

Topic of the presentation: Gospel of John, Johannine Literature

The “Prologue” and “Epilogue” of John’s Gospel as paratext? Revisiting the consensus

This research challenges the consensual definition of the thresholds of the Gospel of John (Jn 1,1-18 and Jn 21) as “paratext”, *i.e.* as that which is not the body of the Gospel proper. Indeed, in the absence of the slightest textual evidence in the manuscripts to confirm the alterity of the thresholds of the Fourth Gospel, I will argue that it is necessary to problematize the evidence with which traditional exegesis considers them as separate textual units.

My thesis is that calling the thresholds of the Fourth Gospel “Prologue” and “Epilogue” – and thus tying them to the literary genre of “paratext” – has essentialized as immanent textual properties what were merely theological presuppositions held by the historical-critical paradigm that has dominated biblical studies since the nineteenth century.

First, I will focus on the so-called “Prologue” wondering how Jn 1,1-18 became a “prologue”. Second, I will turn to the so-called “Epilogue” with the same interrogation: how did Jn 21 become an “epilogue”? I propose to tackle these questions from two different but complementary angles. Firstly, the material creation of the “Prologue” will be studied as an editorial process. Secondly, an overview of the history of interpretation of Jn 21 will reveal the intellectual creation of the “Epilogue”.

Finally, I suggest that it is in order to re-attach the written Gospel to a missing body, that of its Author – or his double, the Redactor of the Johannine community –, that exegetes have paradoxically dismembered the body of the text grafting it with a paratext.

With this research my aim is to start contributing to the study of the Gospel of John with a fresh take on a topic so consensual in Johannine research that its foundations have seldom been examined.