setting. Jesus' action with children presents the "context of social culture" and the *topoi* in Jesus' speech present the "context of ideological culture" in this tradition. New Testament interpreters have shown more interest in ideological culture than social culture – a privileging of word over action and situation, of mind over body, of cognitive issues over practical issues. But both aspects are present, and both are being dealt with creatively and interactively in recitation.

There is significant social and ideological energy at work around Jesus' action with children. The social energy emerges in the recitation of various situations and actions. Concerning action, Jesus: (a) sets a child in their midst, (b) sets a child beside him, (c) holds a child in his arms, (d) insists that children be allowed to come to him, and/or (e) points to a child being suckled by its mother (GospThomas 22). The nurturing of ideological culture occurs in the various sayings that recitation generates. Concerning speech, Jesus discusses: (a) being great, (b) his own acceptance by people, (c) people's acceptance of the kingdom, and/or (d) entering the kingdom.

2. Propositions, Rationales, and Contraries

A. Early traditions nurture contextual statements into propositions by adding rationales and contraries that focus their meaning potential in a particular direction.

B. Transmitters of traditions generate explicit rationales for state-

ments that previously were based on implicit, unstated rationales. The explicit articulation of a rationale is a form of expansion or elaboration of the culture-transmitting tradition, nurturing it into an explicit enthymematic or syllogistic argument.

C. The social/ideological/biblical culture nurtured by the initial propositions, rationales, and contraries creates an environment in which people generate new propositions with their own rationales and contraries.

D. Amplification of contraries is a natural way to nurture counter-cultural strategies in a subcultural environment.

Mk 9,33-37 par. and 10,13-16 par.

In Mk 9,33-37 par., Jesus' setting of a child in the midst of a group of people is likely to be the earliest part of the tradition. Whatever Jesus may have intended it to mean, it invited a variety of meanings for early Christians. Transmitters developed these meanings by introducing questions and nurturing contextual statements into propositions with the aid of rationales and contraries. In the Markan version, a particular meaning is nurtured by introducing the question "Who is greatest?" Then the meaning is nurtured by a rationale – "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me" – and by a contrary – "and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me". The question, rationale, and contrary are part of the cultural transmission of the action by Jesus. In other words, storytellers have created "appropriate speech" as a way of giving focus to the meaning potential of Jesus' action.

In Mk 10,13-16 par., Jesus' action with children is focused by introducing a "contrary action" by the disciples: they rebuke people who try to bring children to Jesus. Again, Jesus' acceptance of children, including occasionally picking them up, is primary in this tradition. And Jesus' reason for this action may well have been unstated by the earliest tradition. Christian storytellers, however, have focused its meaning by introducing the contrary action of the disciples, which nurtures Jesus' act into a thesis: "Let the children come to me". This thesis is further positioned and clarified by the contrary: "Do not forbid them". Then, a rationale nurtures an ideological culture for the action: "For to such belongs the kingdom of (God/the heavens)".

The traditional approach during the last fifty years has been to consider the rationale about the kingdom of God to be primary, because it has been decided, through other arguments, that "kingdom of God" was central to Jesus' teaching. The presupposition has been that various stories were created as contexts for sayings about the kingdom of God. It is certainly true that kingdom of God ideology is ubiquitous in synoptic gospel tradition. The question is where it came into various pre-gospel traditions and how pervasive it is. A rhetorical

approach presents a method for analyzing the tradition anew, if interpreters have the will to do it. The primary dimension in this tradition is Jesus' acknowledgment of children in public. The earliest features are an action and a saying:

- (a) setting a child (in the midst/alongside himself) to make a point;
- (b) saying, "Let the children come to me".

This phenomenon has not been considered to be a very important part of pre-gospel tradition, presumably because it is not ideological enough. But this is an item that created a context of social and ideological culture in pre-gospel tradition. In many Mediterranean traditions about important people, children do not appear or they appear as troublemakers to be disciplined. This social phenomenon in pre-gospel traditions should be investigated in Mediterranean literature and its significance should be included in discussions of pre-gospel tradition.

Mt 5,3-12 and Lk 6,20-23

Using the beatitudes as another example, it is possible to exhibit the interaction of propositions, rationales, and contraries further⁵¹. The common wording between Mt 5,3-12 and Lk 6,20-23 contains propositions and rationales that exhibit energetic development of social, ideological, and scriptural culture:

- (a) μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί
ὅτι (αὐτῶν/ὑμετέρα) ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.
- (b) μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες
ὅτι χορτασθήσονται/εσθε).
- (c) μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν δνειδίσωσιν (ὑμᾶς/τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν)
καὶ (εἰπωσιν/ἐκβάλωσιν) ... πονηρὸν ἕνεκα (ἐμοῦ/τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου).
- (d) (χαίrete/χάρητε) καὶ (ἀγαλλιᾶσθε/σκιρτήσατε)
(ὅτι/γὰρ) ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς(ᾧ) οὐραν(οῖς/ᾧ).
(οὕτως/κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ) γὰρ (ἐδίωξαν/ἐποίουν) το(ύς/ἴς) προφήτ(α/αι)ς (τοὺς
πρὸ ὑμῶν/οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν).

The first two units contain a proposition with a social cultural focus followed by a rationale with an ideological statement (a) those who are poor/possess the kingdom of God; and (b) those who are hungry/shall be satisfied. The third unit contains a proposition that thoroughly intermingles social culture and ideological culture: (c) blessed are you when people revile (you/your name) and speak evil against (me/the Son of man). The fourth unit moves away from social culture into an ideological statement grounded in a scriptural cultural statement: (d) Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven; for they likewise (persecuted/did to) the prophets.

51. This discussion is informed by V.K. ROBBINS, *Pragmatic Relations as a Criterion for Authentic Sayings*, in *Forum* 1/3 (1985) 35-63; cf. CROSSAN, *In Fragments* (n. 24), pp. 168-174.

A rhetorical approach recognizes that explicit rationales regularly emerge in the tradition after strong assertions. The propositions in (a) and (b) emerge from widespread Mediterranean social culture (poverty and hunger). Unit (c) concerns a social culture that has been created by a particular ideological culture within Mediterranean society. Perhaps an earlier stage of this tradition could have existed that referred to people who were despised simply because they were not indigenous to a particular geographical area or had become the targets of a group who had moved into the area. Unit (d), in contrast to the others, contains a rationale for its rationale. *The Rhet ad Her*, II.xviii.28–xix.28 refers to the second rationale as the confirmation of the rationale (*confirmatio rationis*). This confirmation comes from scriptural culture. In the common wording in Matthew and Luke, social culture appears in the “blessing” statements in (a) and (b); ideological culture appears in the rationales in units (a) and (b) and throughout (c). Scriptural culture appears explicitly in the confirmation of the ideological rationale in (d).

Using insights from rhetorical expansion and elaboration, then, it would appear that three theses grounded in widespread social culture stand earliest in the tradition:

- (a) Blessed are the poor;
- (b) Blessed are those who hunger;
- (c) Blessed are those who are despised.

The third unit contains a transition to ideological culture. The consciousness here has a focus on people who are being singled out for special reasons, reasons that suggest a stigma, a peculiarity. While the peculiarity may have begun as a natural social phenomenon with the presence of different kinds of people with one another, it soon nurtured an ideological culture that interacted with it, perhaps intensifying the social stigma.

An early step appears to have been the nurturing of ideological rationales to support a special posture toward the widespread social phenomena of poverty and hunger in Mediterranean society:

- (a) because (they/you) possess the kingdom of God;
- (b) because (they/you) shall be satisfied.

Then, a more specific ideological culture began to come to expression:

- (c) because you have a special name and express a life related to the Son of man;
- (d) because your reward is great in heaven.

In turn, a rationale from scriptural culture was brought in to confirm the ideological rationales:

- (d) because they likewise (persecuted/did to) the prophets.

In the culture that nurtured the Matthean version of the sayings, ideological and scriptural culture brings about an amplification of the theses and the creation of additional theses and rationales.

Mt 5,4-11

- 3 (μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ) τῷ πνεύματι...
- 4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται
- 5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.
- 6 (μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες) καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην...
- 7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.
- 8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.
- 9 μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.
- 10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
- 11 ... καὶ διώξωσιν ...

- 3 (Blessed are the poor) in spirit ...
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 (Blessed are those who hunger) and thirst for righteousness ...
- 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 ... and persecuted...

Perhaps most interesting among these are the propositions that exhibit a social role or action supported by a culture that has been nurtured and cultivated ideologically and scripturally. Those who are merciful, peacemakers, and persecuted for righteousness' sake appear to point to a social subculture generated out of the ideological and scriptural culture that appeared in the earliest rationales. In other words, initial propositions and rationales nurture a social/ideological/scriptural culture that gives rise to additional propositions with their rationales and confirmations. Part of the skill of analysis of pre-gospel traditions is to detect the cultural environment in which the propositions themselves were generated, since they can appear in any stage of the development.

The Lukan beatitudes, in contrast to those in Matthew, exhibit an intensification of the social posture by means of contraries. This reveals the strengthening of subcultural thinking into countercultural thinking:

Lk 6,20-26

- 22 ὅταν μισήσωσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι,
- καὶ ὅταν ἀφορίσωσιν ὑμᾶς
- καὶ ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν ὡς πονηρὸν ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.
- 24 πλὴν οὐαὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς πλουσίοις, ὅτι ἀπέχετε τὴν παράκλησιν ὑμῶν.
- 25 οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, οἱ ἐμπλησμένοι νῦν, ὅτι πεινάσετε.
- οὐαὶ, οἱ γελῶντες νῦν, ὅτι πενήσετε καὶ κλαύσετε.
- 26 οὐαὶ ὅταν ὑμᾶς καλῶς εἴπωσιν πάντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι· κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ γὰρ ἐποίουν τοῖς ψευδοπροφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν.

- 22 when men hate you
and when men exclude you
and cast out your name as evil for the sake of the Son of man.
24 But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.
25 Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.
Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.
26 Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

In 6,22, the social culture is described in aggressive, negative terms. Social differentiation is articulated in terms of hatred, exclusion, and being cast out. This intensification of the social differentiation is accompanied by countercultural language in 6,24-26 based on the rhetorical figure of the contrary. Language that exhibits subcultural thinking in the common wording has been nurtured into language that functions as a counterattack. The language is countercultural in posture, adopting the form of a curse. Yet the language does not identify specific opponents. It is pitted in confrontational terms against wealthy, well-fed, and honored people. The curses are supported by ideological and scriptural rationales, but there has been no energetic gleaning of additional items from scripture to function as rationales or confirmations of rationales. The rationales are simply intensifications of earlier ideological and scriptural rationales through the rhetorical figure of the contrary. The Lukan version of the beatitudes nurtures countercultural thinking as it equips Jesus with aggressive social language. The Lukan version does not reveal a subculture that adds new, intricate scriptural resources as rationales. The rationales simply intensify the social aggressiveness of previously generated scriptural rationales.

In summary, the common wording in the beatitudes suggests an early social cultural posture: (a) Blessed are the poor; (b) Blessed are those who hunger; and (c) Blessed are those who are despised. At the earliest stage, whatever rationale existed for this social posture remained implicit, unstated. As transmitters recited these traditions in a culture-forming environment, they generated ideological rationales in support of the social posture, and they marshalled scriptural rationales to support (confirm) the ideological rationales. The Matthean version of the beatitudes exhibits an amplification of the beatitudes in the context of an ideological culture that is receiving energetic support from a well-nurtured scriptural culture. In contrast, the Lukan version exhibits a cultural development that was not receiving significantly new energy from an active scriptural culture, but was nurturing a subcultural tradition into a countercultural tradition.

3. *Contraries and Analogies*

- A. The early function of a contrary is to clarify negative or positive implications or propositions.
- B. When a contrary is present, the positive is present by implication.
- C. Elaboration of a contrary regularly adds a rationale, creating an enthymeme containing complex reasoning.
- D. Amplification of a contrary may nurture the positive implication into a proposition.
- E. Amplification of a contrary regularly generates additional contraries and/or contrary language.
- F. Analogies have a close relation to paradigms. Therefore, transmitters may generate both generalized and specific paradigms out of analogies.

Interpreters regularly have not given careful enough attention to whether statements are contrary or positive statements. Positive statements (propositions) provide a rich environment for the generation of rationales and contraries, as we have seen in the two sub-sections above. Contraries, saying that something is "not" something, have their own ways of being amplified and elaborated which are related to positives but require their own attention. Jesus' statement about a lamp which is not brought in to be put under a bushel or bed but to be put on a lampstand illustrates this kind of tradition well⁵².

The common synoptic wording in Mt 5,15; Mk 4,21-25; Lk 8,16 is as follows:

(οὐδε[]μήτι) λύχνο(ν/ς) τ[]θ[] ὑπό
ἐπὶ λυχνίας
no lamp (to be put) under (something)
(but) on a lampstand

The earliest form of this tradition is a contrary statement: a statement that argues that since something is not the case, something else obviously is the case. Bultmann and Jeremias were correct in their observation that we cannot know the initial context for this tradition⁵³. Someone, very possibly Jesus himself, used the analogy in a context in which something was said or suggested that the speaker considered to be inappropriate. This contrary has lived on in the tradition, because it uses an analogy to make its point. In other words, the earliest form of

52. This discussion is informed by V.K. ROBBINS, *Rhetorical Argument about Lamps and Light in Early Christian Gospels*, in P.W. BÖCKMAN – R.E. KRISTIANSEN (eds.), *Context, Festschrift til Peder Johan Borgen* (Relief, 24), Universitet i Trondheim, Tapir, 1987, pp. 177-195.

53. BULTMANN, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (n. 49), p. 98; J. JEREMIAS, *The Parables of Jesus*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963, p. 120.

this tradition merges a contrary rhetorical argument with an argument from analogy.

On the one hand, a contrary argument invites a rationale. Mk 4,22/Lk 8,17 contains such a rationale. The Markan version reads as follows:

οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν τι κρυπτόν, εἰ μὴ ἵνα φανερωθῆ· οὐδὲ ἐγένετο ἀπόκρυφον, ἀλλ' ἵνα ἔλθῃ εἰς φανερόν
For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light.

Here we notice that the rationale is formulated in negative terms, just like the contrary argument it supports. The rationale takes the argument into an environment of contrary syllogistic reasoning, which has its own form of complexity. The rationale introduces reasoning from some kind of ideological culture that cared about secret information and insisted that such information was not meant to remain hidden. It would be interesting to know if there are variations of a saying like this in circulation in Mediterranean culture. Its language has not been influenced by the Markan discourse concerning "the mystery of the kingdom" in 4,11, and its reasoning goes beyond the reasoning in that earlier verse. Perhaps the saying reveals subcultural Jewish reasoning that all knowledge now hidden from view will at an appropriate time be revealed to all. It would be informative to know if such reasoning were more widespread in the culture.

Whenever a contrary argument is present, an opposite to the contrary also is present. Thus, the common tradition asserts that a lamp is not brought in to be put under something but "on a lampstand". This language reflects the context of social culture for the tradition: people commonly used lamps, and a lamp regularly benefited more than one person at a time. The presence of an explicit or implicit opposite in a contrary analogy creates a potential for amplification and elaboration of the positive. Amplification of the positive is present in Lk 8,16: "that those who enter may see the light", and in GThom 33: "so that everyone who enters and leaves may see the light".

Mt 5,15 also amplifies the positive dimension of the saying, but instead of keeping the light in a passive position to be seen by others, it emphasizes the active shining forth of the lamp: "and it gives light to all in the house". The Matthean amplification occurs in a context where a transmitter has personalized the active aspect of the positive analogy: "You are the light of the world" (5,14). This is, then, an additional step in the generation of culture-transmitting tradition: the nurturing of analogies into generalized paradigms. A specific paradigm, which is the normal use of the term παράδειγμα, refers to a specific person who embodies a certain attribute, like: Demosthenes, after locking himself in

a room and toiling long, later reaped his fruits: wreaths and public acclamations⁵⁴. But rhetoricians were well aware of the close relation between analogies and paradigms. A transmitter of tradition could change the Demosthenes paradigm into a generalized paradigm simply by changing it to "he who locks himself in a room and toils long with speech will later reap his fruits: wreaths and public acclamations".

In early Christian tradition, the development was not from specific to generalized paradigms, but the other way: from analogy, to generalized paradigm, to specific paradigm. The contrary analogy with the lamp generated the context for a positive analogy about light. The positive analogy generated a generalized paradigm in the context of discipleship. Also the positive analogy generated specific paradigms in relation to John the Baptist and Jesus:

- Jn 5,35 He [John] was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light;
Jn 1,9 The true light [Jesus] that enlightens everyone was coming into the world;
Jn 8,12; 9,5; cf. 12,46 I [Jesus] am the light of the world.

In the context where transmitters generated the paradigms from the analogy, biblical culture was playing a significant role. In Matthew, Jesus' dwelling in Capernaum, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphthali, is considered to fulfill Isaiah's statement: the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned (Mt 4,13-16). In the Gospel of John, the biblical creation account, where God creates light with his word, has played an influential role, both for the application to John the Baptist and Jesus (Jn 1,5-9; 5,35; 8,12; 12,46).

There is yet one more phenomenon to address. The negative formulation of a contrary analogy may not only influence the formulation of a negative rationale but may also generate a series of negative statements. The persistence of negatives in traditions generated out of the lamp/light analogy is noticeable:

- Jn 1,5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
Jn 1,8 He [John] was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.
Jn 8,12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life".
Jn 12,46 I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

Once negatives begin to be used like this, they generate other

54. HOCK-O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* (n. 2), p. 177.

negatives in the context. It would appear that one of the sources of this negative technique in the Fourth Gospel is the tradition concerning light, which appears to have begun as a contrary analogy in the earliest tradition.

4. *Second-level Elaboration that Creates the Boundaries of a Story*

A. Situations and actions may remain primary even when they are a social embarrassment.

B. Transmitters of early tradition elaborate embarrassing social situations by turning the argumentation to topics which they have significant resources to support.

The accounts of a woman's anointing of Jesus in the gospel tradition is an excellent example of the manner in which situations and actions are tenacious in the tradition. In this instance, the situation is socially problematic, and transmitters had to find a way to deal with it. Rhetorical elaboration is the natural tool for this kind of circumstance.

The common wording in synoptic Christian tradition about the woman who anointed Jesus is as follows:

μύρου
οἴκ[]
γυνή
ἀλάβαστρον μύρου
τῆς κεφαλῆς
Σίμων[]

This wording features an alabaster of ointment, a house, a woman, action on Jesus' head, and Simon (either a healed leper or the disciple). The Markan and Matthean accounts are close recitational variations of one another. The variation between them is precisely of the kind described earlier: they replicate a significant amount of verbatim wording in an environment where they freely use words they prefer. The Lukan account exhibits a significantly different kind of elaboration to deal with the social situation. The Gospel of John has a story that features Mary anointing Jesus' feet with costly ointment, and wiping his feet with her hair (12,1-8). Judas' complaint that the ointment could have been sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor, and Jesus' response that they would always have the poor with them but they would not always have him, shows that the story is a variant of the Markan and Matthean accounts. The Johannine account exhibits a way of dealing with the situation by attributing it to a person with status in the tradition.

In all the accounts, the situation and action of a woman with Jesus are primary. The beginning of the tradition lies in social culture – interaction between two people in a setting where others look on. It

appears that this social culture is problematic: the woman's presence and her specific action require a "Christian" response; otherwise, the context could evoke meanings associated with sexual actions in the environment of a symposium. In order to give a response to this situation and action, more than amplification is necessary. The tradition needs to use elaboration, a procedure that adds significantly new rhetorical figures to the context of social culture. The new rhetorical figures, naturally, will nurture an ideological culture. It is good, however, if the figures can engage another aspect of social culture that can successfully divert the hearers and readers away from the dynamics of the social culture that more naturally call forth a response.

Burton Mack has analyzed both the Markan and the Lukan accounts, but for the purposes of this essay, only Mk 14,3-9 will be exhibited and discussed⁵⁵:

Introduction

Setting: 3 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the jar and poured it over his head.

Challenge

Thesis: 4 But there were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment thus wasted?"

Rationale: 5 For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor". And they reproached her.

Response

Redirection of the question: 6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her?"

Alternative thesis: "She has done a beautiful thing for me".

Alternative rationale: 7 "For you always have the poor with you", *Implied analogy:* "and whenever you will, you can do good to them";

Contrary: "but you will not always have me".

Paradigm: 8 "She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying".

Authoritative judgment (as encomiastic period): 9 "And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her"⁵⁶.

Second-level elaboration begins in the articulation of the challenge to Jesus. By introducing the topic of wasting the ointment when it could be sold and given to the poor, an alternative social culture can direct attention away from the presence of the woman anointing Jesus' body

55. MACK-ROBBINS, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (n. 6), pp. 85-106.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 93, with slight variations.

while he reclines at dinner. The initial social culture smacks of symposium activity during Jesus' life and in early Christian circles; the alternative social issue evokes an ideological culture in which Christians are engaged in almsgiving, which is an honorable Mediterranean tradition. Once the transmitter has introduced this topic, abundant argumentative resources lie at hand to deal with this issue.

Jesus turns the topic back towards social culture, but in a manner that bypasses the initial social culture in this tradition. The topic comes from that kind of Christian ideological culture that focused on the death of Jesus. Can anyone fault the woman for anointing Jesus for burial, when people "in the know" are aware that Jesus was hastily buried and his body was gone on the morning after the sabbath when women came to anoint his body? Therefore, a new thesis is at hand: "She has done a beautiful thing to me". A rationale also is ready at hand, "For you always have the poor with you"; with an implied analogy, "and whenever you will you can do good to them"; and a contrary, "But you will not always have me". Thus, the woman is a paradigm of action, and Jesus articulates this argument: "She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying". This creates an environment for an authoritative encomiastic saying at the end: "And truly I say to you, whenever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her".

In this instance, then, second-level elaboration creates the final boundary of the story. Expansion of the story introduces a series of new rhetorical figures that approximate a complete argument according to the definition of the rhetoricians. This kind of argumentation nurtures a subculture both socially and ideologically. They know the kinds of subcultural social commitments they need to have (preaching the gospel to the whole world rather than almsgiving), and they have an ideological culture to support them (memory of paradigmatic action toward Jesus, Jesus' defense of that action, and Jesus' death and burial)⁵⁷.

CONCLUSION

Socio-rhetorical analysis proceeds in a significantly different manner from literary-historical analysis. The eye and ear of the socio-rhetorical critic is on argumentation and its social and cultural meanings in the context in which it emerged. Exploration of the contexts of utterance, reference, and culture of the argumentation in the gospels begins to

57. See V.K. ROBBINS, *Using a Socio-Rhetorical Poetics to Develop a Unified Method: The Woman who Anointed Jesus as a Test Case*, in *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers*, pp. 302-319.

exhibit various kinds of subcultural and countercultural movements in early Christian tradition. Burton Mack's analysis of Mark probes five different cultural subgroups in early Christianity⁵⁸. Each subgroup exhibits a distinctive use of language, a preference for a particular form of tradition, special social strategies, and a significant ideology. His proposal needs to be tested, refined, and expanded in the context of detailed socially and culturally oriented rhetorical analysis. This essay has not started such an analysis, but it has displayed a significant number of the features of culture-transmitting tradition that are the targets of analysis in such an investigation. The purpose has been to start a discussion. An earlier version of this essay was successful, in fact, in initiating a vigorous and fruitful discussion in the Seminar at the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense that honored Frans Neiryck. I am grateful for that discussion and look forward to the additional discussion this form of the essay may elicit.

Emory University
Department of Religion
Atlanta, GA 30322
U.S.A.

Vernon K. ROBBINS

58. MACK, *A Myth of Innocence* (n. 6).