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FOREWORD

The Itinerary of The Prophet-King by Wayne Meeks

BY PAUL N. ANDERSON

AMONG MODERN ANALYSES OF the origin and development of John's Christology, the socio-religious analysis of Wayne A. Meeks advances one of the most compelling and suggestive theses in recent years, addressing the riddles pertaining to the puzzling presentation of Jesus as a prophet-king like Moses in John 6:14-15. Whereas the *Logos* motif of the Johannine Prologue and the Father-Son relationship in the Johannine narrative convey high-christological thrusts, his receptions as a rabbi, teacher, and prophet elsewhere in John's story of Jesus are far more mundane and earth bound. While he is rejected in Judea for failing to live up to Davidic royal expectations (7:40-52), Jesus is declared to be "the King of Israel" by Nathanael of Cana (1:49) and the crowd in Jerusalem (12:13), and he is labeled "King of the Jews" by Pilate at his trial and crucifixion (18:39; 19:19-22). In his appearance before Pilate, however, Jesus also affirms his being a king, but rather than asserting political prowess, his kingship is one of truth (18:36-37). Rather than a king, though, he is acclaimed as a prophet by the Samaritan woman, the Jerusalem crowd, and the blind man (4:19; 7:40; 9:17), and when the Galilean crowd seeks to rush him off for a coronation as a prophet-king like Moses in John 6:14-15, Jesus responds by fleeing into the hills. The question is *why*? Was the origin and development of John's presentation of Jesus here political, historical, theological, sociological, or some combination of the like? These are the issues Wayne Meeks addresses in his first of several important monographs, and his work continues to impact New Testament studies to this day.¹

1. Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovTSup 14 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967); see also his early essay on the subject, "Moses as God and King," *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, Studies in the History of Religions 14, Jacob Neusner, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1968) 354-71.

In charting the course for his study, Meeks poses a corrective to insightful commentaries by Edwin Hoskyns and others, wherein the grounded realism of the Fourth Gospel is appreciated, but its contemporary religious milieu is ignored.² Of course, Hoskyns was interested in the Johannine tension between history and theology, but in Meeks' judgment, making use primarily of the Old Testament and a cluster of citations from Philo, rabbinic sources, and later Christian literature offered too small a repository for understanding John's socio-religious background. Conversely, despite Rudolf Bultmann's identifying of twenty-eight similarities between John's presentation of the mission of Jesus and the Gnostic Redeemer-Myth,³ the Mandaean literature is itself later. It most likely was influenced by John rather than contributing to the Johannine tradition. Further, identifying John the Baptist as a proto-Gnostic figure is less than compelling historically, and Johannine parallels with the Qumran writings account for some of its features just as readily. Here the works of Ferdinand Hahn, Francis T. Glasson, and others point the way forward, focusing on the themes of the eschatological prophet, kingship in the Levant, and Moses in contemporary literature and in the Gospel of John.⁴

In approaching his subject, Meeks first of all reviews the Mosaic, prophetic, and kingly themes in the Gospel of John, seeking to identify ways they cohere with reference to John's Christology (Chapter 2). He then explores these themes within non-Rabbinic Jewish sources (Chapter 3), the Rabbinic haggadah (Chapter 4), early Samaritan sources (Chapter 5), and finally the Mandaean texts (Chapter 6). From these analyses, Meeks contributes not only a fresh understanding of John's Christology, but he also accounts for its history-of-religions development within its Palestinian Jewish milieu (Chapter 7). It would be a mistake, however, to simply regard the value of Meeks' analysis as casting light upon the Palestinian context within which John's memory of Jesus sprouted and grew. As the scope of Meeks' lifetime contributions to New Testament studies would

2. Edwin C. Hoskyns, *The Gospel of John*, F. N. Davey, ed. (2nd edn., London: Faber & Faber, 1947).

3. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, R.W.N. Hoare, J.K. Riches, and G.R. Beasley-Murray, trans. (1971, repr. Johannine Monograph Series 1, Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2014).

4. Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity*, Harold Knight and George Ogg, trans. (1963, Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1969); T. Francis Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (London: SCM, 1963).

suggest, within this monograph lie the seeds of understanding more fully the Jewish character of John's memory of Jesus, Samaritan and Galilean tensions with Judean leaders regarding what sort of messianic deliverance was envisioned, ongoing dialogues within the evolving Johannine situation, and the emerging character of early Christianity itself with extensive implications for understanding John's contested Christology and its continuing meanings. While these enduring contributions took a lifetime to develop, their impetus is here seen in Meeks' first monograph: *The Prophet-King*.

The Presentation of Jesus as Prophet, King, and Prophet-King in the Fourth Gospel

While other approaches to John's Christology have focused on titles with exalted or theological meanings, Meeks' selection of "prophet" and "king" focuses on understandings of Jesus rife with political and mundane associations. In fact, this is the first major treatment of the *prophet-king typology* in Jewish life and culture to be performed, period. Part of the interest is to establish a historical sense of rootedness in contemporary contextual settings so as to illumine a fuller understanding of John's presentation of Jesus as the Christ. While the Johannine Jesus indeed fulfills a host of scriptural allusions, both typologically and predictively,⁵ one must inquire as to what those texts and associations would have meant to originative audiences—both in oral and written stages of the Johannine tradition. If the evangelist was indeed a dialectical thinker, as Barrett and others have pointed out,⁶ the dialectical and grounded associations within southern, central, and northern Palestine (Judea, Samaria, and Galilee) must be taken into account if John's story of Jesus is to be appreciated in its fullest. Therefore, the range of contemporary religious literature provides a helpful backdrop for understanding the origins of John's memory of Jesus as well as its later developments.

As a history-of-religions approach, however, the work of Meeks pushes back hard against the Bultmannian School, which identified the agency of Jesus as rooting in early Gnostic Baptist traditions, flowering later in the Mandaean literature (pp. 1-31). Even after the discovery of the Dead Sea

5. Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011) 83-85.

6. C.K. Barrett, "The Dialectical Theology of St John," *New Testament Essays* (London: SCM, 1972) 49-69.

Scrolls, Bultmann's inference that John the Baptist, if he were connected with the Essene movement or the Qumran community, exposes thereby the Gnostic character of Qumranic Judaism.⁷ After all, the Dead Sea is to the east of Jerusalem, so Gnostic influence might have had some impact even on the Essene sectarians on its way toward Palestinian Judaism, which then evolved into Mandaean Gnosticism—wherein John the Baptist was a heroic figure. And, if followers of the Baptist became the first followers of Jesus (John 1:19-51), this would explain the originative character of the Johannine I-am sayings, the sending motif, and the *Logos*-hymn, which introduces the Fourth Gospel. Therefore, the Gnostic Redeemer-Myth, in Bultmann's view, formed the theological basis for the Johannine Father-Son relationship, inviting the hypothesizing of a Revelation-Sayings Source supposedly underlying the discourses of Jesus in John. A major problem with Bultmann's approach, however, is that the Odes of Solomon and other Mandaean literature were likely written over two centuries after the Gospel of John,⁸ so these connections are better explained on the basis that the Johannine Gospel influenced their development rather than being influenced by the Gnosticism they came to represent in the 3rd and 4th centuries CE.

This is why the approach of Ferdinand Hahn seems compelling, and why Meeks was well advised by N.A. Dahl in following his lead. If it can be shown how Palestinian Judaism understood the motifs of "prophet" and "king" within the time and context of the Johannine tradition's development in the first century CE, important groundwork will have been laid in understanding the content of the Johannine Gospel in historical and theological perspective. In Hahn's approach, advances rooted in Second Temple and intertestamental Jewish literature provide several ways forward. First, the title *Christos* ("Christ," "Messiah," "Anointed One") is associated with a variety of authoritative leaders within Judaism, including prophetic, royal, priestly, and political figures.⁹ Therefore, messianic associations were more fluid than fixed in contemporary Judaism. Second, the anticipation of the

7. Paul N. Anderson, "John and Qumran: Discovery and Interpretation over Sixty Years," *John, Qumran, and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Sixty Years of Discovery and Debate*, Early Judaism and its Literature 32, Mary Coloe, PVBM and Tom Thatcher, eds. (Atlanta: SBL Press 2011) 15-50.

8. Although James Charlesworth dates the Odes of Solomon around 100 CE, which seems early to most scholars, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, James H. Charlesworth, ed., Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1985) 726-34.

9. Hahn, "Christos," *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, 136-222.

eschatological prophet in later Judaism incorporated both the typologies of Elijah (Mal 3:1, 23-24) and Moses (Deut 18:15, 18), while also assimilating the royal-prophetic associations of the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah.¹⁰ Rather than assert a Davidic understanding of royalty, however, Hahn builds upon royal understandings of Moses in Maccabees, Philo, and Qumran, and the Samaritan anticipation of the *Taheb* (the prophet like Moses). Third, the Elijah-Moses typology is certainly connected with the ministry of John the Baptist in the Synoptics, and Josephus describes several messianic leaders in first-century Judaism that draw upon prophetic associations in seeking deliverance from Roman occupation in political terms. As a result, Meeks teases out the details of this trajectory with great success in ways that illumine understandings not only of the primitive Johannine Jesus tradition, but which also provide valuable clues to the evolving Johannine situation and the contextual thrust of John's story of Jesus.

In analyzing the thematic functions of Jesus as prophet and king in John's narrative, Meeks notes several important features (pp. 32-99). First, Jesus is regarded as a prophet by some in John 7:37-52, although his identity as such is debated by the religious leaders in Jerusalem. In favor of Jesus' being regarded as "the Prophet" is the fact that he has performed signs, and yet this identity is denied by the Judean leaders because he does not hail from Bethlehem, the city of King David. Second, given that prophetic and royal messianic associations are here intertwined, it is ironic that the understandings of the Jewish leaders are tied facilely to geography. Thus, we see in the Johannine critique of the Jerusalem-centered rejection of the northern prophet the Judean leaders' failure to conceive of the spiritual character and heavenly origin of the Messiah, which the Galilean prophet-king embodies. Third, the ironic miscomprehension of the Judean leaders is accentuated by their allegations that Jesus, in speaking of himself, is the presumptuous and false prophet described in Deuteronomy 18:19-22, when his words indeed come true, attesting his authenticity. Fourth, in John's trial of Jesus, his "kingship" being one of truth is presented in sharp relief against political prowess. Encompassing all the elements of Israel's authentic prophet, the "good shepherd" is willing to lay down his life for his sheep, and they recognize his voice. Fifth, acclamations of Jesus as the true "king of Israel" in John's calling and Jerusalem-entry narratives (John 1:49; 12:12-19) reflect an independent tradition designed to lead later audiences

10. Hahn, "The Eschatological Prophet," *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, 352-406.

from initial miscomprehension to fuller comprehension of Jesus as a humble leader, whereby in affirming their faith, they become linked with the “true Israelites” of John 1:45-51. Sixth, it is in John 6 where the motifs of prophet and king are linked together following the feeding of the multitude, as the crowd hails Jesus as “the prophet who is to come into the world” and seeks to make him a king by force (John 6:14-15). Ironically, Jesus flees their political designs on his future, reflecting a historically grounded set of messianic expectations in Galilee, which Jesus partially embraces but also qualifies in the rest of his ministry.

Meeks then sets the history-of-religions backdrop against which John’s story of Jesus deserves to be most closely read (pp. 100-75). Among *non-rabbinic Jewish sources*, Moses is portrayed as a divine and royal figure—superior to all others—a prophet, lawgiver, priest, and king. In Philo’s *Life of Moses*, three types of Mosaic prophetic oracles include oracles spoken by God, oracles answering human questions, and divine words delivered while in ecstasy by the prophet. Therefore, as a hierophant, a mystic, and a “divine man,” Moses is also portrayed as ascending into heaven and thus conveying heavenly knowledge of the world below (pp. 100-31). By contrast, Josephus portrays Moses not as a king, but as a legislator, commander, and sovereign leader. While silent on royal and priestly associations, Josephus does portray Moses as the archetypal Hellenistic commanding leader, also describing his work as a paraclete—an advocate—pleading for grace on behalf of the Jewish nation. Josephus also embellishes the theme of an authentic succession of Moses, whereby recent prophetic figures are compared, contrasted, and thereby judged (pp. 131-46). The presentations of Moses in apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings do feature some links between Moses as a prophet and a king,¹¹ wherein Moses comprehends and explains the state of the world as a vice-regent with God. And, as Moses was adopted into Pharaoh’s household, he would indeed have had a royal upbringing. In addition to ascending into heaven and being Israel’s intercessor (paraclete), Moses is attested as God’s authentic ambassador because of his signs and wonders, as made clear in *Wisdom of Solomon* (pp. 146-64). In Qumranic literature, the connection with Deuteronomy 18 is especially pronounced with reference to the anticipation of an eschatological prophet

11. The clearest association is found in a fragment cited by both Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria, “The Exodus,” a poem attributed to an otherwise unknown person named Ezekiel, which offers an apocalyptic perspective on things past, present, and future emerging from Moses’ dream (Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 147-53).

like Moses, and while the Teacher of Righteousness is associated with such, explicit identifications are lacking (pp. 164-75). Therefore, anticipations of the eschatological prophet-king like Moses in the non-Rabbinic literature are many, though not entirely parallel to John 6:14-15.

Within *the rabbinic haggada*, Moses is presented as a king, and within this literature the divine character of that kingship is sometimes conflated with priestly status (pp. 176-215). Royal associations also accompany the shepherding role of Israel's leader, and Moses as the supreme prophet is remembered as originator of prophecy and the source of the prophets' succession. Moses also plays the role of Israel's defense attorney before God, and his ascent of Sinai becomes spiritualized and extended as ascending to heaven in approaching the *Shekinah*-presence of the divine throne. Thus the eschatological role of Moses envisions his appearing, along with Elijah, returning at the appointed time to lead Israel again through the wilderness into the Promised Land. In these and other ways, Moses is portrayed in the rabbinic literature as sometimes a greater king than David, and his messianic roles included caring for, instructing, and redeeming Israel at the appointed time.

Within *Samaritan sources*, the royal role of Moses is even more pronounced (pp. 216-57). In what proves to be the most significant of his chapters in terms of the religious background of John's presentation of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ, Meeks shows how the figure of Moses dominates Samaritan religious literature of the times, whereas messianic associations with David are largely absent. As Samaritans also had their own Pentateuch, their traditions reflect individuated developments involving some interfluent exchanges with contemporary Judaism, though the particulars of intertraditional exchange are elusive. Samaritan sources portray Moses as "the faithful prophet," "the great prophet," "the righteous prophet," and "the true prophet," by whom the secrets of Yahweh are revealed in the Torah. He is also called "the apostle of God," and while kingly references to Moses are more rare, he nonetheless founded the kingdom of Israel as the pivotal figure between Joseph and Joshua. Thus, Meeks concludes (p. 256):

This inquiry into Samaritan sources has shown that Moses was for the Samaritans the supreme prophet, indeed virtually the only prophet. His prophecy was understood as the mediation to Israel of heavenly secrets, imparted by God when Moses ascended Mount Sinai into "the unseen world." These secrets, including the Torah, brought "life" to the world, and both the Torah and Moses himself

are symbolized by such terms as “water” and “light.” Closely related to Moses’ prophetic office is the notion that he was God’s “apostle,” belief in whom was equivalent to belief in Yahweh, himself.

Within the *Mandean literature*, however, royal references are more common, and prophetic references are less common (pp. 258-85). While Mandean salvation and redemption myths are difficult to systematize, they do bear a semblance with such Johannine revelational themes as “light” and “life,” and “the King of Light” is associated with the hidden Creator, who both creates and redeems the world. Conversely, kings of darkness and rebellion distort the truth and oppose the redemptive work of God. In the heavenly spheres, Mandean demiurges serve as divine envoys, bringing the water of life and the gift of light from the πλήρωμα to the world of humans, availing deliverance from the powers of darkness. Despite these similarities, however, direct connections between Mandean sources and Jesus’ being a king of truth in John 18:37 are lacking. Connections with Moses, however, are primarily associated with enthronement motifs, and references to prophets are also set in two oppositional categories. On one hand, false prophets characterize those in opposition to the Mandean, whereas John the Baptist is hailed as their true prophet. Finally, though, king and prophet are not associated together in Mandean literature, so the Johannine linking of these two images cannot be attributed to Mandean influence.

Mosaic traditions in *the Fourth Gospel*, therefore, cohere more closely with Jewish and Samaritan sources than any others, confirming the view of E. R. Goodenough, that Mosaic mystical piety played an important role within Jewish traditions contemporary with the emergence of the Johannine tradition.¹² Thus, such an ethos avails the clearest backdrop for understanding the prophet-king like Moses motif within the Gospel of John, elucidating the religious backdrop of some of the most puzzling elements of Johannine Christology. Direct mentions of Moses in the Fourth Gospel affirm that the Torah was given through Moses (1:17), Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness (3:14), manna was given by Moses (*and* God, 6:31-58); and yet, the gifts availed through Moses are surpassed by the gifts availed through Jesus Christ (1:16-17).

As the center of Jewish piety, Judean leaders put their hope in Moses while not seeing that Moses wrote of Jesus (5:39-47). They claim to be

12. Pp. 286-319. E.R. Goodenough, “John a Primitive Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 64 (1945): 145-82.

disciples of Moses (9:28-29), and yet they fail to glimpse the truth of Jesus, as witnessed to by the walking lame man in John 5 and the seeing blind man of John 9. Parallel to the ascension of Moses on Mount Sinai and followed by his heavenly enthronement in contemporary Jewish literature, the Johannine Jesus not only descends from heaven in order to carry out the will of the Father, but he also returns whence he came, fulfilling his apostolic commission and thereby being glorified (3:13; 6:62). While no one has ever seen God (1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 1 John 4:12), Jesus has (like the Mosaic theophany), thus forming the heart of Johannine-Jewish polemic. As such, Jesus as the prophet of whom Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 18:15-22, serves as the apostolic agent sent from God, speaking (only) God's words and performing signs, demonstrating his divine agency. Confirming his authenticity, his words come true, and he even speaks them ahead of time to show that he indeed is the true prophet like Moses—despite being accused of being the presumptuous prophet (Deut 18:19-22)—challenging competing claims of Mosaic authority by the Judean leaders.

As a result of these clear presentations of Jesus in John as the prophet-like Moses in the light contemporary literature, the following inferences can be made. First, the forensic character of Jesus' revelation betrays ironically the judgment of the world in the trial of Jesus before Pilate (John 18-19). In rejecting the apostolic agent of God, the unbelieving world is self-condemned. Jesus thus becomes the world's accuser in its rejecting the Revealer. Second, the Good Shepherd motif in John 10 bears clear associations with the leadership of the virtuous king in contemporary Jewish literature, as the authentic shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, in contrast to thieves and robbers; and he knows his sheep, and they recognize his voice. Third, given the geographical symbolism in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus goes back and forth between Galilee and Judea—through Samaria—and while he is rejected in Judea, he is embraced in Samaria and Galilee. Given Kundsın's work on topographical and contextual Galilean and Samaritan features in John, we clearly have a tradition originating in Palestine, though finalized in the diaspora. Within that later setting, the depiction of Jesus as greater than the law-giver Moses (1:17), the well-provider Jacob (4:12), and nation-father Abraham (8:53) served a set of pointed rhetorical thrusts. Thus, if John's audience did not adhere to the prophet-king like Moses, they would cease to be true followers of Moses, as Moses wrote of Jesus. And,

Jesus is not simply presented as a “new Moses” in John;¹³ rather, Jesus is “greater than” Moses, who simply witnesses to Jesus as does John the Baptist. From these features, the common inferences can be made regarding the developments and provenance of the Johannine tradition (pp. 318-19):

First, the Johannine traditions were shaped, at least in part, by interaction between a Christian community and a hostile Jewish community whose piety accorded very great importance to Moses and the Sinai theophany, probably understood as Moses’ ascent to heaven and his enthronement there. Second, it is clear that the Johannine church had drawn members from that Jewish group as well as from the Samaritan circles which held very similar beliefs, and it has been demonstrated to a high degree of probability that the depiction of Jesus as prophet and king in the Fourth Gospel owes much to traditions which the church inherited from the Moses piety.

While reviews of Meeks’ book were few in number, they nonetheless picked up on these two points. The Johannine tradition and its developments show evidence of Mosaic rhetoric marshaled in addressing religious challenges in Jerusalem-centered Judea as well as in Torah-centered Judaism in the diaspora.¹⁴ As a result, Meeks’ work launched a series of developments regarding the background and foreground of the Johannine tradition over the next several decades, eventually impacting history-and-theology analyses of John’s presentation of Jesus as the Messiah-Christ.

The Johannine Backdrop: Hellenistic, Jewish, or Both?

As a result of Meeks’ analysis, the religious background of the Johannine tradition cannot be said to be simply biblical, as though the evangelist were merely citing Jewish scripture (Hoskyns and others), nor can it be said to represent the Gnostic Redeemer-Myth, as though its primary backdrop were third- and fourth-century Mandeism (Bultmann and others).

13. Versus Glasson and others; see also Marie-Emile Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, B.T. Viviano, trans. (1988, Leuven: Peeters, 1993); Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

14. See, for instance, the review in *Biblische Zeitschrift* 13:1 (1969): 136-38 as well as that by Ludovít Fazekaš, *Theologische Zeitschrift* 27:1 (1971): 53-54.

Rather, in the light of contemporary Jewish literature, John's presentation of Jesus as the Messiah-Christ shows a distinctively northern Palestinian perspective, somewhat at odds with Judean Davidic typologies that anticipated a messianic figure who would elevate the Jerusalem-based center of Judaism and restore the priesthood and Judean aristocracy to their rightful place of honor. In presenting Jesus as a prophet-king like Moses, John's northern messianic perspective poses a challenge to centralizing tendencies within the Judean populace, and in that sense, the Samaritan embrace of a Mosaic prophet as the anticipated Messiah-Christ would have borne extensive similarities in Galilee, as well.

In his investigation of Samaritan messianic expectations, Meeks built upon the works of Karl Kundsinn, Hugo Odeberg, John Bowman, John Macdonald and others,¹⁵ and yet, his monograph then established the connections between Samaritan and Johannine studies more than any other single work.¹⁶ Given the fact that Samaritan studies had long been overlooked in history-of-religions analyses of New Testament studies, elucidating the Samaritan ethos and its messianic expectation of a Mosaic *Taheb* contributes significantly toward understanding both the mixed reception of Jesus in Jerusalem and its ambivalent presentation of Judean leaders in the Gospel of John.¹⁷ Then again, while links between Samaritan and Johannine messianic understandings are impressive, the character and particulars of

15. In addition to Nils Alstrup Dahl's guidance, Meeks builds upon the works of Karl Kundsinn, *Topologische Überlieferungstoffe im Johannes-Evangelium*, FRLANT 22 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925); Hugo Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel: Interpreted in its Relation to Contemporaneous Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1929); John Bowman, *Samaritan Studies*, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 40:2 (1958): 298-327; and John Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (London SCM, 1964). Note Meeks' appreciation for Dahl's work in his later essay, "The Restless Curiosity of Nils Alstrup Dahl," *Religious Studies Review* 29:3 (2003): 247-50.

16. Thus, just as studies of Jesus as prophet in the Fourth Gospel can be divided as works preceding and following Meeks' monograph, the same can be said of Samaritan and Johannine studies: Sumkin Cho, *Jesus as Prophet in the Fourth Gospel*, New Testament Monographs 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2006) 33-53.

17. Following directly on Meeks' monograph are C.H.H. Scobie, "The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity," *NTS* 19 (1973): 390-414; E. D. Freed, "Samaritan Influence in the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 580-87; and George Wesley Buchanan, "The Samaritan Origin of the Gospel of John," *Religions in Antiquity*, J. Neuser, ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968) 149-75.

the relationship remain uncertain.¹⁸ Nor is it clear what the implications of Samaritan-Johannine links might be. Along these lines, some scholars have argued that John's story of Jesus was crafted to convert Samaritan and/or Jewish audiences to believe in Jesus as the Messiah-Christ;¹⁹ still another view is that the Fourth Gospel was crafted in order to provide a means of reconciling otherwise estranged Jews and Samaritans.²⁰ Most significant, however, is the fact that Samaritan messianic expectations inform a grounded understanding of how a Galilean prophetic figure would have perceived and been perceived by religious leaders in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and elsewhere.²¹

This set of north-south tensions can be seen in the symbolic geographical references in the Johannine narrative, as the Judean leaders declare that no prophet arises from Galilee but rather should come from David's city, Bethlehem (John 7:40-52). Jesus is thus referred to pejoratively as "a Samaritan" and a demoniac by the Judean leaders (John 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20), and virtually all of the negative references to the *Ioudaioi* in John target religious leaders in Jerusalem and Judea.²² That being the case, John's geographical symbolism presents the prophet-king from Nazareth

18. As Margaret Pamment has argued, it is also possible that parallels between Samaritan writings and the Fourth Gospel reflect either the use of similar biblical texts or the possibility that Samaritan theologies were influenced by Christian presentations of Jesus as the Christ: "Is there Convincing Evidence of Samaritan Influence on the Fourth Gospel?" *ZNW* 73 (1982): 221-30.

19. E. D. Freed argues that John was written to convert Jewish and Samaritan audiences, "Did John Write his Gospel Partly to Win Samaritan Converts?" *NovT* 12:3 (1970): 241-56; James D. Purvis sees John's story of Jesus as a polemic against Samaritan Mosaism, perhaps represented by Simon Magus or Dositheus (cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* I, 57), "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans," *NovT* 17:3 (1975) 161-98.

20. Craig S. Keener, "Some New Testament Invitations to Ethnic Reconciliation," *EQ* 75:3 (2003): 195-213.

21. B.P. Robinson, "Christ as a Northern Prophet in St John," *Scripture* 17 (1965): 104-08. See also Abram Spiro, "Stephen's Samaritan Background," Appendix V in Johannes Munck, *Acts*, Anchor Bible 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1967) 285-300, for another example of tensions with temple-centered Judaism in Jerusalem.

22. On this point, inferred anti-Semitism within the Fourth Gospel is anachronistic and controverted by the textual facts, as none of the general references to "the Jews" in John are negative: Paul N. Anderson, "Anti-Semitism and Religious Violence as Flawed Interpretations of the Gospel of John," *John and Judaism*, R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson, eds, Resources for Biblical Study 87 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017) 265-311.

as juxtaposed over and against the anticipated Davidic Messiah of Judea.²³ From the Johannine perspective, Pilate's rhetorical question: "Am I a Judean?" bears with it something of an adversarial sting (John 18:35).²⁴ Despite the prominence of the Judean mission of Jesus in John, this does not imply, however, that the evangelist was from Jerusalem. More plausible is the view that John's presentation of multiple visits to Jerusalem by Jesus posed a realistic alternative to Mark's single visit culminating at the end of his ministry.²⁵ Further, at odds with Mark's presentation of the rejection of Jesus in his hometown (Mark 6:1-6), in John the Samaritans and Galileans in the midlands and the north receive him openly (John 4:45). Thus, John's rendering of Jesus' ministry poses a dialectical engagement of alternative gospel traditions, if the evangelist were familiar with Mark's narrative or its synoptic incorporations, even in part.²⁶

It is at this point that John's presentation of Jesus and his mission clashes with Matthew's rendering, where Jesus instructs his followers not to travel among the Samaritans (Matt 10:5), whereas the itinerary of Jesus in John "must" involve the passing through of Samaria on the way to Jerusalem (John 4:4). Whether this is a matter of divine necessity, it certainly represents a geographical reality, and Luke also includes travel among the Samaritans in his story of Jesus (Luke 9:51-56). Note, though, that in the Fourth Gospel, the Samaritan woman becomes the apostle to the Samaritans, and they not only receive him as the Messiah, but they also welcome

23. As argued by Meeks in "Galilee and Judea in the Fourth Gospel," and developed more fully in the contributions of Sean Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004); "The Galilean Jesus and a Contemporary Christology," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009): 281-97.

24. See Meeks' essay, which takes this theme further, "Am I a Jew?—Johannine Christianity and Judaism," *Christianity, Judaism, and other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, Vol. 1, Jacob Neusner, ed, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1975) 163-86.

25. So argued by Paula Fredriksen, "The Historical Jesus, the Scene in the Temple, and the Gospel of John," *John, Jesus, History; Vol. 1, Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, SJ, and Tom Thatcher, eds., Symposium Series 44 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007) 249-76.

26. With Richard Bauckham, "John for Hearers of Mark," in his *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 147-72, a primary interest of John's story of Jesus is to provide an alternative rendering to Mark: Paul N. Anderson, "Mark and John—the *Bi-Optic* Gospels," *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher, eds. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 175-88.

Jesus and his disciples to stay with them for two days, extending them a hospitable welcome (John 4:1-43). If the Johannine evangelist were aware of Matthew's narrative, his presentation of the Samaritan mission of Jesus and his followers might reflect a corrective to Matthean ethnocentrism or at least the sentiment it represents. Whatever the case, John's presentation of Jacob's Well and a worship site on Mount Gerizim cohere with archaeological findings,²⁷ and yet the words of the Johannine Jesus defining worship as being in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24) reflect a more universal view of authentic worship over and against more provincial ones.²⁸

In these and other ways, John's presentation of Jesus as the Mosaic prophet, received favorably in Galilee and Samaria and with some unevenness in Judea and Jerusalem, coheres with Samaritan and Galilean perspectives of the day. Therefore, while John's story of Jesus was developed further within a Hellenistic diaspora setting, its traditional memory was deeply rooted in Palestinian Judaism and its variegated expressions.

The Dialectical Johannine Situation: History and Theology Continued

As a result of Meeks' analysis, not only is the religious backdrop of the Johannine tradition illuminated, but so is the foreground of the Johannine situation and its dialectical character. Rather than seeing only a single set of engagements with Jewish leaders in a diaspora setting—Ephesus, Alexandria, the Negev, or elsewhere—the Johannine situation likely involved engagements with Samaritan, Jewish, Gentile, and Christian audiences either in Palestine, or the larger Mediterranean world, or both. Along these lines, John's rhetorical presentation of Jesus as a prophet greater than Moses would have challenged would-be disciples of Moses to believe in Jesus, lest they deny their professed religious values. Here Meeks' argument goes

27. Robert J. Bull, "An Archaeological Footnote to 'Our Fathers Worshipped on this Mountain,'" *New Testament Studies* 23 (1977): 460-62.

28. E.D. Freed, "The Manner of Worship in John 4:23f," *Search the Scriptures: New Testament Studies in Honor of Raymond T. Stamm*, J.M. Myers, O. Reimherr, and H.N. Bream, eds. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969) 33-48; Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, WUNT 2:78 (1996; 3rd printing with a new introduction and epilogue, Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010) 234-49. See also Marie E. Isaacs, "The Prophetic Spirit in the Fourth Gospel," *Heythrop Journal* 24 (1983): 391-407.

beyond simply asserting that Jesus is presented as the new Moses in the Fourth Gospel; Jesus surpasses Moses, fulfilling the ultimate Jewish typologies of divine agency.²⁹ According to Meeks, John's presentation of Jesus as the Mosaic prophet thus reflects something of the evolving Johannine situation and its experience, including rejection from local Jewish audiences and a growingly sectarian existence.³⁰ Along these lines, further developments in Johannine studies can be seen.

First, with the pivotal work of J. Louis Martyn,³¹ it is no surprise that the work of Meeks contributed significantly to the view that what we have in the Fourth Gospel is a two-level reading of history and theology. In Martyn's sketching of the Johannine situation, a curse against the followers of Jesus of Nazareth (the *Nazoreans*) was added to the twelfth of eighteen benedictions, introduced by Gamaliel II during the Yavneh Council period (estimated between 85-115 CE). Martyn argued that this development was directly linked to the *apostynagōgos* references in John (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). While Meeks disagreed with Martyn over the role of the *birkat ha-minim* as a precipitator of synagogue expulsion, they did concur that reflected in John's story of Jesus is the breaking away of Johannine believers from local Jewish communities of faith, reflected in the narrative itself.³² In Meeks' view, John's binary presentation of Jesus as the eschatological Mosaic prophet forced audiences to take a stand for or against Christ and his community, which was now meeting in house churches; to stay behind in the synagogue

29. In addition to the works by Glasson, Boismard, and others, Sumkin Cho's *Jesus as Prophet in the Fourth Gospel* shows the development of scholarly understandings of the Johannine Jesus not simply as a prophetic figure, but as *the* prophet predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-22.

30. Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972) 44-72 (published also in *The Interpretation of John*, John Ashton, ed., 2nd edn., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997, 169-206. Note, however, the challenge to the view of Johannine sectarianism by Kåre Sigvald Fugsleth, *Johannine Sectarianism in Perspective: A Sociological, Historical and Comparative Analysis of Temple and Social Relationships in the Gospel of John, Philo, and Qumran*. NovTSup 119 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), seeing the Johannine situation as more cultic and cosmopolitan than sectarian.

31. First published in 1968, J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd edn., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

32. Wayne A. Meeks, "Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," "To See Ourselves as Others See Us": *Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds. (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985) 93-115.

is to “love the world” versus embracing life-producing truth.³³ In addition to John’s scandal of particularity, however, the Fourth Gospel also includes the most universal and open soteriology in the New Testament, as all have access to the light—a fact too easily missed by readers of John.³⁴

A second set of developments in Johannine research came to see John as either written for a Samaritan community or designed to convince Samaritan audiences to believe in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ. While the above works of Bowman, Freed, Macdonald and others argue for a close link between the Johannine Jesus movement and Samaritan communities either in Palestine or in the diaspora, the Samaritan approach to the Johannine situation has not endured within Johannine scholarship overall. Nonetheless, Raymond Brown’s reconstruction of the Johannine community included the presence of Samaritans, in one way or another, functioning to elevate the Johannine Christology as a factor of embracing Mosaic pietism. In Brown’s sketching of the history of the Johannine community, the second phase saw the addition of Samaritan converts to Christianity among Johannine believers, following their expulsion from the local synagogue.³⁵ These believers in Jesus as the Mosaic Prophet and Messiah (ca. 90 CE) entered the Johannine community, discernible in a two-level reading of John 4, and it was during this phase that the Johannine narrative was written. This led to John’s embellished presentation of Jesus’ signs and discourses, posing an either-or depiction of the Son’s representation of the Father. The inclusion of Samaritan actants in the narrative, however, does not necessarily imply the presence of Samaritan members of John’s community or audience at the time of its composition. Thus, Brown’s two-level reading of the Fourth Gospel on this score must be considered suggestive rather than conclusive.³⁶

33. While Adele Reinhartz agrees with much of Meeks’ analysis, she disagrees that all who might have been impressed with the Johannine Jesus would have also been willing to accept its binary opposition of believers and nonbelievers. *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001) 156-59.

34. See R. Alan Culpepper, “Inclusivism and Exclusivism in the Fourth Gospel,” *Word, Theology and Community in John*, John Painter, R. Alan Culpepper, and Fernando F. Segovia, eds. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002) 85-108; and Paul N. Anderson, “The Way to Salvation in John: Particular or Universal,” *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel*, 34-35, 183-86.

35. Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist, 1979) 22, 36-40.

36. I see it as one of the weaker elements of Brown’s overall theory; Paul N. Anderson,

A third development alongside the contributions of Meeks and others involves an important advance on the history-of-religions character of the mission of Jesus as the Christ in the Fourth Gospel. While Marinus de Jonge faults Meeks for not connecting John's presentation of Jesus as the Mosaic Prophet more explicitly with the Father-Son relationship,³⁷ others have developed that link more extensively.³⁸ Central within these studies is the role of Deuteronomy 18:15-22 as a means of confirming the authenticity of the Mosaic Prophet, and Peder Borgen has shown convincingly that within the Jewish agency schema of Merkabah mysticism, the one who is sent is in all ways like the sender.³⁹ This feature would thus account for one of John's key theological riddles: the egalitarian and subordinate relation between the Father and the Son, bolstered by a contemporary religious convention. Therefore, central within the Johannine Father-Son relationship is the Jewish sending (*shaliach*) motif,⁴⁰ wherein the Son is to be equated with the Father precisely because he does nothing except what the Father has instructed.⁴¹ Given that there are no fewer than twenty-four parallels be-

"The Community that Raymond Brown Left Behind—Reflections on the Dialectical Johannine Situation," *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, Early Christianity and its Literature 13, R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson, eds. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014) 47-93.

37. Marinus de Jonge, "Jesus as Prophet and King in the Fourth Gospel," in his *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God: Jesus Christ and the Christians in Johannine Perspective*, SBL SBS 11 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977) 49-76.

38. Ernst Haenchen, "Der Vater, der Mich Gesandt Hat," *NTS* 9 (1963): 208-16; Rudolf Schnackenburg, "'Der Vater, der Mich Gesandt Hat' Zur Johanneische Christologie," *Anfänge der Christologie: Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum 65. Geburtstag*, Ferdinand Hahn, Cilliers Breytenbach, and Henning Paulsen, eds. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991) 275-92.

39. Peder Borgen, "God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel," *The Interpretation of John*, 2nd edn, John Ashton, ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997) 83-96, first published in Jacob Neusner, ed., *Religions in Antiquity* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968) 137-48. Note also contemporary cases of rejecting a prophetic figure as the presumptuous prophet of Deut 18:19-22 (as in John 7): Wayne A. Meeks, "The Divine Agent and His Counterfeit in Philo and the Fourth Gospel," *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976) 43-67.

40. See especially Craig Evans' work on the *shaliach* motif in the Fourth Gospel: Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue*, JSNTSupS 158 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Series, 1993).

41. Thus, rather than seeing subordinate and egalitarian presentations of the Father-Son relationship in John as representing opposing christological views, they should be seen as flip-sides of the same coin, reflecting a Jewish agency typology: Anderson, *The*

tween Deuteronomy 18:15-22 and the Father-Son relationship in John, the prophet-like-Moses agency schema not only accounts for many of John's elevated christological features; it also accounts for subordinated ones and the Son's representative relation to the Father.⁴² A full-length treatment of the Johannine agency schema was contributed by Jan-A. Böhner, and even so, his indebtedness to the work of Meeks and the trajectory he forged is evident within that monograph.⁴³

Interestingly, while this was not the primary interest of Meeks in his work, the elucidation of Jesus' mission within the schema of the prophet-like Moses casts valuable light on John's first level of history in addition to its later developments. In particular, the presentation of Jesus as the Mosaic prophet bears a closer resemblance to what might be imagined as the self-understanding of Jesus and his mission, commanding a greater historical likelihood than Davidic messianic associations.⁴⁴ Thus, one would not be surprised to learn that the provocative deeds and words of Jesus were legitimated by appeals to a Mosaic-Prophet commission early on, and that in response to later challenges to the Jesus movement within the Johannine situation, appeals to the representative authority of Jesus as

Christology of the Fourth Gospel, 184-85, 229; *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel*, 27-29, 85-87, 131-34, 216-18. See also Wayne A. Meeks, "Equal to God," *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990) 309-22.

42. Paul N. Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father—Aspects of Agency, Encounter, and Irony in the Johannine Father-Son Relationship," *Semeia* 85, Adele Reinhartz, ed. (1999): 33-57. See also A.E. Harvey, "Christ as Agent," *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology*, L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 239-50; Paul W. Meyer, "'The Father': The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel," *Exploring the Gospel of John; In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black, eds. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996) 255-73.

43. Jan-A. Böhner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im vierten Evangelium: Die kultur- und religionsgeschichtlichen Grundlagen der johanneischen Sendungschristologie sowie ihre traditionsgeschichtliche Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977).

44. The presentation of Jesus as a charismatic prophetic figure is supported by the corroborative impression of all four canonical Gospels, and even though the Gospel of John was likely finalized last, it still conveys early impressions of Jesus of Nazareth in addition to the Christ of faith. Cf. Paul E. Davies, "Jesus and the Role of the Prophet," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 64:2 (1945): 241-54; Henry J. Cadbury, "Jesus and the Prophets," *Journal of Religion* 5 (1935): 607-22; see also the work of the John, Jesus, and History Project (2002-2016), which benefited from the wise counsel of Wayne Meeks at the outset of its organization.

the prophet-king like Moses would have been especially potent.⁴⁵ Palpable also is the political thrust of messianic associations among the Gospels, and the messianic secrecy of Mark is corroborated by Jesus' fleeing of the crowd's designs on Jesus' future in John 6:15, as they seek to rush him off for a nationalistic coronation.⁴⁶ While John's Jewish agency motif was developed more fully within the *Logos*-hymn of the Johannine Prologue, its pervasive presence within the rest of the mundane Johannine narrative informs modern understandings of the Jesus of history as well as the Christ of faith.⁴⁷

While it is unlikely that specific Samaritan audiences are targeted within a two-level reading of John's story of Jesus, nor is it likely that the Johannine situation reflects much of a Samaritan presence within its later community developments, John's characterization of Moses and his supersession by Jesus is clear within the rhetorical construction of the Johannine narrative.⁴⁸ On a multi-level reading of the text, however, the authority of Moses can be seen to be leveraged by the opponents and advocates of Jesus alike. Within Jerusalem and its environs, religious defenders of the Mosaic Law and the cultic establishment plausibly appealed to Sabbath prescriptions and temple practices. In answering those objections, Jesus reciprocally appealed to the Mosaic promise of a Prophet, who would speak and act directly on God's behalf.⁴⁹ In later stages of the Johannine situation, as Deuteronomy 6:4-9 would likely have been cited in combatting the perceived ditheism of John's elevated Christology, followers of Jesus likely cited

45. Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father."

46. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 170-93.

47. Paul N. Anderson, "The Johannine *Logos*-Hymn: A Cross-Cultural Celebration of God's Creative-Redemptive Work," *Creation Stories in Dialogue: The Bible, Science, and Folk Traditions*, *Radboud Prestige Lecture Series* by R. Alan Culpepper, *BibInt* 139, R. Alan Culpepper and Jan van der Watt, eds. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2016) 219-42.

48. Stan Harstine, *Moses as a Character in the Fourth Gospel: A Study of Ancient Reading Techniques*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 229 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

49. On the Mosaic agency schema and the historical Jesus in John, see Paul N. Anderson *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered*, *Library of New Testament Studies Series* 321 (London: T&T Clark, 2006) 33-39, 59-60, 90-96, 107-10, 119-20, 138-42, 156-57, 161-62. On the self-understanding of Jesus and his mission, see also Wayne A. Meeks, "Asking Back to Jesus' Identity," *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus de Jonge*, Martinus C. De Boer, ed. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 38-50.

Deuteronomy 18:15-22 as a means of connecting the authority of the Son to his ambassadorial representation of the Father. As Meeks would put it, if one would truly aspire to be a follower of Moses, one must consider embracing the kingly Prophet of whom Moses wrote.

Conclusion:

The Itinerary of the Prophet-King Continuing

It is a rare thing indeed that the doctoral dissertation of Wayne Meeks addressed one of the most puzzling of the Johannine riddles in such a way as to set the trajectory for his own career and also influences generations of New Testament scholarship continuing to address a multitude of puzzling Johannine idiosyncrasies. Puzzling indeed is John's presentation of Jesus being rejected in Jerusalem because he does not fit the royal expectations of Davidic messianism, while at the same time claiming to be a king before Pilate and hailed as a kingly prophet like Moses by the Galilean crowd. As a result of Meeks' exhaustive research, such a riddle cannot be explained away as simply a theological concoction or a rhetorical ploy. Nor is John's elevated Christology explicable on the assumption that it betrays later assimilation of Hellenistic redeemer myths. Rather, John's story of Jesus reflects Samaritan and Galilean anticipations of an eschatological prophet like Moses, who would speak on God's behalf, bringing liberation by the power of grace and truth—at times at odds with religious and political claims of authority and the leveraging of power. After all, Jesus fled the Galilean crowd's designs on a hasty coronation in John 6, and before Pilate in John 18, he declared that he is a king, but that his kingdom is one of truth, which is why his followers cannot resort to force to further it. As the Johannine Prologue reminds future hearers and readers of the narrative (John 1:17), "The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."