

Rhetorical Syncrisis in the Johannine Presentation of Jesus and Peter

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SUMMARY: The article advances a hypothesis that certain elements in the Johannine characterization of Jesus and Peter can be profitably interpreted through the lens of the ancient rhetorical device of syncrisis. The analysis consists of six main parts. First, the hypothesis itself is laid out in detail. Second, the Jewish and Christian uses of syncrisis around the turn of era is described, as proof for the possibility that this rhetorical technique was employed in the FG. Third, the *status quaestionis* on the use of syncrisis in the FG is provided. Fourth, some arguments are presented to justify the choice of *progymnasmata* as a methodological framework in the exposition of σύγκρισις between Jesus and Peter. It is argued that the ancient rhetorical exercises called *progymnasmata*, which contain a reliable and helpful description of ancient syncrisis, can thus provide useful criteria in the search for elements of syncrisis in the Johannine description of the relationship between Jesus and Peter. Fifth, the Johannine comparison between Jesus and Peter is viewed according to some of the basic rules of the progymnastic theory of syncrisis. Sixth, a detailed analysis of a few elements of the Johannine syncrisis between Jesus and Peter is presented.

KEYWORDS: syncrisis, ancient rhetoric, rhetorical interpretation, characterization, Jesus, Peter, Gospel of John

1. Introduction: A Hypothesis

The present article sets forth a hypothesis that the author of the Fourth Gospel (FG) presented some elements of the relationship between Jesus and Peter by means of an ancient rhetorical technique of comparison (Greek σύγκρισις, Latin *comparatio*). The study does not contend that the entire Johannine presentation of the relationship between Jesus and his disciple *in all its details* lends itself to such a reading, but that at least some elements of the Johannine characterization of these two figures can be profitably read with the help of the ancient rhetorical device of comparison. The foundation of our hypothesis is the conviction that ancient rhetoric has some bearing on the origin and meaning of the FG. In more precise terms, in the Hellenized world in which the FG

was composed, anyone with some rudimentary Greek educational background was acquainted with the rhetorical device of syncrisis, and a reliable ancient understanding of this rhetorical technique is accessible through its description in the ancient rhetorical exercises called *progymnasmata*. Consequently, the description of syncrisis, along with the encomiastic topic lists found in four ancient treatises of *progymnasmata*, will be used in this study. Together, they provide the methodological criteria for detecting and describing the suggested elements of syncrisis in the FG. To my knowledge, no other researcher has thus far proposed describing the relationship between Jesus and Peter, as presented in the FG, through the lens of ancient σύγκρισις.

2. The Jewish and Christian Use of Syncrisis around the Turn of Era, and the Probability of Its Use in the FG

The Jewish character of the FG does not preclude the possibility that the Greek rhetorical technique of σύγκρισις figured into its composition. The clearest connection to be drawn from older Jewish works is with the Book of Wisdom, undoubtedly Jewish in its message and origin, which contains a single extended σύγκρισις from 11:2 till 19:22.¹ Some modern commentators even claim that the author of the FG was influenced by the syncrises found in the Book of Wisdom in his choice of signs (σημεῖα) and the manner of their description.² Philo, a Jewish writer from the first century AD, provides many examples of the use of σύγκρισις, the most impressive being the *Life of Moses*, in which his protagonist is shown to be greater than any outstanding person from among the Greeks or any other people.³ Josephus Flavius, in both *Antiquities* and *Jewish War*, works with the same principle of *genus syncrasis*, comparing the Romans and the Jews and demonstrating that the latter were superior to Romans (*Antiquities*) or nearly as great as the Romans (*Jewish War*). Further, in *Contra Apion*, he compares

1 M. Gilbert, "Sagesse de Salomon. III. Le genre littéraire", *Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément* (ed. J. Briand – É. Cothenet) (Paris: Letouzey & Ané 1991) XI, 85; H. Hübner, *Die Weisheit Salomos. Liber Sapientiae Salomonis* (ATD Apokryphen 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1999) 146-149.

2 E. Eve, "Signs and Syncrises in John and the Wisdom of Solomon", *The New Testament and the Church: Essays in Honour of John Muddiman* (ed. J. Barton – P. Groves) (LNTS 532; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2016) 24-36, here 35: "The point of the partial parallels between the signs in John and the *syncrises* in the Wisdom of Solomon would then be not to remind John's readers of another text, but to evoke a particular kind of response from the audience, namely to see Jesus' ministry as both paralleling and surpassing the great saving acts of the exodus." Cf. G. Ziener, "Weisheitsbuch und Johannesevangelium (I)", *Bib.* 38 (1957) 396-418 (he is against any direct influence); D.K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John", *CBQ* 45 (1983) 201-209.

3 Cf. M.W. Martin, "Philo's Use of Syncrisis: An Examination of Philonic Composition in the Light of Progymnasmata", *PRSt* 30 (2003) 271-297.

Jews to Greeks, displaying a syncretical approach to highlighting the greater antiquity and general superiority of the Jews. In *Vita* 65-70, Josephus compares his own work with that of Justus, using the same principle of σύγκρισις.⁴ The FG, then, having its origins in the same Hellenistic Judaism of that era – infused with Greek ways of thinking, speaking and writing – was thus susceptible to the influence of Greek rhetorical methods.⁵ Michael W. Martin discussed a few other ancient Jewish texts where some “outstanding” figures are representative of earthly “genera” in what may be described as “an encomion–invective genus syncretism”.⁶ In many cases, however, the texts he analyzed are unconvincing as examples of syncretism (cf. esp., *Test. Levi* 5:3-5).⁷

The use of σύγκρισις in other writings of the New Testament – among them parts of Matthew,⁸ Mark,⁹ Luke-Acts,¹⁰ *Corpus Paulinum*,¹¹

4 M.W. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric of Comparison in the Fourth Gospel* (New Testament Monographs 25; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press 2010) 63-66.

5 In Martin Hengel’s view, “From about the middle of the third century BC all Judaism must really be designated ‘Hellenistic Judaism’ in the strict sense.” See M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism. Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1974) I, 104.

6 Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric*, 66-69, quote 69.

7 These examples are taken from the OT (e.g., Esau and Jacob in the Book of Genesis and the four beasts juxtaposed with the Son of Man in Daniel 7), the intertestamental literature (e.g., four angels juxtaposed with the satans and the sinners in *1 Enoch* 40:1–41:2; “hosts of Aziel” or “servants of Satan” juxtaposed with Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Phanuel in *1 Enoch* 54:5-6; the Devil juxtaposed with the chief angel in *Testament of Moses* 10:1-2), and the Dead Sea Scrolls (children of light/truth juxtaposed with children of darkness/falsehood in the *Community Rule* [IQS] 3–4; two antagonistic earthly groups juxtaposed with two angels, Michael and Belial, and their armies in *War Scroll* 1).

8 In Matthew 3, there is a comparison between Jesus and John the Baptist. Cf. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric*, 74-75.

9 The Gospel opens (1:2-20) and continues (e.g. 6:14-29) with the comparison of Jesus with John the Baptist. Cf. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric*, 71-74.

10 M. Crimella, *Marta, Marta! Quattro esempi di “triangolo drammatico” nel “grande viaggio di Luca”* (Studi e Ricerche. Sezione Biblica; Assisi: Citadella Editrice 2009); L. Rossi, *Pietro e Paolo testimoni del Crocifisso-Risorto. La synkrisis in Atti 12,1-23 e 17,1–28,16. Continuità e discontinuità di un parallelismo nell’opera lucana* (AnBib 205; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2014). On the comparison between Jesus and John in the opening chapters of Luke, see A. George, “Le parallèle entre Jean-Baptiste et Jésus en Lc 1-2”, *Mélanges Béda Rigaux* (ed. A. Descamps – A. de Halleux) (Gembloux: Duculot 1970) 147-171; F. O’Fearghail, *The Introduction to Luke-Acts: A Study of the Role of Luke 1,1 – 4,44 in the Composition of Luke’s Two-Volume Work* (AnBib 126; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute 1991) 33-36; J.A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1992) 60-84; C.G. Müller, *Mehr als ein Prophet. Die Charakterzeichnung Johannes des Täufers im lukanischen Erzählwerk* (HBS 31; Freiburg im Br.: Herder 2001) 49-152. On the comparison between Jesus and Paul, see W. Radl, *Paulus und Jesus im lukanischen Doppelwerk. Untersuchungen zu Parallelmotiven im Lukasevangelium und in der Apostelgeschichte* (Europäisch Hoschulschriften 23/49; Frankfurt: Peter Lang 1975).

11 Rom 5:12-21 (Adam & sin vs. Christ & grace); 1 Cor 15:45-49 (Adam, earthly man vs. Christ, heavenly man); 2 Cor 3:7-18 (Moses vs. Christ); Ga 4:21-31 (Hagar vs. Sarah). Cf. George,

Hebrews¹² and Revelation¹³ – can be deemed conclusive evidence that the employment of this technique in the FG is indeed possible. Most importantly, however, the NT writers frequently describe Jesus in juxtaposition with other human figures, most notably with John the Baptist.¹⁴ Moreover, the particular syncretism between Jesus and Peter is attested in the Book of Acts. Lorenzo Rossi has produced a monograph devoted to describing the threefold syncretism between Jesus, Peter and Paul in Acts.¹⁵ The seemingly bold (for some even iconoclastic) idea of comparing Jesus with his disciple is really a natural reflection of the call to every Christian to transform his or her life according to the model of Christ. That is, a comparison with Jesus was a natural and effective way for NT writers to describe any Christian (cf. Gal 2:20). Undoubtedly, Peter would not have been excepted from this call.

3. *Status Quaestionis* on Syncretism in the Fourth Gospel

The idea of seeing σύγκρισις in the descriptions of Johannine characters is not novel, but there are only three studies to my knowledge that deal with the presence of this rhetorical technique in the Fourth Gospel. Already in 2003, Christoph G. Müller interpreted from the perspective of σύγκρισις the texts concerning John the Baptist (1:6-8.15; 1:19-34; 1:35-42; 3:22-36; 4:1-3; 5:33-35; 10:40-42) as well as the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist.¹⁶ The comparison

“Le parallèle”, 158; O’Fearghail, *The Introduction*, 34; C. Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony: Paul’s Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric,” *NTS* 32 (1986) 1-30; P. Marshall, *Enmity at Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT II/23; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1987) 53-55, 325-53.

12 In Hbr there are multiple syncretisms, e.g.: angels and Jesus (1:1-14; 2:5-18), Moses and Jesus (3:1-6; 8:5-7), the Aaronic high priests and Jesus (4:14-5:10), the Levitical priestly ministry and the Melchizedekian priestly ministry (7:1-10:18), Mt Sinai and Mt. Zion (12:18-24). Cf. A. Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l’épître aux Hébreux* (Paris – Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer²1976) 144-151, 206-207; T.H. Olbricht, “Hebrews as Amplification”, *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. S.E. Porter – T.H. Olbricht) (JSNTSS 90; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic 1993) 375-387. Cf. T.W. Seid, “Syncretism in Hebrews 7: The Rhetorical Structure and Strategy”, *Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture. Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference* (ed. S.E. Porter – D.L. Stamps) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999) 322-347; M.W. Martin – J.A. Whitlark, “The Encomiastic Topics of Syncretism as the Key to the Structure and Argument of Hebrews”, *NTS* 57 (2011) 415-439.

13 Martin (*Judas and the Rhetoric*, 78-84) discusses a comparison between Christ and the beast as well as between God and the dragon.

14 On Jn 1:1-4:3, see C.G. Müller, “Der Zeuge und das Licht. Joh 1,1-4,3 und das Darstellungsprinzip σύγκρισις”, *Bib.* 84 (2003) 479-509; on Luke 1-2, see C.G. Müller, *Mehr als ein Prophet. Die Charakterzeichnung Johannes des Täufers im lukanischen Erzählwerk* (HBS 31; Freiburg im Br.: Herder 2001); on Mark, Matthew and Luke, see Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric*, 71-78.

15 Rossi, *Pietro e Paolo*.

16 Müller, “Der Zeuge und das Licht”, 479-509.

in the FG reveals aspects of both continuity and discontinuity between the two figures, serving eventually to show the subordination of John to Jesus.

Two years later Michael W. Martin defended a PhD dissertation, whose revised version was published in 2010, and in which σύγκρισις is broadly employed to describe even more Johannine characters.¹⁷ The starting point of his analysis is the rule, found in the ancient rhetorical manuals called *progymnasmata*, according to which one can compare two groups of people by carrying out syncrisis between their two outstanding representatives. Thus, M.W. Martin presented a two-level reading of the FG, in which individuals from the Gospel represent various communities in the real-world experienced by the evangelist.¹⁸ Martin in fact examines two triple comparisons: in the first part of the Gospel, a positive comparison between Jesus, John the Baptist and Moses, and in the second part, a positive-negative comparison between the Beloved Disciple, Peter, and Judas. He also briefly surveys the comparisons between Jesus and Jacob, and Jesus and Abraham, occurring in the first part of the Gospel. According to M.W. Martin, σύγκρισις found in the first part of the FG serves to demonstrate the superiority of Christians (represented by Jesus) over other Jewish groups, whose representatives are John (Baptist Messianists), Moses (the Jews), Jacob (Samaritans), and Abraham (the Jews). In the second part of the Gospel, the threefold σύγκρισις serves the same principle of showing the superiority of the Beloved Disciple, identified with the Johannine church, over Peter, who represents some Petrine group (proto-orthodox Christians, “apostolic churches”), and also Judas, who stands for the Johannine secessionists, who left the Johannine community and are known from the Johannine Letters.

The work of M.W. Martin, which was deemed quite novel, met with both criticism and support. For instance, according to D. Estes, “the argument that a rhetorical device [of σύγκρισις] necessitates an allegorical reading of the characters in the fourth Gospel is unpersuasive.”¹⁹ However, acknowledging

17 M.W. Martin, *Judas the Secessionist: Reading Johannine Syncrisis in its Mediterranean Milieu* (PhD dissertation, Waco, TX: Baylor University 2005); M.W. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric of Comparison in the Fourth Gospel* (New Testament Monographs 25; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press 2010).

18 In doing so, he also embraced a hypothesis advanced by J.L. Martyn in his seminal study *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York, NY: Harper and Row 1968). The third, expanded and revised edition of this work appeared in the series “The New Testament Library” by Westminster John Knox in 2003. The hypothesis that the FG’s final form reflects, or at least echoes, conflicts and rivalries within the Johannine community has recently been countered by a number of authors. See T. Hägerland, “John’s Gospel: A Two-Level Drama?”, *JSNT* 25 (2003) 309-322.

19 D. Estes, review of M.W. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric of Comparison in the Fourth Gospel*, *RSr* 37/3 (2011) 211. In the same vein, A. Steward’s review in *BTB* 42/2 (2012) 100: “his conclusion that the fourth evangelist intentionally employed *genus syncrisis* to critique or

this device does not *require* a purely allegorical reading, even if it make such a reading probable or at least justifiable. For T. Thatcher, on the contrary, the idea of a figurative reading of the Johannine characters is persuasive (i.e., “genus syncrisis naturally supports a ‘two level’ reading of narrative texts that incorporate this rhetorical device”), although he is less persuaded of the precise identification of the various real-world groups standing behind the Johannine characters, “simply because we lack external verification of the political dynamics of John’s situation.”²⁰ Most importantly, however, M.W. Martin’s argument persuaded Thatcher “that the Fourth Gospel uses comparison as a key technique of characterization.”²¹

In an article from 2007, Jerome H. Neyrey discusses the FG as an encomium dedicated to Jesus. Since syncrisis was regarded as a stereotypical *topos* found in encomion, Neyrey was able to identify in the FG four comparisons, namely three between Jesus and Israel’s greatest patriarchs (Abraham, Jacob and Moses) and one between Jesus and “the Christian hero”, John the Baptizer. Due to both the short form of the article and the particular focus of his study, which was encomium, the scope of Neyrey’s description of Johannine syncrisis is very limited, comprising no more than one page.²²

As is evident from the above scrutiny, there is still much room for research on the syncrisis in the Fourth Gospel. To my knowledge, no one has thus far advanced such a reading for the relation between Jesus and Peter.

4. The Progymnasmatic Theory of Syncrisis and the Fourth Gospel: The Case for Interference?

The σύγκρισις was one of the most widely used rhetorical techniques in antiquity, and one can provide multiple examples from the Graeco-Roman world, including in Homer, Aristophanes, Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, Livy, Plutarch and Appian.²³ The theoretical concept of σύγκρισις is already laid down by

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 praise different competing or allied communities in the first century remains in the realm of possibility and not probability.”

20 T. Thatcher, review of M.W. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric of Comparison in the Fourth Gospel*, *RevBL13* (2011) 387-388.

21 Thatcher, review, 387.

22 J.H. Neyrey, “Encomium versus Vituperation: Contrasting Portraits of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel”, *JBL* 126 (2007) 547-548; reprint in *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans 2009) 3-28.

23 The examples from the Graeco-Roman world are given by F. Folke, “Synkrisis”, *Hermes* 58 (1923) 327-368, esp. 342-344; Forbes, “Comparison”, 1-30, esp. 25; Müller, *Mehr als ein Prophet*, 49-64; Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric*, 47-59. Cf. also S. Swain, “Plutarchan Synkrisis”, *Eranos* 90 (1992) 101-111.

Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* (1.9.38-41; 2.23), which stems from his lectures in Athens delivered in the mid-fourth century BC. In the next centuries, the principles of this rhetorical technique were enunciated by Cicero (*Topics* 3.23) in the first century BC and by Quintilian in *On the Education of the Orator* (5.10.86-93), written in Rome between AD 92 and 95. The description of σύγκρισις is also found in *Rhetoric to Herennius* (1.6.10; 4.45.59–4.48.61), probably written by Cornificius about 84 BC, and likewise in all four extant Greek *progymnasmata* (“preliminary training-exercises”) written in the time of the Roman Empire. In the elucidation of the Johannine σύγκρισις between Jesus and Peter, the present article draws upon the theoretical descriptions of this rhetorical device provided by the *progymnasmata*. There are several sound reasons for our reliance on these four treatises in the exposition which follows.

First, the *progymnasmata* contain significant discussions on how σύγκρισις was to be composed and arranged. In each of these ancient textbooks – authored by or attributed to Aelius Theon of Alexandria (first century AD), Hermogenes of Tarsus (second century AD), Aphthonius (fourth century AD), and Nicolaus of Myra (fifth century AD) – there is a chapter, or rather an exercise, wholly dedicated to the art of syncrisis.²⁴ Thus, the comprehensive description of this rhetorical principle provided by the *progymnasmata*, by the very fact of its comprehensiveness, invites us to embrace these works as providing valid methodological guidelines for describing the Johannine rhetoric of syncrisis.

Second, though the dating of some of these treatises seems too remote in time to have influenced the authors and original audiences of the New Testament, it has been suggested that some of the exercises must have been known and practiced already in the early Hellenistic period (fourth century BC).²⁵ Bonner argues:

24 The translation of all four *progymnasmata* is provided by G.A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Society of Biblical Literature. Writings from the Greco-Roman World 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2003). In the following pages, Kennedy’s translation will be quoted, but text citations will reference the page numbers of the following critical editions: for Theon: L. Spengel (ed.), *Rhetores Graeci* (Leipzig: Teubner 1854) II, 59-130; for Hermogenes: H. Rabe (ed.), *Hermogenis Opera* (Rhetores graeci 6; Leipzig: Teubner 1931) 1-27; for Aphthonius: L. Spengel (ed.), *Rhetores Graeci* (Leipzig: Teubner 1854) II, 21-56; for Nicolaus: J. Felten (ed.), *Nicolai Progymnasmata* (Rhetores Graeci 11; Leipzig: Teubner 1913; repr. Osnabrück: Zeller 1968) 1-79.

25 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, xi. Cf. M.W. Martin, “Progymnastic Topic Lists: A Compositional Template for Luke and Other *Bioi*?”, *NTS* 54 (2008) 19: “The exercises have pre-Hellenistic origins and began to take a form very similar to that attested in the extant sources in the Hellenistic period”. The Latin description of these *progymnasmata*, written by Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*), dates to AD 94, which sets *terminus ante quem* for the use of those exercises, but obviously not for the date of writing the treatises themselves. For instance, it has been recently suggested that Theon’s *progymnasmata* should be attributed to the fifth-century rhetorician and not the first AD as was commonly held; see M. Heath, “Theon and the History of the *Progymnasmata*”, *GRBS* 43 (2002/2003) 129-160.

It seems likely [...] that the formation of the standard set of preliminary exercises, known to us mainly from writers of the imperial period, was a gradual process, which took place during the Hellenistic Age. It must, however, have been fairly complete by the first century B.C., and maybe earlier, for already in the late Republic the set, or a good part of it, was being used by teachers of rhetoric in Latin, who called them *exercitationes* or, later, *materiae*.²⁶

Such a presumed early dating of the progymnasmatic forms renders possible an assumption about their influence on the authors of the NT and, consequently, on both the text of the FG and its original audience.

Third, the *progymnasmata* were very popular in the ancient educational system, and their use was not restricted, as it might be assumed, to the tertiary level of education only. As G.A. Kennedy explains:

In the later stages of their training under a grammarian and in the early stages of rhetorical study, students in New Testament times and late antiquity practiced exercises in composition called progymnasmata, which provided a method for working out the common types of discourse. If students subsequently undertook serious literary work, they tended to utilize progymnasmatic forms in the development of their thought.²⁷

Thus, in Kennedy's opinion, the progymnasmatic exercises were used both on the second and the third educational levels.²⁸ Some other scholars tend to opt for either the second or the third tier exclusively.²⁹ This disagreement does not seem too significant, however, as modern researchers are more and more convinced that the tripartite organizational model of ancient education does not accurately reflect the complex reality of the ancient Hellenistic and Roman world.³⁰ As is corroborated by ancient authors, the selected exercises taken from *progymnasmata* could have been applied by teachers already before the tertiary/final level

26 S.F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome. From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (London: Methuen 1977) 250-251.

27 G.A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC – London, U.K.: University of North Carolina Press 1984) 22.

28 In fact, Theon (*Prog.* 59) envisioned the initiation into *progymnasmata* as a preparation for rhetorical studies. It would suggest then the second level and/or the beginning of the third.

29 In J.H. Neyrey's opinion ("Encomium", 531): "The *progymnasmata* were the exercises taught in the second level of education to train students for public discourse." In D.F. Watson's opinion: "The progymnasmata were a central part of the rhetorical instruction in the curricula of post-secondary education in the Roman Empire." D.F. Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism", *Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (ed. D.E. Aune) (Oxford: Blackwell 2010) 171.

30 R.A. Kaster, "Notes on 'Primary' and 'Secondary' Schools in Late Antiquity," *TPAPA* 113 (1983) 323-346, talks not only about a three-stage model, now slowly being abandoned by scholars, but also about two separate tracks of schooling: the *ludus literarius* (an education provided for students of humble origins) and the *scholae liberales* (designed for a more affluent part of the society). T. Morgan names the two realities of the latter organizational model as "core" and "periphery" education. Cf. T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge Classical Studies; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998) 71-73.

of education, depending on individual circumstances.³¹ This was especially true among the Latin grammarians who, during Imperial times, gradually extended their range of teaching to embrace all the Latinized *progymnasmata*.³²

Fourth, an intentional presence of σύγκρισις in the FG might be also corroborated by the popularity of this specific rhetorical device within the ancient Greek educational system. According to B. Witherington, the exercise of comparison was introduced already at the very first tier of Greek schooling: “In elementary education, children would learn how to do rhetorical comparisons (called *synkrisis*) for the sake of the formation of their values – so they would know the difference between being a virtuous person and being a wicked one.”³³ This view is in complete dissonance with the conviction of some scholars that syncrisis would likely fall in the tertiary level of education.³⁴ Although there is

31 Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.9.3; 2.1.2-3; Suetonius, *De Gramm.* 4; Strabo, *Geog.* 14.1.48; Libanus, *Ep.* 768.2; 1261.2. See R. Webb, “The Progymnasmata as Practice”, *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (ed. Y.L. Too) (Leiden: Brill 2001) 297: “there is evidence that in Greek schools up to the end of antiquity, and beyond, the *progymnasmata* were taught as part of rhetorical studies, and were not generally taken over by grammarians. [...] Even so, practice must have varied considerably from place to place in both East and West, with small-town grammarians teaching as much of the curriculum as they could, if there was no local rhetor. [...] To be taken through the exercises by a grammarian who had perhaps had very little experience of rhetorical composition or performance, would have been a very different experience from being taught in the school of an experienced rhetor.”

32 Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 250-253, esp. 252. S.A. Adams, “Luke and *Progymnasmata*: Rhetorical Handbooks, Rhetorical Sophistication and Genre Selection”, *Ancient Education and Early Christianity* (ed. M.R. Hauge – A.W. Pitts) (LNTS 533; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2016) 153, observes that the location of *progymnasmata* as straddling the gap between the secondary and tertiary tiers has a number of implications: “First, it recognizes that the handbooks are not rigidly held together, but were used in a flexible manner which changed over time and between different geographic regions. Second, it limits the availability of formal rhetorical training within the education system to the tertiary level. Third, and most importantly, it highlights that occasional examples of rhetoric use (e.g. *chreia*, maxims) in a work are insufficient for claiming rhetorical training and sophistication for the work’s authors.” At the same time, however, Adams (*ibidem*) acknowledges (1) the possibility of using rhetorical tools to evaluate the Gospel narratives, and (2) the utility of some insights that rhetorical examination can bring to the interpretation of these narratives.

33 B. Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books 2009) 11. Morgan (*Literate Education*, 121-123) provided documentary evidence that the most basic of progymnasmatic exercises (e.g. gnomic maxims and *chreiai*) was introduced already on the first and second levels of education. Among them, however, she does not mention syncrisis.

34 See an argumentation for this case in Adams, “Luke and *Progymnasmata*”, 141-142 and 147-148. Adams hypothesizes that the division of progymnasmatic material between the second and the third level of education was set on *refutation*. In all the *progymnasmata* treats the exercise of *syncrisis*, as more advanced, is found after *refutation*. He (“Luke and *Progymnasmata*”, 142) argues: “Beginning with refutation, greater responsibility is placed on the students and their ability to think for themselves. Accordingly, with this division the secondary student would have had training in *chreia*, maxim, fable and narrative with possible (although increasingly less likely) exposure to the more advanced exercises.”

no conclusive evidence to answer the question on which level of formal education syncrisis was introduced, it goes without saying that an exercise of comparing the lives of famous personages could have a great pedagogical value.

Fifth, referring to *argumentum ad verecundiam*, two unquestionable authorities in the field of rhetorical analysis of the NT, namely G.A. Kennedy and J.H. Neyrey, have no doubt that the authors of the Gospels, in their habits of thinking and writing, were molded by progymnastic school exercises.³⁵ Even if such a claim is open to debate, there is no doubt that those authors noted a conformity between some rhetorical characteristics of the gospels and the rhetorical theory found in the *progymnasmata*.

In view of the above, and before proceeding further in our analysis, a few caveats and clarifications are necessary. First, Sean A. Adams warned that the presence of any rhetorical technique within a work does not imply its correct use by the author. It is then possible that the author of the FG consciously employed a syncrisis, or at least attempted to do so, but the outcome was not necessarily impressive in terms of its conformity to the rhetorical canons like those, for instance, presented in the *progymnasmata*.³⁶ According to Adams, if the ancient author, in our case the author of the FG, (1) created a comparison while abandoning some of the discrete formal (form-determinant) features of syncrisis, as defined by ancient theorists, and (2) did not use the term σύγκρισις in his work, it “creates substantial ambiguity for applying the label of *syncrisis*.”³⁷ It is our conviction, however, backed up by ancient theorists themselves (as will be demonstrated later), that the author of the FG was not required to employ a syncrisis that contained all the discrete formal elements as found in the *progymnasmata*, or in certain other illustrious examples of this technique, such as Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*. Neither was he obliged to use the term σύγκρισις. For these very reasons, we venture to confidently use the label “syncrisis” in describing some elements of the Johannine characterization of Jesus and Peter.

Second, even if the author of the FG was not formally trained in composing σύγκρισις within the secondary and/or tertiary tiers of the Greek educational

35 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, ix; Neyrey, “Encomium”, 550; Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 4: “the author Fourth Gospel knows the traditional code for praising persons as is found in the encomium exercise in the *progymnasmata*.” Cf. also Martin, “Progymnastic Topic Lists”, 41: “the Third Evangelist is a graduate of the progymnasmata.”

36 Adams, “Luke and *Progymnasmata*”, 142: “It is necessary [...], to differentiate between the possible existence of a rhetorical stratagem within a work and the quality of its use. Just because an author employs a rhetorical device does not mean that it was used well. Even within antiquity ancients recognized gradients of uses among authors. In each case the quality of the author’s employment may also indicate the level of education. Excellent employment supports the claim of higher rhetorical training; whereas mediocre employment suggests (but does not guarantee) a less thorough education.”

37 Adams, “Luke and *Progymnasmata*”, 153.

system, and, moreover, even if the Greek audience of this Gospel were not acquainted with this technique through formal rhetorical education, both the author and audience were still exposed to the Greek cultural milieu within which such a device was extremely popular. Thus, it is entirely feasible that the author of the FG could have consciously applied the concept of σύγκρισις in his work without having had any formal rhetorical training, and the Greek-speaking audience of the FG could likewise have easily interpreted its message through the lens of this ubiquitous technique.³⁸

Third, there is also another situation possible: having some Greek educational background, which is self-evident by the simple fact of composing the FG in the Greek language, the author could have applied the technique of syncrisis unconsciously, by sheer imitation of other writers and orators and their ways of portraying various characters or personages. In this case, the audience, acquainted with this technique either by formal education or simply by exposure to Greek oral culture (without any formal rhetorical preparation), would have recognized its presence in the narrative.

To sum up, we do not claim that the author of the FG consciously employed the formal principles of syncrisis found in the *progymnasmata* treaties in the composition of comparisons between Jesus and Peter. It is possible that he did not have a firsthand knowledge of any rhetorical treatises (the *progymnasmata* themselves postdate the FG). However, all the essential *topoi* advised by progymnastic theorists to create syncrisis were also found, long before the

³⁸ This claim was advanced by G.A. Kennedy, M.C. Parson and K. Maxwell, and was countered – in my opinion unpersuasively – by S.A. Adams (“Luke and *Progymnasmata*”, 143) who cites the works of these authors and argues: “Although the claim that an uneducated audience could identify rhetorical devices or recognize a speech that lacked rhetorical flair is probable (especially within an important metropolis), it is questionable whether a person from that same audience would have the skills to construct a literary work that utilized the same rhetorical tools that they could identify. Accordingly, the identification of rhetorical features within a work lends greater support for that writer’s education than to the idea that rhetoric was ‘in the air’ and was therefore assimilated. There is little doubt that a person could have learned a phrase of Isocrates or Demosthenes by listening to a declaiming sophist. However, the ability to consistently and elegantly utilize such knowledge would have been nearly impossible without a thorough knowledge of classical authors. Moreover, the extreme specialty of rhetoricians, indicated by the amount of extra schooling needed for this profession, mitigates against the idea that a marginally educated person would have been able to use advanced handbook exercises well without training.” In response, no one claims that the author of the FG “consistently and elegantly” utilized the *progymnasmata* or, more precisely, the technique of syncrisis. Otherwise, its use in the FG would have been noted long ago by many scholars and found its firm place in any introduction to the FG. As already noted, the author of the FG might employ it inconsistently, even wrongly, limiting its use to only a few single elements. As to ancient authors who suggested that all the citizens of a city “share in the study as by a vapor” and thus would have recognized rhetoric, Adams (“Luke and *Progymnasmata*”, 143, note 23) mentions Libanus, *Or.* 11.192 and Aristides, *Panath.* 46.

composition of the *progymnasmata*, in biographies (*bioi*) and encomia.³⁹ Thus, the author of the FG could have possessed a knowledge of these *topoi* from other literary compositions and oral speeches.⁴⁰ Finally, we do claim that the *progymnasmata*, by the very fact of transmitting an essential ancient rhetorical theory about biography (*bios*), encomium and syncrisis, can serve as valuable guides in identifying the syncrises and describing their basic elements.

5. Basic Rules of the Progymnasmatic Theory of Syncrisis and the Johannine Syncrisis between Jesus and Peter

The *progymnasmata* lay down a significant number of rules for conducting σύγκρισις. A few of them, however, seem to be of special importance and as such ought to be taken as the methodological guidelines for the analysis which follows.

First, one of the rules, set forth by all four of the progymnastic theorists, states that the comparisons are conducted not whole to whole, but part to part. In other words, it is more persuasive to compare a few facets of the lives of the two persons rather than comparing their whole lives as such.⁴¹ Further, only those topics should be brought forth which have some importance for the writer's aims.⁴² Indeed, the theorists envision situations in which comparison by a single topic will suffice for a syncrisis.⁴³ In the case of the FG, the encomium of Jesus contains many syncrises (e.g., Jesus vs. John the Baptist, Jesus vs. Moses, Jesus vs. Jacob), among them the one juxtaposing Jesus with Peter. There is no doubt, however, that these comparisons do not encompass the entire lives and personalities of the compared figures. In our case, there is a selection of only a few themes by which Peter is compared with Jesus.

³⁹ See a constructive critique raised by Adams ("Luke and *Progymnasmata*", 148-149) of the view advanced by Martin ("Progymnasmatic Topic Lists", 18-41) that progymnasmatic topic lists were the model for the composition of the Third Gospel.

⁴⁰ For example, Adams ("Luke and *Progymnasmata*", 152) argues: "it appears that Luke could have solely used existing biographies for his *topoi* and for modelling his instances of comparison."

⁴¹ Cf. Aphthonius (*Prog.* 43), who argued: "It is not necessary in making comparison to contrast a whole with a whole, for this is flat and not argumentative, but compare a heading to a heading; this at least is argumentative." In the same vein, Nicolaus (*Prog.* 59) states: "neither in the exercise called encomium will there be an evaluation of a whole in comparison to a whole, but of a part to a part." See also *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 6.48.61 (LCL 383): "The resemblance between the two things need not apply throughout, but must hold on the precise point of comparison."

⁴² Cf. Theon, *Prog.* 111; Nicolaus, *Prog.* 51 and 61 ("heading employed in syncrisis are double, and just as there, we shall seek out those that are possible, choosing them to fit the subjects or persons or actions").

⁴³ Cf. Nicolaus, *Prog.* 61.

Second, all the theorists agreed that the elements, headings or parts to be compared consist of the encomiastic topics.⁴⁴ That is, those encomiastic topics (selected for their relevance) ought to serve as the compositional outline of a fully-fledged syncrisis. All four treatises, in discussing either encomia or syncrisis, provide a list of those topics. Hermogenes' proposal, providing the most expansive list of topics, will serve as a point of reference (and provide a numbering scheme) for the proposals advanced by Aphthonius and Nicolaus.

Hermogenes (*Prog.* 14-18: "On Encomion") lists the following headings: (1) national origin, (2) city, (3) family, (4) marvelous occurrences at birth (e.g. dreams, signs), (5) nurture, (6) upbringing (training, education) (7) body (e.g. swift, strong), (8) mind (e.g. just, brave), (9) pursuits (vocation, e.g. philosopher, soldier) and deeds (accomplishments), (10) externals (e.g. relatives, friends, possessions, servants, luck), (11) time (length of life), (12) manner of death (if there was anything unusual about it), (13) greatness of the one who killed the subject, (14) events after death (e.g. games in honor of the deceased, famous children), and (15) comparison. Discussing the syncrisis, Hermogenes (*Prog.* 19: "On Syncrisis") lists only seven topics: (2) city, (3) family, (5) nurture, (9) pursuits and deeds, (10) external factors, (12) manner of death, and (14) events after death.

Aphthonius (*Prog.* 35-36: "On Encomion"), discussing encomion and invective, gives the following list: (0) prooemion, (1) origin (nation, homeland, ancestors, parents), (6) upbringing (habits, skills, conduct), (9) deeds: mind (e.g. courage, prudence), body (e.g. beauty, swiftness, strength), and fortune (e.g. power, wealth, friends), (15) comparison, and (0) epilogue (a prayer). Dealing with syncrisis, Aphthonius (*Prog.* 43: "On Syncrisis") states that one should elaborate it "with the same headings as encomion, except for comparison. There is no comparison in it, since the whole exercise is a comparison".

Discussing encomion, Nicolaus (*Prog.* 47-58: "On Encomion and Invective") invokes Plato's division of topics into goods of the mind (e.g. prudence, justice, temperance, courage) and goods of the body (e.g. beauty, strength, size, speed), supplemented by the Peripatetic addition of external goods (e.g. origin, friends, wealth).⁴⁵ However, he advises another division of topics, in his opinion the one

⁴⁴ Hermogenes (*Prog.* 19) states explicitly that syncrisis "proceeds by use of encomiastic topics." While talking about syncrisis Theon (*Prog.* 113) states, "Whenever we compare persons we shall first put side by side their good birth and education and the excellence of their offspring and offices they have held and their reputation and the condition of their bodies and any other bodily and external good that we mentioned earlier in discussing encomia". Theon argues then that the topics for comparison must be taken from encomia. M.W. Martin made a useful compilation and juxtaposition of all encomiastic topics mentioned by all four theorists. Cf. Martin, "Progymnastic Topic Lists", 18-41. Those lists are also found in Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric*, 42-43; Martin – Whitlark, "The Encomiastic Topics", 421-422.

⁴⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus* 270b. Cf. also Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.85.

which is more prevalent in use: (0) prooemion, (1) origin (nationality, native city, ancestors), (4) circumstances of birth (e.g. parents' dreams), (5) circumstances of upbringing (e.g. nurture), (6) activities in youth (e.g. training in rhetoric or poetry), and (9) deeds referred to virtues, accompanied by comparisons. Discussing syncrisis, Nicolaus (*Prog.* 61) states that one should employ the same list of topics as in encomion.

In his exercise "On Encomion and Invective" (*Prog.* 109-112), Theon differentiates three kinds of goods which should be mentioned in encomium: (I) external goods, (II) bodily goods, (III) goods of mind and character (virtues) and actions referred to virtues. Among external goods, Theon lists good birth (origin), "either from the goodness of (a man's) city and tribe and constitution, or from ancestors and other relatives" (*Prog.* 110), education, friendship, reputation, official position, wealth, good children, a good death. By the bodily goods, Theon means health, strength, beauty, and acuteness of sense. As to the goods of the mind and character, Theon gives a few examples: prudence, temperance, courage, justice, piety, generosity, and magnanimity. Dealing with syncrisis, Theon (*Prog.* 113) mentions good birth, education, excellence of offspring, offices, reputation, condition of the body, ending with the following comment: "any other bodily and external good that we mentioned earlier in discussing encomia. After this we shall compare their actions" (*Prog.* 113).

The differences among the lists demonstrate that the number of topics and their order was not a matter of agreement among the theorists. Nevertheless, there was a core set of topics (origin, upbringing, deeds, and comparison) and, except for Theon advising a thematic order of three kinds of goods,⁴⁶ the theorists recommended a chronological order.⁴⁷ In the next section of the article, dealing with the detailed exposition of syncrises between Jesus and Peter, the list of topics presented above will serve as a structuring principle.

Third, one of the progymnastic rules advises to compare only two important figures, a principle already brought forth by Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1.9.38). Theon (*Prog.* 114) states explicitly that the method of genus syncrisis consists in "comparing one or two of the most outstanding to the most outstanding". The same procedure was employed by Plutarch in his *Parallel Lives*, where he compared Romans with Greeks, choosing only some outstanding personages.

⁴⁶ Theon (*Prog.* 111) states, "Immediately after the prooemion we shall speak of good birth and other external and bodily goods, not arranging the account simply and in any random order."

⁴⁷ The above core set of *topoi* did not come into being only with the composition of the *progymnasmata*. Long before the emergence of these rhetorical handbooks, these topics were employed as standard features within biography (*bios*) and encomium, genres established well before that time. Cf. Adams, "Luke and *Progymnasmata*", 148-149; S.A. Adams, *The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography* (SNTSMS 156; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013) 68-115.

In the Johannine narration, Peter is referred to more frequently than any other disciple – even more frequently than the Beloved Disciple. Moreover, he enjoyed a high profile within the early Church, where he was regarded as the model figure to be followed and imitated. This preeminent position of Peter is accentuated by the author of the FG by certain elements: (1) The central position of Peter in the literary structure of the description of the call of the first disciples (1:35-51). (2) Peter, the only disciple so honored, receives a nickname directly from Jesus (1:42). (3) Peter responds to Jesus' question on behalf of all the Twelve (6:67-69). (4) He is the leader of the group of disciples for the catch of fish (21:3). (5) Peter, as compared to other disciples, appears in the greatest number of episodes, and he is the one who has the greatest number of dialogues with Jesus.

Fourth, Theon defines σύγκρισις as a syncrisis of genera, or comparison of groups by their “outstanding members”.⁴⁸ In this sense, a figure in comparison is to be understood as a representative of a larger group. In fact, Peter is explicitly presented as a representative of the whole group of Jesus' disciples in at least two Johannine episodes: when he is confessing the true identity of Jesus on behalf of the Twelve (6:68-69), and while he is leading a group of six disciples in the catch of fish (21:3). In this sense, by comparing Peter to Jesus, the author of the FG wants to compare the whole group – all the disciples – to Jesus. By the same token, identifying Peter as a representative of the group justifies his choice as a person suitable for comparison.

Fifth, the syncrisis can structure the whole literary composition (like Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*) or it can be employed as one element of a composition, belonging to any known rhetorical species (an encomion, juridical or deliberative speeches).⁴⁹ Nicolaus (*Prog.* 62) is explicit about it: “the use of syncrisis takes many forms [...] both when employed by itself as a whole discourse and when part of something else.”⁵⁰ Looking at the FG as a whole, it is rather clear that this narrative cannot be labeled as a syncrisis. Though the comparisons are

⁴⁸ Theon (*Prog.* 114) states: “We usually compare more than one thing to more than one in two ways. One way is when we take extreme examples of the things being compared and put these beside each other and in the comparison of these we think to find the whole genus (of one group) in comparison with the whole genus (of the other). For example, if we wanted to compare the genus of males to that of females (to find) which of them is braver, by comparing the bravest man to bravest woman; whichever we find better, we would conclude that the whole of that genus is better than the other.”

⁴⁹ According to Theon (*Prog.* 60-61) σύγκρισις is useful “in judicial speeches when we compare either wrongs to wrongs or good deeds to good deeds, and similarly in encomia when we contrast good deeds. The advantage (of practice of comparison) for deliberative speeches is also very clear, for speeches of advisers are concerned with which policy is preferable.” Cf. also Nicolaus, *Prog.* 59.

⁵⁰ Nicolaus (*Prog.* 60) argues that syncrisis “will be brought on as a part in encomia and commonplaces, and as a whole when, say, a prize for a virtuous life is offered and two men, distinguished in that way, contend with each other for the prize.”

present throughout the whole narrative, they are only a device integrated into its structure and subordinated to its global scheme. As to the types of compositions in which syncrisis ought to be employed as a part of the larger piece, the progymnastic theorists list a common-place, encomion and invective.⁵¹ Jerome H. Neyrey convincingly argued for the understanding of the FG as an encomion of Jesus, so there is no need to discuss this case.⁵² According to the progymnastic lists of encomiastic topics given by Hermogenes (*Prog.* 17) and Aphthonius (*Prog.* 36), the syncrisis was to be placed at the end of the encomion. Theon, on the contrary, does not ascribe to syncrisis any precise place in encomion. According to Nicolaus (*Prog.* 53), however, “one should introduce comparisons everywhere, avoiding excessive flatness and aiming at an account of his virtues, in order that the discourse may be alive.” For this reason, one should not expect to find a full-fledged comparison at the end of the FG. Although, in the Passion Narrative, which is the pivotal and somehow concluding point of the FG, Peter is juxtaposed with Jesus in the scene of Jesus’ trial (18:16-27). Moreover, the Gospel ends (chap. 21) with the presentation of Peter’s fate as a martyr and Peter’s status as a shepherd of Jesus’ flock. It naturally evokes the comparison with Jesus’s fate and Jesus’ identity as the good shepherd.

Sixth, both the comparison itself and the individual points of comparison can be placed anywhere within the narrative. Although, as advised by the progymnastic theorists, the elements of comparison are to be put next to each other, side by side.⁵³ In our case, an excellent example is the juxtaposition of Jesus’s trial (18:19-24) with that of Peter (18:16-18.25-27).

Seventh, as to the progymnastic rules dealing with the status of the characters to be compared, the incomparably higher status of Jesus with respect to that of Peter raises a real question: whether the comparison between Jesus and Peter is in any way justified. As to the categories of syncrisis, M.W. Martin observed that the theorists work with two different taxonomies, “one having to do with the inherent praise- and/or blame-worthiness of each subject of comparison, and the other having to do with the primary subject’s standing relative to the secondary.”⁵⁴ As to the first taxonomy, according to Theon, only good with good (in the case of double encomion) and bad with bad (in the case of double invective)

51 Hermogenes (*Prog.* 18-19) states: “Syncrisis has been included in commonplace, where we amplify the misdeeds by comparison, and in encomion, where we amplify the good features of the subject by comparison, and also in invective, as having the same function.” Nicolaus (*Prog.* 61) argues: “There being three parts of rhetoric, syncrisis would seem to belong to one, I mean encomion.” Nicolaus by encomion intends panegyric rhetoric. Cf. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 163, note 98.

52 Neyrey, “Encomium”, 529-552.

53 Theon, *Prog.* 112; Hermogenes, *Prog.* 19; Aphthonius, *Prog.* 36; Nicolaus, *Prog.* 60.

54 Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric*, 39. See also a useful chart on p. 41.

is to be compared. In general, in Theon's opinion (*Prog.* 112), syncrises "are not comparisons of things having a great difference between them." For Theon, again, "comparison should be of likes" (*Prog.* 113). According to Hermogenes and Aphthonius, however, it is also possible to compare good with bad (the case of encomion-invective combination).⁵⁵ All of the theorists discuss the syncrisis through the use of the second taxonomy, in which the comparison of one person is carried out to another person who is greater, or equal, or lesser.⁵⁶ Obviously, the second taxonomy works only in the case of comparison between good vs. good and bad vs. bad. The above theory allows carrying out the comparison of the good deeds of Jesus with the good and bad acts of Peter.⁵⁷ The σύγκρισς between Jesus and Peter follows a "good to good" model of comparison as well as a "good to bad" pattern. While Peter behaves as the lesser (e.g. his denial), he is called to become equal to Jesus or as good as Jesus was (e.g. the title "friend" and the task of tending Jesus' sheep, i.e. becoming the shepherd just as Jesus is).

55 Hermogenes (*Prog.* 19) states: "Now sometimes we introduce comparisons on the basis of equality, showing the subjects we compare as equal, either in all respects or in most; sometimes we prefer one or the other, while also praising what we placed second. Sometimes we blame one thing completely and praise the other." Aphthonius (*Prog.* 42) defines syncrisis as bringing together "fine things beside good things or poor things beside poor things", but also by setting "good beside bad or small beside larger." Aphthonius (*Prog.* 42) continues, "As a whole, syncrisis is a double encomion or 'a double' invective or a speech made up out of encomion 'and invective'."

56 Theon (*Prog.* 108) states that syncrisis is "threefold; for we compare what is charged to something greater or lesser or equal." According to Hermogenes (*Prog.* 18), "syncrisis is a comparison of similar or dissimilar things, or of lesser things to greater or greater things to lesser." A bit latter (*Prog.* 19), he states: "Now sometimes we introduce comparisons on the basis of equality, showing the subjects we compare as equal, either in all respects or in most; sometimes we prefer one or the other, while also praising what we placed second. [...] There is also a comparison with the better where we bring in the lesser to show it is equal to the greater." Aphthonius does not deal *expressis verbis* with this threefold taxonomy in a single description, but is aware of it and mentions all three kinds of comparison. Nicolaus (*Prog.* 60) advises the use of comparisons to the greater and to the equal, but advises against the comparison to the lesser: "syncrisis is parallel scrutiny of good or evils or persons or things, by which we try to show that the subjects under discussion are both equal to each other or that one is greater than the other." However, as Martin (*Judas and the Rhetoric*, 41) observed, "In practice, he [Nicolaus] employes syncrises that the others would describe as comparison to the lesser." A threefold way of comparing things in argumentation (i.e., lesser, greater, equal) is used also by Quintilian, *On the Education of the Orator* 5.10.91: *Sunt enim et haec maiora et minora aut certe vim simile obtinent [...] Infinita est enim rerum comparatio.* „Now all these arguments deal with the greater or the less or else with things that are equal [...]. For the comparison of things is infinite". After H.E. Butler, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian with an English Translation* (LCL; London – New York: William Heinemann – G.P. Putnam's Sons 1921) II, 250-251.

57 Even if the FG can be understood as an encomion of Jesus, it does contain some invectives addressed toward Jesus (e.g. 8:48). Hermogenes (*Prog.* 15) states: "Do not overlook the fact that they include *psogoi* (invectives) with encomia, either naming it euphemistically or because both use the same topics." The FG is surely not an encomion of Peter, yet the presence of some negative or shameful episodes from his career as Jesus' disciple should not surprise.

Eighth, there are some rules dealing with the fundamental issue of the aim or goal of the syncrisis. Reading the progymnasmatic theorists, one can discern at least three distinct goals of comparison. First, syncrisis helps to identify a superiority among not easily distinguished subjects. According to Theon (*Prog.* 112-113), “syncrises are not comparison of things having a great difference between them [...]. Comparison should be of likes and where we are in doubt which should be preferred because of no evident superiority of one to the other”.⁵⁸ Also Aphthonius (*Prog.* 36) advises to focus on superiority, when he defines comparison at the end of encomium as “attributing superiority to what is being celebrated by contrast.” Undoubtedly, Jesus is the one who accomplished successful deeds and, simply by the sheer fact of his divinity, is superior to any other character in the FG. There is no hesitancy about the incomparable status of Jesus, because the difference between him any other character is easily perceivable for the reader of the FG from the very first sentences of the Prologue.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, describing the human Jesus and comparing his deeds, performed in the flesh during his earthly ministry, with the similar deeds of other human figures, could be profitable in highlighting his superiority. By demonstrating this superiority, the author can also allude to Jesus’ identity as the divine Son of God. In this respect, only the comparison with Peter seems to be profitable. Both Jesus and Peter, for example, are put in the same situation of facing physical violence (e.g. 18:1-27), but their reaction is totally different.

The second reason for carrying out a syncrisis consists in amplifying the greatness of one person. In this case, there are two possibilities. First, there is no doubt as to the superiority of the praised person, but any comparison serves only to enhance this person’s preeminence. Second, a person with a good reputation is compared with the most outstanding person in order to enhance the greatness of the former. Hermogenes (*Prog.* 18) argues: “syncrisis has been included [...] in encomion, where we amplify the good features of the subject by comparison.” In the case of the FG, the comparison between Jesus and Peter aims to demonstrate the outstanding qualities and virtues of Jesus. At the same time, however, the elevated status of Jesus in this comparison does not imply a disdain for Peter, rather Peter is himself promoted by virtue of the comparison. Hermogenes (*Prog.* 19) adds: “sometimes we prefer one or the other, while also praising what we placed second.”

⁵⁸ According to Theon (*Prog.* 112), in syncrisis “we give preference to one of the persons by looking at their actions.” Theon (*Prog.* 113) also argued that „a syncrisis claims to identify simply the superiority of successful deeds.”

⁵⁹ See J.H. Neyrey, “‘My Lord and My God’: The Divinity of Jesus in John’s Gospel”, *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers Series. One Hundred Twenty-Second Annual Meeting, November 22-25, 1986, Atlanta Marriott Marquis, Atlanta, Georgia* (ed. R.K. Harold) (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1986) 152-171; reprint in Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 441-453.

The third goal can be defined as an attempt to demonstrate an equal status of two compared persons. Hermogenes (*Prog.* 19) states: “Now sometimes we introduce comparisons on the basis of equality, showing the subjects we compare as equal, either in all respects or in most.” The definition of syncrisis advanced by Nicolaus (*Prog.* 60) can also be useful in this regard: “syncrisis is parallel scrutiny of good or evils of persons or things, by which we try to show that the subjects under discussion are both equal to each other or that one is greater than the other.” As to the Johannine characterization of Peter, there are some topics (e.g. the role he is given as a shepherd, his manner of death) which point to some equality between him and Jesus.

6. The Elements of Johannine Syncrisis between Jesus and Peter

The exposition of the syncrisis between Jesus and Peter will follow the general order of encomiastic topics advised by the authors of *progymnasmata*, namely origins, pursuit, deeds and death. As to the figure of Jesus, there is no need to repeat the findings of a detailed and exhaustive study by J.H. Neyrey, which explores all the stereotypical *topoi* that make up the encomion of Jesus in the FG, namely origins, birth, nurture and training, deeds of the soul, comparison (with Moses, Jacob, Abraham), and death/posthumous honors.⁶⁰ Since J.H. Neyrey described the figure of Jesus, our focus will be on the figure of Peter. Consequently, the topics referring to Jesus’ life will be mentioned only if they correspond to the topics found in the presentation of Peter. Obviously, not all of the encomiastic topics employed in the Johannine presentation of Jesus find their parallels in the description of Peter, who is only a secondary character.

6.1. Origins

The progymnasmatic theorists advise to discuss the city of origin and ancestors both in encomium and in syncrisis. The FG provides these items of information with regard to both Jesus and Peter. Peter comes from Bethsaida, the city (ἡ πόλις – 1:44) in Galilee (12:21). Thanks to Herod Philip (reigned 4 BC – AD 34), this fishing village around AD 30/31 was raised to the rank of a *polis* and renamed Julias.⁶¹ Thus, at the time of Jesus the village seems only beginning to gain its

⁶⁰ Neyrey, “Encomium”, 529-552; Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 3-28.

⁶¹ Cf. *Ant.* 18:28. The information given by Josephus is corroborated by coins found on the spot. Cf. F. Strickert, “The First Woman to be Portrayed on a Jewish Coin: Julia Sebaste”, *JSJ* 33 (2002) 65-91.

importance. As to the fishing industry, Magdala and Capharnaum, settlements located in Herod Antipas's realm, were offering much better economic fortunes. In fact, Peter and his brother Andrew might have moved from Bethsaida to Capharnaum for this reason. Additionally, they likely would have avoided paying a toll and custom taxes on the border set at the Jordan River, plus the bountiful waters around Capharnaum were known for large catches of fish. If the village of Bethsaida had some pagan or Jewish Greek-speaking inhabitants at the beginning of the first century AD, it could account for the knowledge of the Greek language by Philip and Andrew, Jesus' disciples hailing from Bethsaida and having Greek names. Consequently, their Greek background might have been a reason behind mentioning them, along with the name of their home city, in the episode about some Greeks who wanted to encounter Jesus (12:21-22).⁶² If this is the case, Peter, Andrew's brother, could also have known Greek. The need to add the specification τῆς Γαλιλαίας to the name of the city, Βηθσαιδᾶ, by the author of the FG (12:21) might suggest that it was not a place of great importance and as such was not well known to the audience of the Gospel.⁶³ In

62 Cf. L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1971) 591. The presence of pagan inhabitants in Bethsaida might be inferred from (1) the information from Josephus Flavius (*War* 3,57) about the mixture of Jews and Syrians living in the region of Julias, and (2) a Phoenician-type "temple" building found at et-Tell (one of the two most probable locations of biblical Bethsaida), dated already to the pre-Maccabean period and perhaps used as a temple in the first century AD. Cf. I. Skupińska-Løvset, *The Temple Area of Bethsaida: Polish Excavations on et-Tell in the Years 1998-2000* (Łódź: Łódź University Press 2006). H.-W. Kuhn argues: "The extent to which Bethsaida/Julias was Jewish or pagan in the first century is still an unanswered question. According to our excavations and historical information it was definitely Jewish, but perhaps also had a pagan population." H.-W. Kuhn, "Did Jesus Stay at Bethsaida? Arguments from Ancient Texts and Archaeology for Bethsaida and et-Tell", *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus. IV. Individual Studies* (ed. T. Holmén – S.E. Porter) (Leiden: Brill 2011) 2995.

63 It has even been suggested that by the time of the composition of the FG the city in fact no longer existed. According to J.H. Charlesworth, in the aftermath of military campaigns during the First Jewish Revolt the city already ceased to exist in AD 67. Cf. J.H. Charlesworth, "Background I: Jesus of History and the Topography of the Holy Land", *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus. III. The Historical Jesus* (ed. T. Holmén – S.E. Porter) (Leiden: Brill 2011) 2237. Perhaps this statement draws upon information given by Josephus, who mentions some battles taking place near Julias (*War* 4.438; *Life* 398-406). However, in light of the more convincing interpretation, based on results of the archaeological excavations, the city (located at et-Tell) only ceased to exist after a major earthquake in AD 363 when a massive slope failure destroyed the economic base of the inhabitants. See H.-W. Kuhn, "An Introduction to the Excavations of Bethsaida (et-Tell) from a New Testament Perspective", *Bethsaida. A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed. R. Arav – R.A. Freund) (Bethsaida Excavations Project 2; Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press 1999) 283-294. Cf. also J.F. Shroeder *et al.*, "Catastrophic Geomorphic Processes and Bethsaida Archaeology, Israel", *Bethsaida. A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed. R. Arav – R.A. Freund) (Bethsaida Excavations Project 2; Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press 1999) 115-173. For the existence of Bethsaida in the first century AD see C.E. Savage, "Supporting Evidence for a First-Century Bethsaida", *Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition* (ed.

the same vein, C.S. Keener comments that “John’s explicit Bethsaida ‘of Galilee’ reinforces the connection between Galilee and other distant from the Judean elite”.⁶⁴ The archaeological survey of et-Tell (this location is, however, debated) demonstrates that the supposed time of the city’s prosperity, at the end of Herod Philip’s reign, did not leave any significant material signs. In all probability, it flourished (if at all) for only three years, from AD 30/31 until Herod’s death in AD 34, which according to Josephus Flavius took place at Julias (*Ant.* 18,108). The fact of the author of the FG using the original Jewish name Βηθσαιδά instead of the new Roman name Ἰουλίαις, favored by Josephus Flavius (known for his sympathies toward Rome),⁶⁵ might corroborate the thesis about the insignificant status of this city. It could point also to a predominantly Jewish character for this settlement, both in Jesus’ day as well as the time of the composition of the FG. To sum up, the principle expressed by Theon (*Prog.* 111), that a person might attain notable status despite coming from a small town, can be applied then both to the Johannine characterization of Jesus, as coming from Galilean Nazareth (cf. 1:46 – *Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*)⁶⁶ and also that of Peter, hailing from Galilean Bethsaida (1:44). Moreover, both bits of information occur at the very beginning of the Johannine narrative.

J.K. Zangenberg – H.W. Attridge – D.B. Martin (WUNT 210; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2007) 193-206. Bethsaida is also mentioned in some rabbinic texts in connection with Hadrian (AD 117-138). Cf. R.A. Freund, “The Search for Bethsaida in Rabbinic Literature”, *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed. R. Arav – R.A. Freund) (Bethsaida Excavations Project 1; Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press 1995) 267-311. For more on Peter and Bethsaida see M. Appold, “Peter in Profile: From Bethsaida to Rome”, *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed. R. Arav – R.A. Freund) (Bethsaida Excavations Project 3; Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press 2004) 133-148. See also F. Strickert, *Bethsaida: Home of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1998); F. Strickert, *Philip’s City: From Bethsaida to Julias* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 2011).

⁶⁴ C.S. Keener, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2003) 872. According to H.-W. Kuhn, the designation Βηθσαιδά τῆς Γαλιλαίας might reflect the political situation under Agrippa II, who incorporated Bethsaida to his territory in 61 AD and ruled there till his death in AD 92 or 100. Cf. H.-W. Kuhn and R. Arav, “The Bethsaida Excavations: Historical and Archaeological Approaches”, *The Future of Early Christianity* (ed. B.A. Pearson) (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1991) 88-87.

⁶⁵ The name Ἰουλίαις occurs in *Ant* 18,27; 18,108; 20,159; *War* 2,168; 2,252; 3,57; 3,515; 4,438; 4,454; *Life* 1,398; 1,399; 1,406. In *War* 4,438 Josephus mentions Julias among a *small cities* (πολίχνη) and *villages* (κώμη). At other places (*War* 2,252; 3,515), he designates Julias as a *city* (πόλις), including the most important passage, *Ant* 18,28, where he states that *the village of Bethsaida, located at the lake of Gennesaret, was advanced to the dignity of city* (κώμην δὲ Βηθσαιδά πρὸς λίμνη τῇ Γεννησαρτιδι πόλεως παρασχρών). In *Ant.* 20,159, he talks about Caesar bestowing upon Agrippa a city in Perea called Julias, along with fourteen villages that lay around it (Ἰουλιάδα πόλιν τῆς Περαιᾶς καὶ κώμας τὰς περὶ αὐτὴν δεκατέσσαρας); it pinpoints the status of Julias as a city.

⁶⁶ In the case of Jesus, his origin from Judean Bethlehem, which John calls a *village* (κώμη) in 7:42, fits the same pattern.

Already with the first mention of Peter in the FG (1:40-41), there is an emphasis on (1) his nickname “rock” (Πέτρος – twice, Κηφᾶς – once), mentioned next to his name (Σίμων – thrice) and (2) his familial relation to Andrew, as his brother (ἀδελφός – twice; cf. 6:8). John mentions also (3) Peter’s ancestor, his father (ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννου – once; 1:42). These three details can be relevant in detecting the Johannine syncrisis between Jesus and Peter. Discussing encomium, Theon (*Prog.* 110) advised to talk about good birth “either from the goodness of (a man’s) city and tribe and constitution, or from ancestors and other relatives.” The reference to Peter’s father and brother shows that the author of the FG adopted the second approach. While Peter’s father remains generally unknown to the audience of the FG – the mention of his name can simply reflect a formulaic Semitic way of addressing and naming persons – the reference to Andrew could carry more meaning for this audience. Specifically, it would enhance Peter’s honorable status by listing among the members of his family another very close disciple of Jesus (cf. 6:8; 12:22), indeed the first disciple mentioned by name in the FG (1:40). Theon encouraged also the provision of a nickname while describing a character through an encomion or syncrisis.⁶⁷ In fact, Simon’s nickname, Πέτρος/Κηφᾶς, repeated three times, “creates an expectation in the implied reader that this character will act in the narrative world in a way that will correlate with the new name that he receives.”⁶⁸ R.E. Brown observed that this nickname is to be explained by “Simon’s character or career.”⁶⁹ Origen in his commentary to John 1:42 argued that Jesus, the “Rock” *par excellence*, calls Simon the “Rock” of the Church.⁷⁰ In fact, in the immediate context, John evokes an image of Bethel (1:51; cf. Gen 28:12-19), and, in line with the patristic commentators, Jesus can be understood as “the stone of Bethel”, the house of God, a place of heavenly revelation.⁷¹ Though some commentators want to see Peter’s nickname as sign

67 Theon (*Prog.* 111) states, “It is pleasant sometimes to draw a topic of praise from names and homonyms and nicknames”, and gives an example of Perciles, who received the sobriquet of “Olympian”.

68 D.F. Tolmie, “The (not so) Good Shepherd. The Use of Shepherd Imagery in the Characterization of Peter in the Fourth Gospel”, *Imagery in the Gospel of John. Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (ed. J. Frey – J.G. Van der Watt – R. Zimmermann – G. Kern) (WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2006) 357. Tolmie (*ibidem*) reformulates the significance of giving a nickname to Simon in his own words: “Take note of this character. He will play a significant role in the rest of the narrative. This was indicated by Jesus on the first occasion on which he met him.”

69 R.E. Brown, *The Gospel of John. Introduction, Translation and Notes* (AncB 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1966) I, 76.

70 *In Jo.* 22: Πέτρον δὲ αὐτὸν κληθήσεσθαι εἶπεν, παρονομασθέντα ἀπὸ τῆς πέτρας, ἥτις ἐστὶν ὁ χριστός. ἴν’ ὥσπερ ἐκ σοφίας σοφὸς καὶ ἅγιος ἐκ ἀγιότητος, οὕτως καὶ ἐκ τῆς πέτρας Πέτρος. After E. Preuschen (ed.), *Origenes Werke. IV. Der Johanneskommentar* (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte; Leipzig: Hinrichs 1903) 502.

71 J. Jeremias, “Die Berufung des Nathanael (Jo., 1,45-51)”, *Angelos* 3 (1928) 2-5; M.-É. Boismard, *Du baptême a Cana (Jean, I, 19 – 2, 11)* (Lectio Divina 18; Paris: Cerf 1956) 86-87; J. Betz,

of his stubbornness and dullness,⁷² its positive meaning seems more justified in light of the overall Johannine portrait of Peter.⁷³

In the case of Jesus' relatives, the "high" Christology of the FG accentuates his divine family (the Father and the Holy Spirit) at the expense of his human origins. Already the first sentence of the FG, by means of the preposition πρὸς, underlines the closeness of Jesus with God (ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν – 1:1, cf. 1:2). In fact, the whole Christology of the FG is focused on the Father, as it is the primary metaphor for shaping the theological discourse of the FG.⁷⁴ There is also no other canonical Gospel in which the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to both Jesus and the Father would be so prominently elucidated.⁷⁵ The whole

"Christus–petra–Petrus", *Kirche und Überlieferung* (ed. J. Betz – H. Fries) (Freiburg: Herder 1960) 1-21. According to R. Schnackenburg, a parallel between Jesus, the Rock, and Peter, the Rock, is improbable, since "among the numerous Christological titles in John, that of 'the stone' or 'the rock' is never found". R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John. I. Introduction and Commentary on Chapters 1–4* (New York, NY: Crossroad 1990) 313. In reality, however, the image of Christ as "the stone" was widely diffused within the early Church, as reflected in other writings of the NT (Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6-8). The image of Christ as the water-flowing rock (cf. Ex 17:6), explicit in Paul (1 Cor 10:4), is alluded to in John 7:38. Moreover, at the time of Jesus, in Jewish exegesis (e.g. reflected in Targums) the place of Jacob's dream was located not in Bethel, but in the Temple in Jerusalem. In John, Jesus is explicitly seen as a new temple (cf. 2:19-21). Thus, the implicit reference to Jesus as "the stone" and "the rock", via connection with Bethel (=Temple) in John 1:51, cannot be easily dismissed.

72 A.J. Droge, "The Status of Peter in the Fourth Gospel: A Note on John 18:10-11", *JBL* 109/2 (1990) 307-311: "in the Fourth Gospel Peter is a 'rock' because of his obtuseness and persistent inability to understand Jesus."

73 A.R. Culpepper (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel. A Study in Literary Design* [New Testament: Foundations & Facets; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1983] 120) leaves this dilemma unanswered: "Is it because Jesus perceived his future potential for stable leadership (a future that is at best only alluded to in John) or because Jesus knows how fickle he will be?" For the general positive characterization of Peter in the FG, see R.E. Brown, "Peter in the Gospel of John", *Peter in the New Testament. A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (ed. R.E. Brown – K.P. Donfried – J. Reumann) (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House – New York, NY: Paulist Press 1973) 129-147; B.B. Blaine, *Peter in the Gospel of John. The Making of an Authentic Disciple* (SBL. Academia Biblica 27; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2007). For the view that the FG contains a strong anti-Petrinism, see A.H. Maynard, "The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel", *NTS* 30 (1994) 531-548; G.F. Snyder, "John 13:16 and the Anti-Petrinism of the Johannine Tradition", *BR* 16 (1971) 5-15.

74 Cf. A.J. Akala, *The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John* (LNT 505; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2015). See also various essays in A. Reinhartz (ed.), *God the Father in the Gospel of John* (Semeia 85; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 1999). According to A. Reinhartz, the Aristotelian theory about the male role in procreation (epigenesis) may have influenced the Johannine presentation of the relationship between God and Jesus. A. Reinhartz, "'And the Word Was Begotten': Divine Epigenesis in the Gospel of John", *God the Father in the Gospel of John* (ed. A. Reinhartz) (Semeia 85; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 1999) 83-103.

75 G. Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (SNTSMS 12; Cambridge: University Press 1970); T.G. Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John. Johannine Pneumatology in Social-scientific*

ecclesiology of the FG is also built on the principle of the new family, in which Jesus is the brother of his disciples (cf. 20:17). The very beginning of the Gospel talks of Jesus' coming to his "own" (τὰ ἴδια / οἱ ἴδιοι – 1:11). At the end, it is significant that the mention of Peter's father (Σίμων ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννου – 1:42) and the place of his origin (ἀπὸ Βηθσαιδά, ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Ἀνδρέου καὶ Πέτρου – 1:44) appear in the immediate vicinity of the mention of Jesus' foster-father and his place of origin (Ἰησοῦν υἱὸν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ – 1:45). It must also be noted that, according to the progymnastic way of fashioning a syncretism, these points of information are placed at the beginning of the narrative.

6.2. Pursuit: Shepherds

By pursuits, Hermogenes, a progymnastic theorist, understands the sort of life which one conducts. In the case of the FG, the lives or roles of both Jesus and Peter can be described as those of shepherds. While Jesus is the good shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep (10:1-18), Peter is called to become such a shepherd (21:15-17). Jesus, the Shepherd, in fact entrusts his own flock to Peter: *Feed my (μου) lambs!* (21:15), *Shepherd my (μου) sheep!* (21:16), and *Feed my (μου) sheep!* (21:17). Peter thus continues Jesus' role as a shepherd of the same flock. Consequently, Peter is called to become a shepherd as good as Jesus was. The main quality of a shepherd, stated explicitly by Jesus himself, is the ability to lay down his life for the sheep (10:11.15). The Johannine characterization of Peter, however, shows him as a shepherd-in-the-making. During Jesus' trial (18:15-27), Peter does not stand up to his call to be a real shepherd since he, despite his previous promise (13:37), is unable to lay down his life for a friend: *No one has greater love than this that one lays down his life for his friends* (15:13). The triple question about Peter's love (21,15.16.17) evokes a mutual love existing among friends, who should be able to give their lives for each other, but it primarily recalls the shepherd's duty of laying down his own life for the sheep.

Mark Stibbe points out three allusive connections between the discourse about the good shepherd and the scene in the high priest's courtyard, and the ramifications of these narrative echoes:

- (a) the courtyard of the high priest's house, which is described in John 18.15 by the same word used for the sheepfold in John 10.1, ἀύλη; (b) the θυρωρός at the entrance of Annas' courtyard, which recalls the θυρωρός at the entrance of the sheepfold in 10.3 (which may

Perspective (LNTS 253; London – New York, NY: T&T Clark 2003); D. Pastorelli, *Le Paraclét dans le corpus johannique* (BZNW 142; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 2006).

explain why John 10 has this otherwise unnecessary detail); and (c) the anonymous disciple who goes in and out of the αὐλή in 18.15-16, just as the shepherd in 10.2-3 goes in and then out of the fold. The implication of these narrative echo effects is that the anonymous disciple functions as the shepherd of the symbolic word-picture in 10.1-5, while Peter functions as the hired hand who flees in the hour of danger.⁷⁶

In 18:15-18, Peter is juxtaposed with the Beloved Disciple, and the latter in fact proves to be the good shepherd. J.H. Neyrey noted the following parallels between the discourse of the good shepherd in John 10 and the actions of the Beloved Disciple in John 18⁷⁷:

Metaphorical Description of the Noble Shepherd	Johannine Description of the Beloved Disciple
Shepherd Enters by the Door <i>He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep</i> (10:2)	Beloved Disciple Enters by the Door <i>As this disciple was known to the high priest, he entered [...] while Peter stood outside the door</i> (18:15)
Gatekeeper Recognizes Him <i>He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens</i> (10:2-3).	Gatekeeper Recognizes Him <i>So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the maid who kept the door</i> (18:6).
He Leads the Sheep In/Out <i>He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him</i> (10:3-4).	He Leads the Sheep In <i>Peter stood outside the door. [...] The other disciple spoke to the maid who kept the door and brought Peter in</i> (18:16).

While the Beloved Disciple is presented as the “noble” shepherd, Peter’s lack of courage degrades him to the status of a hireling or a sheep.⁷⁸ J.H. Neyrey comments: “The respective role of Beloved Disciple and Peter are confirmed as

⁷⁶ M.W.G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller* (SNTSMS 73; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994) 104.

⁷⁷ J.H. Neyrey, “The Footwashing in John 13:6-11: Transformation Ritual or Ceremony?”, *The Social World of the First Christians. Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (ed. L.M. White – O.L. Yarborough) (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1995) 210-211.

⁷⁸ J.H. Neyrey (“The ‘Noble Shepherd’ in John 10: Cultural and Rhetorical Background”, *JBL* 120 [2001] 290) states: “the Beloved Disciple acts like the shepherd in 18:15-16 when he persuades the maid keeping the door to admit Peter. This closely resembles the parable in 10:1-5 in which the shepherd enters by the door, the gatekeeper opens the door for him, his sheep hear his voice, and he either leads them in or out. The very fact that the Beloved Disciple and Peter enter the dwelling of Jesus’ enemy, the high priest, tells us that this is a life-risking scene (i.e., “lay down my life”). But Peter’s subsequent cowardice (18:17-18, 25-27) demonstrates his disqualification to be a noble shepherd at this time.”

shepherd and sheep. Far from being either shepherd or noble, Peter acts out the inferior role of the sheep.⁷⁹ Despite his failure as a shepherd during Jesus' trial, Peter is eventually endowed with the office of a shepherd. To use J.H. Neyrey's terminology, Peter's status of a hireling and a sheep is transformed into that of the shepherd. Peter's death, envisioned in 21:18, will ultimately prove his status as a noble, good shepherd, who is able to lay down his life for the sheep, a requirement for being a "noble" shepherd (10:11.15; cf. 15:13). J.H. Neyrey states:

In 21:15-17 and 18-19 the Fourth Gospel finishes Peter's status transformation. He is finally acknowledged to be the official and unchallenged Shepherd ("Feed my lambs [...] Feed my sheep," 21:15-17). Likewise his status as "noble" shepherd is acknowledged; he can truly "follow Jesus" and "lay down his life for him" (13:37). His death as faithful witness will seal his status as an elite disciple, courageous, loyal, and perfect according to the canons of his Gospel.⁸⁰

As Jesus' prophetic word about Peter's denial (13:38) turned out to be irrevocable and true (18:17-18.25-27), in the same way Jesus' prophecy about Peter's death (21:18) is expected to enjoy the same certainty and factuality. From extrabiblical sources, one learns that it indeed turned out to be true; Peter died as a martyr.⁸¹ J.H. Neyrey noted also one more parallel between Jesus and Peter, namely of serving as the host or ceremonial official during a meal. In fact, it is related to their status as "noble" shepherds.⁸²

6.3. Deeds or Goods

According to Hermogenes, while writing an encomion or syncrisis, along with pursuits one has to deal with deeds or accomplishments. In the next step, Hermogenes advises to deal with externals, e.g. relatives, friends, possessions, servants, and luck. Athonius differentiates three kinds of deeds, which include what Hermogenes deems externals, namely the deeds of mind/soul (e.g. courage), body (e.g. strength), and fortune (e.g. friends, fame). Nicolaus mentions this traditional tripartite taxonomy, but the third kind of deeds (Athonius' "fortune") he labels as external goods. Nicolaus provides yet another taxonomy, in which he speaks only in general of deeds, referred to as virtues. Theon again talks about three

⁷⁹ Neyrey, "The Footwashing in John 13:6-11", 211.

⁸⁰ Neyrey, "The Footwashing in John 13:6-11", 212.

⁸¹ Cf. *Apocalypse of Peter* 37; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1.2.

⁸² Neyrey ("The Footwashing in John 13:6-11", 212) noted: "Just as Jesus acted as the host of the ceremonial meal just finished (21:13), so Peter will assume that role too, as Jesus tells him, "Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep" (21:15, 17). Whether we understand Jesus' command literally (Peter as host at genuine community meals) or symbolically (Peter as shepherd who pastures the flock), Jesus designates him as a ceremonial official."

kinds of goods: external (e.g. friendship, official position), bodily (e.g. strength) and mind (e.g. temperance, courage). In the exposition that follows, the above-mentioned deeds or goods will serve as a primary guideline.

All four theorists mention friendship as a deed or a good desirable for inclusion as an element of comparison. In the FG, Jesus' disciples, including Peter, are explicitly called Jesus' friends (15:14-15), while Jesus is depicted as a friend, although not named verbatim as such.⁸³ The moment of Jesus's trial put to the test the friendship of both Jesus and Peter. In the introductory episode, during Jesus' arrest (18:1-12), they both withstand the test of their friendship. Peter is loyal to Jesus and takes a great risk to fight for Jesus using a sword. Jesus is loyal to Peter and his other friends, as he takes care of them, arranging the whole situation in such a way that they can escape the danger of being arrested. Unlike in the Synoptic accounts, where the disciples escape in a panic (Mt 26:56; Mk 14:50-52), the reader of the FG gets the impression that the disciples are left untouched on the spot of Jesus' arrest. In the second scene, however, Jesus' trial before the high priest (18:13-27), Peter fails as a friend, while Jesus again withstands the test. A reader can even gain the impression that Jesus encourages the high priest to interrogate those lingering nearby about his case, including Peter: *Ask those who heard what I said* (18:21).⁸⁴ It seems that Jesus was counting on the loyalty of Peter, which he had displayed by his unbelievable courage at the moment of Jesus' arrest.

According to ancient Greek and Roman writers, one of the characteristic elements of friendship was frankness or boldness of speech (παρρησία).⁸⁵ The FG gives many examples of Jesus' frankness of speech (e.g., 11:14; 16:25.29;

⁸³ G.R. O'Day, "Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John", *Inter.* 58 (2004) 144-157. On the friendship in the FG see E. Puthenkandathil, *Philos. A Designation for the Jesus-Disciple Relationship. An Exegetico-Theological Investigation of the Term in the Fourth Gospel* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 23; Theologie 475; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 1993); J.M. Ford, *Redeemer – Friend and Mother. Salvation in Antiquity and in the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1997); S.H. Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends. Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1999); T.B. Liew, "Endless Friends? Problematizing John's Paradoxical Politics of Friendship", *Reading Communities. Reading Scripture. Essays in Honor of Daniel Patte* (ed. G.A. Phillips – N.W. Duran) (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International 2002) 292-310; K. Scholtissek, "«Eine grössere Liebe als diese hat niemand, als wenn einer sein Leben hingibt für seine Freunde» (Joh 15,13). Die hellenistische Freundschaftsethik und das Johannesevangelium", *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums. Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditions-geschichtlicher Perspektive* (ed. U. Schnelle – J. Schlegel – J. Frey) (WUNT I 175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2004) 413-439.

⁸⁴ L. Schenke, *Johannes: Kommentar* (Kommentare zu den Evangelien; Düsseldorf: Patmos 1998) 345; M. Labahn, "Simon Peter: An Ambiguous Character and His Narrative Career", *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel. Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* (red. S.A. Hunt – D.F. Tolmie – R. Zimmermann) (WUNT 314; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013) 161.

⁸⁵ See the collection of three articles, titled "Friends, Flatterers, and Frank Speech in the Greco-Roman World", being the first part of the book *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech*.

18:20), which have been sufficiently discussed by modern authors.⁸⁶ Applying this concept to the comparison between Jesus and Peter, the FG notes that Jesus is speaking plainly about Peter's denial (13:38). Jesus' plain words, very unpleasant for Peter, are addressed directly to him. They are a sign of a real friendship in which there is no room for secrets or flattery. Peter's bold and publicly pronounced reassurance about laying down his own life for Jesus (13:37) can also be identified as a marker of their friendship. Peter's words do not seem to be vain flattery, as Peter is genuinely risking his life during Jesus' arrest. Similar frankness occurs in the dialogue between Jesus and Peter in 21:15-17. Peter's triple response to Jesus' questions contains each time the verb οἶδα, a marker of sincerity and frankness. In the final answer, there is even an emphasis by the addition of the synonymous verb γινώσκω: *Lord, you know (οἶδας) everything. You know (γινώσκεις) that...* (21:17). Frankness of speech, as a *sine qua non* of friendship, not only makes Jesus and Peter similar to each other (thus defining them as friends), but also creates a significant contrast between them. During Jesus' trial before the high priest, Jesus boldly employs the frank speech (18:19-23), while Peter lies in cowardly fashion, avoiding any forthright talk in his three answers to different interlocutors (18:17.25.26).⁸⁷ Jesus here corroborates his status as a real friend, while Peter fails as a friend. Just as Peter is a shepherd-in-the-making, so he is a friend-in-the-making.

As to the goods or deeds of body, the author of the FG does not seem to be interested in the qualities of anybody's body, except for the body of the risen Lord (cf. 20:17[ἄπτου].19.20.25.26.27; 21:15). Jesus' body, bearing the signs of crucifixion, serves as a proof of the true and bodily resurrection. Interestingly enough, both Jesus and Peter's bodies are described in the FG as tied up. Jesus is tied up (διαζώννυμι) when he washes his disciples' feet (13:4.5). Peter tied around (διαζώννυμι) his waist with his garment, when he saw the risen Lord at the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (21:7). Peter will be also tied up (ζώννυμι) in

Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World (ed. J.T. Fitzgerald) (NT.S 82; Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill 1996) 5-79.

⁸⁶ W. Klassen, "ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ in the Johannine Corpus", *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech. Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (ed. J.T. Fitzgerald) (NT.S 82; Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill 1996) 227-254; M. Labahn, "Die parrhesia des Gottessohnes im Johannesevangelium. Theologische Hermeneutik und philosophisches Selbstverständnis", *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums. Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditions-geschichtlicher Perspektive* (eds. U. Schnelle – J. Schlegel – J. Frey) (WUNT I/175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2004) 321-364.

⁸⁷ Klassen ("ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ in the Johannine Corpus", 242) notes: "The whole pericope (John 18:19-23) seeks to demonstrate that all that Jesus did was open and above board. That John devotes so much more time to this matter than do the synoptics is an indication of its importance for him. There is no messianic secret in John. The slogan of Jesus' teaching for John could very well be coloured along Cynic lines, ἐγὼ παρρησία λελάληκα τῷ κόσμῳ."

this old age, as Jesus promised him in their final dialogue (21:18). According to *communis opinio*, the act of washing the disciples' feet is a metaphor for Jesus's death on the cross.⁸⁸ In a similar vein, some exegetes see in the washing of the feet a forecast of martyrdom for both Jesus and his disciples.⁸⁹ The image of Peter being girded up in Jn 21:18 unmistakably refers also to his death as a martyr. In this context, the use of διαζώννυμι in John 21:7, the Johannine *hapax legomenon*, would allude to Peter's willingness of following Jesus even unto death as a martyr. Thus, both Jesus and Peter are described as laying down their lives as martyrs.

As to the qualities of the body, the progymnastic theorists mention the strength of the body. In fact, both Jesus and Peter are described as having considerable strength. In Jesus' case, despite the severe flagellation, he was able to carry his cross alone (interpreting εἰσέρχῃ in 19:17 as *dativus instrumentalis*). This detail is especially evocative, and susceptible to symbolic interpretation⁹⁰ if compared to the Synoptic accounts, where Simon of Cyrene was commandeered to carry the cross for Jesus (cf. Mk 15:21; Mt 27:32; Lk 23:26). As to Peter, it is possible to speak of his great strength if his pulling the net to shore (21:11) is read in light of the great number of fish, which it had been impossible for all seven disciples together to pull up (21:6). Peter's incredible strength at this point in the narrative might be read symbolically (as is the number of the fish, the fact of not tearing of the net, and even the meaning of the verb εἴλκυσεν as interpreted in light of Jn 12:32), since in the preceding narrative (21:6) Peter is toiling to pull up the net together with the rest of the disciples.⁹¹ On the other

⁸⁸ See, for instance, J.D.G. Dunn, "The Washing of the Disciples' Feet in John 13,1-20", *ZNW* 61 (1970) 248 ("What he [Jesus] is doing ἄρτι is to act out in parable his coming death on the cross. μετὰ ταῦτα the Spirit will illuminate the significance of the foot-washing by the light of the cross."); C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John. An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK 1978) 436 ("the washing of the disciples' feet, which prefigures the crucifixion itself, and in doing so points the way to the interpretation of the crucifixion."); J. Zumstain, *L'évangile selon saint Jean (13-21)* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament. Deuxième série 4b; Genève: Labor et Fides 2007) 33 ("le levement des pieds est la métaphore de la croix").

⁸⁹ J.A.T. Robinson, "The Significance of the Foot-Washing", *Neotestamentica et Patristica* (red. W.C. van Unnik) (NT.S 6; Leiden: Brill 1962) 144-147, esp. 147: "Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet is [...] to be interpreted as a bid for their solidarity with him as he goes to his death, putting to them, and to Peter in particular, the challenge, 'Are you able to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?'; H. Weiss, "Foot Washing in the Johannine Community", *NT* 21 (1979) 298-325, esp. 300: "the Johannine community performed the act as preparation for the martyrdom their members were willing to face."

⁹⁰ E.g. Jesus as the only savior of men, the sole master of his destiny, the new Isaac, an example for the disciples who were supposed to bear their crosses. Cf. G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Nashville, TN et al.: Thomas Nelson 1999) 345.

⁹¹ Cf. C. à Lapide, *The Great Commentary of Cornelius à Lapide. VI. S. John's Gospel – Chaps. 12 to 21 and Epistles 1,2, and 3* (Trans. T.W. Mossman) (Edinburgh: John Grant 1908) 293: "he [Peter] could not have drawn the net laden with so many great fishes (to land) by himself. Though indeed S. Gregory and Rupertus think that he did do this alone, though not by his own

hand, it is possible to forego any symbolism here in Peter's case, if one reads εἴλκυσεν ("to draw", "to drag") in 21:11 as the causative (ergative) active verb, like ἐμαστίγωσεν ("to scourge") in 19:1.⁹²

As to the exemplary goods of the mind and character, among these Theon (*Prog.* 110) lists prudence, courage, generosity, and magnanimity. Surely, Peter displayed the virtue of magnanimity and generosity in following Jesus (1:42; 18:15; 21:19), prudence in confessing the true identity of Jesus on behalf of the Twelve (6:68-69) and courage during Jesus' arrest (18:10.15). In fact, this last trait of Peter's character, courage, needs more elucidation, as it seems the most evident example of a syncretism between Jesus and Peter.

M.W. Martin observed that the ancient syncretism can be accomplished through explicit comparison of the subjects or topics, yet it can be also carried out implicitly through parallel narration. The latter is in fact the more common way of employing syncretism.⁹³ Ancient theorists insisted also on setting the compared things side-by-side.⁹⁴ In the Johannine description of Jesus' arrest and subsequent Jewish trial, Jesus and Peter are evidently depicted in contrast to each other. From the narratological point of view, M.W.G. Stibbe argued that the scene of Jesus' arrest (18:1-11) emphasizes Jesus over Peter (Jesus is in the foreground and Peter in the background), while the second episode, the Jewish trial (18:15-27), emphasizes Peter instead of Jesus (Peter in the foreground and Jesus in the background).⁹⁵ In Stibbe's opinion, the focus of both scenes is the contrast between Jesus and Peter, and there are at least three reasons which corroborate his conviction:

First, he [the evangelist] sets up a deliberate opposition between the twofold response of Jesus to an interrogation (ἐγώ εἰμι, in vv. 5 and 8) and the twofold response of Peter to an interrogation (οὐκ εἰμι, in vv. 17 and 25). Secondly, the evangelist depicts Peter assaulting a servant of the high priest in v. 10, whilst Jesus is presented as being assaulted by an official of the same high priest in v. 22. Thirdly, the evangelist designs his narrative of Peter's

strength, but by Divine assistance." M.C. Tenney, "John", *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. IX. *John and Acts* (ed. F.E. Gaebelein) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1981) 200: "If he did this by himself, he must have possessed unusual strength. One hundred and fifty-three fish plus a wet net would probably weigh as much as three hundred pounds, or more."

⁹² Cf. B.M. Newman – E.A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies 1993) 629: "Simon Peter went back aboard the boat and helped drag the net ashore." See also R.E. Brown, *The Gospel of John (XIII-XXI). Introduction, Translation and Notes* (AncB 29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1970) II, 1073: "Despite the size and number of the fish, no miraculous feat of strength is implied."

⁹³ Martin ("Progymnastic Topic Lists", 40) invokes as an example of an explicit comparison Philo's *De vita Mosis*, and as an implicit comparison Plutarch's *Alcibiades* and *Marcus Coriolanus*.

⁹⁴ Aphthonius, *Prog.* 36; Nicolaus, *Prog.* 60.

⁹⁵ The middle section, 18:12-14, is regarded by him as a transitional pericope. Cf. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 96-97.

denials so that they are separated by Jesus' response to interrogation in the high priest's house. This creates a highly ironic scene in which Jesus calls forth his disciples as witnesses at the same time as Peter is denying any knowledge of him. Two trials consequently appear to be taking place: a formal trial of Jesus inside the house, and an informal trial of Peter outside the house.⁹⁶

As pointed out above, the contrast between Jesus and Peter is based on their words and deeds. This contrast, however, is emphasized by the structure of the narrative. The so-called "sandwich" construction underlines the simultaneity of the two trials. The reader is invited, if not forced, to compare the trial of Jesus with the trial of Peter. Interestingly enough, the Synoptics do not use the sandwich structure in their description of Jesus's trial and Peter's denial, even if they put the two episodes next to each other. Again, the Johannine simultaneity emphasizes the comparison of the two episodes.

Stibbe continues his observations:

At every opportunity it seems as if the evangelist has underlined the differences between Jesus and Peter. Whilst Peter is a somewhat spontaneous hostage to fortune, Jesus exhibits a sovereign control over events. Whilst Peter's conduct smacks of human timidity, Jesus speaks of divine composure. [...] How vividly this sovereign control contrasts with Peter, who is everywhere a victim of circumstances!⁹⁷

The above elements of contrast between Jesus and Peter, as noted and aptly described by Stibbe, create a good example of syncrisis. Jesus is presented as prudent and courageous, while Peter as an incautious coward.

Theon (*Prog.* 113) argues that in syncrisis preference should be given to "things that were done at a more crucial time". In fact, there is no more vital or decisive moment in the FG than the time of Jesus' "hour", namely Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion. Exegetes have noted that Jesus' "hour" is the time of putting him to the test. At the same time, however, Jesus' "hour" is also the

⁹⁶ Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 97.

⁹⁷ Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 98. At the same time, Stibbe (*John as Storyteller*, 98) enumerated the signs of Jesus' domination of events in the scene of his arrest: "[F]irst, Jesus goes to a place which Judas knew (v. 2), suggesting that Jesus made no attempt to escape arrest, but went as usual to the place where he rested with his disciples. Secondly, the narrator informs us that Jesus knew everything that was going to befall him (v. 4), and yet he still allowed it to take place. This stresses the voluntary nature of Jesus' acceptance of arrest. Thirdly, in John's arrest narrative, Jesus goes out to Judas instead of Judas coming to Jesus and kissing him, showing that the initiative belongs to Jesus, not to Judas (as in the Synoptics). Fourthly, Jesus' use of ἐγώ εἰμι in v. 5, the divine name, causes the arresting party to recoil in fear before the moral supremacy of Jesus. Fifthly, Jesus manipulates the situation so that he is taken, but not his disciples (vv. 8-9). Sixthly, Jesus' question, 'am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?' (v. 11) manifests confident resignation to suffering, rather than shrinking fear (as in Matthew 26.42)."

time of putting to the test Jesus' disciples.⁹⁸ Both Jesus and Peter face the same situation of trial, yet the differences in coping with this situation reveal their true identities: Jesus confirms again his divine status, while Peter denies his status as a disciple.

According to Theon (*Prog.* 110), the action worthy of mention ought to be “done for others rather than ourselves; and done for the sake of the honorable, not the expedient or the pleasant; and in which the toil is that of the doer but the benefit is common; and through which the populace experiences benefits.” Jesus' salvific act of laying down his own life for others (cf. 10:11.15-17; 15:13) matches perfectly Theon's description. The salvific consequences of Jesus' death are available not only for his own intimate circle of disciples, but for all people (cf. 3:16; 10:16; 11:52; 12:32). It seems that Peter's courage demonstrated during Jesus' arrest also fits Theon's description. Peter puts in action his previous declaration uttered in front of Jesus: *I will lay down my life for you!* (13:37). Peter then acted for the sake of Jesus, defending his master from the arrest. He could also have in mind the other disciples, endangered by the impending arrest. Thus, the supposed benefactors of his act would be both Jesus and other disciples. Undoubtedly, his act was courageous and put him in danger of losing his own life.

Theon (*Prog.* 110) also observed that “actions are praised on the basis of the occasion and whether someone did them alone or was the first or when no one else acted, or did more than others [...] or contrary to expectation or with toils”. During the arrest, Jesus goes out to encounter his persecutors. Contrary to any expectation, he is the one who controls the whole situation. In fact, it seems that no one is able to act without his permission (18:6). Applying Theon's remark to Peter, the circumstances in which he found himself were totally unfavorable to act in such a drastic and radical way. Undoubtedly, his behavior was totally unexpected. Peter was facing a squad of soldiers (ἡ σπεῖρα) as well as servants or officers (ὁ ὑπηρέτης) of the chief priests and Pharisees (18:3). In mentioning a “cohort”, John perhaps employs here a rhetorical figure of speech known as *pars pro toto*, as it is difficult to imagine an entire Roman cohort, some 600 soldiers, involved in Jesus' arrest. Nevertheless, the number of arresting party was more than overwhelming as compared to the solitary Peter acting alone against them all.⁹⁹ Among all the disciples present, Peter stands alone in dis-

⁹⁸ See Z. Grochowski, “I discepoli di Gesù nell'ora della prova (Gv 18–19), luogo di rivelazione del Maestro”, *BibAn* 3 (2013) 67-92; Z. Grochowski, *Il discepolo di Gesù nell'ora della prova (Gv 18–19), luogo di rivelazione del Maestro* (Studia Biblica Lublinsensia 13; Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2015).

⁹⁹ It is also possible to see here a maniple, a detachment of about 200 men, as the word σπεῖρα was used to designate such a unit. Still, with a sizable arrest party facing the lone Peter, the point is made.

playing such courage, hoping to rescue Jesus, and perhaps himself and the other disciples. Again the contrast emerges: Jesus overpowers everyone with his single enunciation ἐγὼ εἶμι (18:6), while Peter, armed with a sword, only manages to cut off one man's ear and then must be defended by Jesus to avoid punishment for his ill-considered action. Both, however, display incredible courage in the face of the overwhelming power of the enemy party.

In light of the further narrative, Peter's act can be viewed as completely misguided, directed by his own misunderstanding of Jesus' true identity and mission. In front of Pilate, Jesus states that his kingdom is not of this world. Consequently, because of the heavenly character of this kingdom, Jesus' servants (οἱ ὑπηρέται) should not fight and use any violence in order to keep him from being handed over to the Jewish authorities (18:36). Peter's violent action can be seen as a complete denial of his status as a disciple and friend, and consequently, as his demotion to the rank of a servant, ὁ ὑπηρέτης. Exactly the same lexeme, ὑπηρέτης, describes those who attempted to arrest Jesus (7:32.45.46), those who eventually did so (18:3.12), those who acted with violence against Jesus during his trial (18:22), and those campaigning for Jesus' death before Pilate (19:6). Peter's violent act demonstrates then his complete misunderstanding of the nature of Jesus' kingdom.

Peter's virtue of courage is also displayed by following (ἀκολουθεῖω) Jesus to the palace of the high priest (18:15). While the Synoptics underscore that Peter was accompanying Jesus from a distance (ἀπὸ μακρόθεν – Mt 26:58; Mk 14:54; μακρόθεν – Lk 22:54), John omits this information and instead gives the impression that Peter, along with an anonymous disciple (ἄλλος μαθητής), was accompanying Jesus by walking almost next to his master.

To sum up, in the narratives of Jesus' arrest and trial, both Jesus and Peter are put in similar situations, but their behavior was completely dissimilar. Jesus can be praised for his conduct; Peter, on the contrary, for denying his master, is to be blamed. Whereas Jesus demonstrates incredible self-control and dominates the whole situation, Peter acts according to his uncontrollable emotions. Jesus is praised, Peter is vilified. Those two contrasting qualities, self-control and uncontrollable emotional action, well reflect Theon's principles in describing two characters in comparison. He (*Prog.* 111) explicitly states that the author should show "that the subject used the advantage prudently and as he ought, not mindlessly – for goods that result from chance rather than moral choice are the least source of praise –; for example, that in good fortune he was moderate and humane and that he was just toward friends and exercised self-control in his bodily endowments."

6.4. Death

The discussion of the manner of death was required both in encomium (Theon, *Prog.* 110) and in synchrisis (Hermogenes, *Prog.* 19). At the end of the Johannine narrative, there is information about the manner of Peter's death (21:18-19). It is worth noting that "the inclusion of the death of a minor character was not required in ancient *bioi*."¹⁰⁰ In the FG, deemed Jesus' *bios*, the mention of Peter's death, along with that of the Beloved Disciple, demonstrates their unique status in relation to the other secondary characters.

There are some important common points in the description of Jesus' and Peter's deaths. First, both Jesus's death and Peter's are defined as the glorifying reality, by means of the verb δοξάζω.¹⁰¹ Second, as already mentioned above, both deaths can be hailed as martyrdom.¹⁰² Third, as noted above, both deaths are alluded to by means of the image of girding or binding up the person's body with clothes. Fourth, both deaths were predicted in advance. This fact may reflect Ps. Hermogenes' advice (*Prog.* 16) about describing unusual events surrounding the death. Peter is forewarned about his martyr's death (21:18). Peter's words τὴν ψυχὴν μου ὑπὲρ σοῦ θήσω (13:37) could also be read as a case of a double entendre. On one level, Peter's words are a facile declaration of his willingness to die for Jesus. Even so, at the moment of Jesus' "hour", when Peter potentially could have laid down his life, he denies Jesus. On the second level, from the perspective of his entire life, ending in martyrdom, Peter's words seem a self-prediction of his lot. In the same vein, Jesus explicitly predicts his own death (3:14; 10:11.15.17-18; cf. 3:16), a prophecy unwittingly echoed by Caiaphas himself (11:49-50). Fifth, both deaths can be described as "noble" deaths. Jerome H. Neyrey convincingly demonstrates that the Johannine texts about Jesus as the shepherd (10:11-18; but also 11:45-53 and 18:1-11) contain a cluster of the classical Greek criteria for a noble death.¹⁰³ A basic criterion of a noble death was to lay down one's life for the benefit of others.¹⁰⁴ This truth about Jesus' death was

¹⁰⁰ Adams, "Luke and *Progymnasmata*", 150, note 47.

¹⁰¹ See with the reference to Jesus 7:39; 12:16.23 and 13:31-32; and with the reference to Peter 21:19. From the perspective of the use of the verb δοξάζω and the concept of friendship (11:11), the death of Lazarus, Jesus' friend (φίλος), can also be seen as glorious (11:4).

¹⁰² Cf. also Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 121; Neyrey, "The 'Noble Shepherd' in John 10", 267-291.

¹⁰³ Neyrey, "The 'Noble Shepherd' in John 10", 267-291, esp. 280-288; Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 282-312.

¹⁰⁴ Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1.9.16-25) listed at least seven criteria which make an action honorable: (1) it benefits others and is not done for self-interest; (2) it is just or demonstrates justice; (3) it produces honor and glory, or advances one's reputation especially after death, and causes one to be remembered; (4) it was done voluntarily, by choice; (5) it ended in victory; the actor was not defeated; (6) it is unique to this particular person or distinctive of a special class of persons; (7) it yielded posthumous honors. After Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 295. Taking into

stated explicitly in the Johannine narrative (10:11.15; cf. 3:16). In the same way, Peter declares that he would lay down his life for Jesus (13:37). Unfortunately Peter's lack of courage, demonstrated in the courtyard of the high priest, proved that he does not indeed want to die for Jesus and cannot be a noble shepherd at this time. J.H. Neyrey continues his analysis:

[...] the Gospel concludes with the investiture of Peter with the role of shepherd (21:15-17). In conjunction with this, Jesus predicts the death of Peter (21:18), by which he would "glorify" God (21:19). We ask again: what constitutes a worthy shepherd? Is Peter, who once failed in courage and loyalty toward Jesus, now a "noble" shepherd? The text would suggest that we now reappraise Peter as a person willing to lay down his life, either in imitation of Jesus or to benefit the flock in some way. His triple declaration that he "loves" Jesus qualifies him according to 15:13 as one whose "greater" love leads him to "lay down his life for his friend." "Love", we remember, is a part of justice. This much is clear: worthy shepherds are they who die in service of their flocks, thus highlighting a death which benefits others, is voluntarily accepted, and manifests justice toward a group in one's care. Thus, we have another "noble" shepherd in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁰⁵

Jesus' mention of Peter's glorifying, honorable, noble death is then an allusion to his new identity as a true, noble shepherd. At the same time, the theme of Peter's death, juxtaposed with the theme of love (21:15-19), evokes Jesus' death, which was an expression of the utmost love for his friends (15:13; cf. 3:16). The connection between death for others and love for others, found in the case of both Jesus and Peter, could be the sixth similarity.

7. Conclusion

The article presented a hypothesis that some elements in the Johannine characterization of Jesus and Peter can be read through the lenses of the ancient

account other classical authors, including progymnastic theorists, Neyrey lists the following seven elements of the Greek rhetorical tradition about "noble death": (1) death benefited others, especially fellow citizens; (2) comparison between courage-cowardice, fight-flight, death-life, honor-shame; (3) virtue: manly courage displayed by soldiers who fight and die; (4) deeds and death unique; (5) voluntary death is praised; (6) unconquered in death; victory in dying nobly; (7) justice: soldiers uphold the honor of their families and serve the interests of the fatherland; by accomplishing duties, they act justly. Cf. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 306. The Johannine description of Jesus' death as a shepherd matches these criteria: 1) death benefited the sheep, who enjoyed a special relationship with the shepherd; 2) comparison between shepherd-hireling: courage-cowardice, fight-flight, death-life, honor-shame; 3) virtue: the shepherd's manly courage battling the wolf and dies; 4) Power over death and return to life unique to God and Jesus: uniqueness of power over death, 5) voluntary character of Jesus' death; 6) dying *not* as a victim ("No one takes it from me [...] "I lay it down; I take it up again"); (7) justice: Jesus (the shepherd) manifests loyalty to his sheep and his Father/God; he has a command from God. After Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 307, 309.

¹⁰⁵ Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 311.

rhetorical technique of comparison (σύγκρισις). In our opinion, the main objective of evaluating this hypothesis has been successfully reached through the following steps of analysis.

First, we argued for the probability of the conscious employment of this rhetorical device in the FG. The use of this device in the Jewish writings around the turn of the era (e.g. Book of Wisdom, Philo, Josephus Flavius), including other writings of the New Testament, seems to provide strong evidence for its possible use in the FG.

Second, we presented a short *status quaestionis* on syncrisis in the FG. Three scholars (C.G. Müller, M.W. Martin, J.H. Neyrey) discussed different σύγκρισις in the FG: Jesus vs John the Baptist, Jesus vs Moses, Jesus vs Jacob, Jesus vs Abraham, Peter vs the Beloved Disciple, Peter vs Judas, and the Beloved Disciple vs Judas. As it turned out, no one so far argued for a Johannine syncrisis between Jesus and Peter. Most importantly, however, such widespread use of this rhetorical device to describe relationships between various Johannine figures reinforces the possibility that it was used for describing the relationship between Jesus and Peter.

Third, we advanced five arguments which justify choosing the theoretical descriptions of syncrisis found in the ancient rhetorical exercises called *progymnasmata* as the source criteria for identifying syncrisis in the FG. J.H. Neyrey in some of his studies argued that the author of the FG was acquainted with these progymnastic exercises and was making use of them in writing his narrative.¹⁰⁶ Some discrete elements of syncrisis described in the *progymnasmata* are indeed found in the Johannine syncrisis between Jesus and Peter, as demonstrated in this article, as well as in other Johannine syncrises discussed by Müller, Martin and Neyrey. The presence of these elements in these Johannine syncrises could corroborate Neyrey's conclusion. Nevertheless, because the ancient culture was saturated with the rhetoric, we claim that the presence of this rhetorical technique in the FG could have resulted from even unconscious imitation of this literary pattern. Thus, the author of the FG did not have to be necessarily formally trained through the use of the rhetorical exercises. In the same vein, the ancient Hellenistic audience of the FG, accustomed to such a technique, could have also perceived some elements of the characterization of

¹⁰⁶ Neyrey, "The 'Noble Shepherd' in John 10", 309: "We claim that for a person to write Greek as well as the author of the Fourth Gospel, he would have been trained in progymnastic exercises. The Johannine treatment of the "noble" shepherd would be plausible and accessible to someone learning to write Greek through the medium of the progymnastic encomium. [...] the author would have learned to write Greek through the medium of progymnastic exercises, especially epideictic rhetoric as embodied in the encomium." As to the possibility of learning from *progymnasmata* by the author of the FG, in another study Neyrey ("Encomium", 550) states that "the author of the Fourth Gospel learned to write an encomium."

Jesus and Peter as being structured by syncrisis. The choice of *progymnasmata* stems then from the fact that they contain a description of syncrisis which is not only contemporary with the FG, but also accurate, systematic and exhaustive. Thanks to these characteristics, the treatises serve as a reliable methodological guideline in looking for elements of ancient rhetoric in the FG.

In view of the above, we pinpointed eight rules for conducting syncrisis, taken from the progymnastic exercises (both encomion and syncrisis), that served as guidelines in exposing the comparison between Jesus and Peter: (1) the syncrisis is conducted not whole to whole, but part to part (only a few elements of Peter's portrayal can be compared to that of Jesus); (2) the elements of comparison consist of the encomiastic topics; (3) the comparison should be made only between two most outstanding figures; (4) the compared outstanding characters may serve as the representatives of groups; (5) the comparison can be one element of a greater literary composition, belonging to any known rhetorical species; (6) the comparison itself, and the single points of the comparison, can be placed anywhere in the narrative, but preferably next to each other; (7) the comparison can be carried out between good and good deeds as well as between good and bad deeds; (8) the goal of syncrisis is threefold: to pinpoint the superiority of one of the compared characters; to amplify the greatness of one of those persons; or to demonstrate an equal status of two compared persons. Each of these rules was applied to the case of the Johannine comparison between Jesus and Peter. The conformity of the Johannine characterization of Jesus and Peter to these rules might be seen as a proof for the existence of σύγκρισις between Jesus and Peter in the FG.

The encomiastic topics, which define the general elements of syncrisis between Jesus and Peter, comprise origin, pursuit, deeds and death. As to origin, despite the fact that both Jesus and Peter hail from small hubs (in fact, villages), they both became illustrious heroes. The information about Jesus' foster-father and his place of origin (1:45) are placed side by side with the mention of Peter's father (1:42) and his place of his origin (1:44) at the beginning of the narrative. As for pursuits, both Jesus and Peter are described as shepherds, although the latter is a shepherd-in-the-making. As to the deeds or goods, both Jesus and Peter are presented in the FG as friends. They both demonstrate the frankness or boldness of speech, a *sine qua non* of friendship. This quality of friendship was put to the test during Jesus' trial, when Peter did not live up to his status as a friend. As to the qualities of body, both Jesus and Peter's bodies are described in the FG as tied up, which is a sign of their death as martyrs (13:4.5; 21.7.18). In the case of both Jesus and Peter one can note their considerable strength, which might have a symbolic meaning. Among other goods, both Jesus and Peter displayed prudence, courage, generosity and magnanimity. Nevertheless, in the Johannine description of Jesus's arrest and trial (18:1-27) – the best example of the Johannine

syncretism between Jesus and Peter – the latter proves to be an incautious coward. The two characters, placed in similar situations, reveal completely dissimilar behaviors. The narrative creates then a vivid contrast between Peter and Jesus. Finally, the FG offers a few common elements in the description of Jesus' and Peter's deaths: death as a means of glory; death as martyrdom; tying or binding up their bodies with garments as a sign of death; death predicted in advance; death hailed as "noble" death.

All of the above-mentioned elements of syncretism between Jesus and Peter might have a very pragmatic purpose. Each one of Jesus' disciples is called to imitate his or her master and enjoy the status of Jesus' friend, and even that of the shepherd. Peter, alongside the idealized Beloved Disciple, is described in the FG as the closest follower of Jesus. The hearers and readers of this Gospel would presumably regard Peter as the founding hero of the early Church and the first imitator of Christ. The similarities between Jesus and Peter would encourage them to persevere on their own journey of imitating Christ. In the same way, Peter's failures, which dramatically contrast him with Christ, are for them a reminder that any fall, however serious, does not irrevocably invalidate their high status as Christ' friends and shepherds.

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