THE RHETORIC OF JAMES 3:1-12 AND A CLASSICAL PATTERN OF ARGUMENTATION

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Martin Dibelius argued for the disunity of Jas 3:1-12: "we observe how the ideas bump against or even clash with one another—evidence that the author is transmitting school material." He believed that vv. 1-2 are traditional admonitions, and at least vv. 3-12 are a borrowed diatribe of Hellenistic-Jewish origin quite unrelated to vv. 1-2. However, more modern commentators argue that "there are sufficient links in language, thought and style with the rest of the epistle to make it clear that, whatever in his environment he may have drawn upon, this section also is James's composition." Topical links bear out this judgment, the more important of which include γίνομαι (1:12, 22, 25; 2:4, 10, 11; 3:1, 9, 10; 5:2), παίζω (2:10; 3:2), τέλειος (1:4, 17, 25; 3:2; cf. τελειώματα 2:22), χαλιναγωγέω (1:26; 3:2), αύξω (2:16, 26; 3:2, 3, 6), βούλομαι (1:18; 3:4; 4:4), γλώσσα (1:26; 3:5, 6, 8), καθίστημι (3:6; 4:4), γένεσις (1:23; 3:6), ἀνακάταστατος (1:8; 3:8; cf. ἀνακαταστάσια 3:16), κακός (1:13; 3:8), μεστός (3:8, 17), and ὀρμώωσις (3:9; cf. ὀρμώως 2:25).

The thesis of this study is that Jas 3:1-12 is the author's own unified composition, constructed according to a standard elaboration pattern for argumentation discussed by Greco-Roman rhetorical works. First I will lay out this classical pattern of argumentation, that is, the arrangement, and second show how it structures Jas 3:1-12. The invention and style of the argumentation

2 James, 181-82, 184, 200; cf. J. Geffcken, Kynika und Verwandtes (Heidelberg: Winter 1909) 45-53 who argues that James 3:3-12 is dependent upon a tract on slander.
will be illuminated with the aid of the Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks and other rhetorical works. It has been noted rightly that 2:1-3:12 as a whole is the most rhetorically structured portion of James.

I. A Greco-Roman Pattern of Argumentation

In a study of the chreia in antiquity, Burton Mack discusses a centuries old Greco-Roman rhetorical pattern of elaboration which provides broad and flexible guidelines for the amplification of chreiae, themes, and complete arguments; for both short units and longer works. This pattern of elaboration corresponds to the four main divisions of the standard speech: exordium (introduction), narratio (statement of the facts of the case), probatio (proof of the propositions of the case), and peroratio (conclusion). Mack discovers this pattern in various associated forms in Anaximenes’ Rhetorica ad Alexandrum (fourth century BCE) and Pseudo-Cicero’s Rhetorica ad Herennium (first century BCE), tracing it to Hermogenes’ “Elaboration of Arguments” and Progymnasmata (third century CE).

Anaximenes offers the following pattern for devising supporting arguments for a deliberative speech: the similar (τὸ ἀκολούθον), the opposite (τὸ ἀντίποινον), and previous judgments (τὰ προηγμένα). Previous judgments may be those “made by the gods or by men of...”

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