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# “Jesus, the Eschatological Prophet in the Fourth Gospel: A Case Study in Dialectical Tensions”

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## *Abstract*

*Central to the presentation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is his association with the Eschatological Prophet, anticipated within first century Judaism. Rooted in Jewish agency typologies cohering around such prophetic figures as Moses and Elijah, these primitive associations reflect historical proximity to Jesus of Nazareth, who as a Galilean prophetic figure continued in the trajectory of John the Baptist while also challenging Jewish institutions and religious conventions in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. From his prophetic demonstration in the temple to his healing on the Sabbath, the Johannine Jesus furthered the social concerns of the Hebrew prophets, and when challenged by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, he legitimated his actions on the basis of Deut. 18:15–22. This Mosaic agency schema is the key to the Father-Son relationship in John, and the signs of Jesus in John echo the wondrous ministries of Moses and Elijah, sometimes in tension with Davidic, Synoptic, and other contemporary views. From beginning to end within the Johannine tradition, the prophetic ethos remains central within its development, reflecting a synchronicity of tradition within a diachronicity of situation.*

Key Words: eschatological prophet, Prophet like Moses agency schema, Davidic typology, Elijah typology, synchronicity of tradition, diachronicity of situation, Father-Son relationship, Johannine Christology, historical Jesus, Johannine situation, dialectical engagements, Bi-Optic Hypothesis.

The most striking feature of John’s Christology is that it is filled with dialectical tensions.<sup>1</sup> In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is portrayed in the most elevated and the most subordinated ways anywhere in the New Testament. He is at once equal to the Father, and yet he can do nothing except what the Father commands. In the words of the Johannine Jesus, “I and the Father are one,” and “the Father is greater than I.” In many of John’s theological tensions, the origin may be attributed to the dialectical thinking of the evangelist. Rather than being an either-or thinker, the Fourth Evangelist approached most of his issues in both-and ways.<sup>2</sup> Another source of John’s tensions involved the

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<sup>1</sup> Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6 (With a New Introduction, Outlines, and Epilogue)* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010); for a fuller outline of other theological tensions and analyses of their epistemological origins, see Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See the work of C.K. Barrett, “The Dialectical Theology of St John,” in *New Testament Essays* (London: SCM, 1972) 49–69; Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 137–69.

dialectical character of revelation, itself. God's discourse with humanity involves both the divine initiative and the human response, but how is it known that a message is really from God, and how is it authorized? A third dialectical feature of the Johannine narrative involves its apologetic thrust. John's narrative is crafted to so as to elicit a response of faith from its audiences, thereby constructing an imaginary set of dialogues with its subject, Jesus.<sup>3</sup> As such, a fourth set of dialogical engagements can be inferred, ranging from corrective and complementary dialogues with other gospel narratives, delivered also with the evolving Johannine situation.<sup>4</sup>

Along these lines, however, the Johannine tradition is not alone in its dialectical character within Second Temple Judaism, as understandings of the Eschatological Prophet were themselves in dialogue with other Jewish understandings of how and when God's saving-revealing deliverance would come. Palpable within John's story of Jesus is the regional and ideological tension between Judean Davidic conceptions of messianic deliverance and Samaritan/Galilean convictions regarding what the Messiah would be like. Even between John and the Synoptics, tensions can be seen as to how and by whom the roles of Elijah and Moses are fulfilled. Within the construction of the Johannine narrative, delivered within the evolving Johannine situation, further rhetorical features are evident. Finally, the Johannine audience is confronted with an existential question: whether one will respond or not to the divine initiative within the larger human-divine dialogue, which revelation claims and is.

So, how can these tensions be understood, in terms of their character and origins, and how might such understandings contribute to our perceptions of first-century messianic understandings, the ways they relate to the ministry of Jesus and his reception, and the ways those understandings also influenced the formation of early Christianity in dialogue with its fraternal Jewish origins? While the Fourth Gospel was finalized in a diaspora setting, its conceptualization of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ is thoroughly Jewish, representing the Prophet like Moses agency schema characteristic of messianic understandings in Second Temple Judaism. It is on this subject that John's presentation of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet bears its greatest significance.

## **1. The Eschatological Prophet in Second Temple Judaism**

In addition to other messianic expectations in Second Temple Judaism, anticipations of the Eschatological Prophet were rife with intensity. Flawed is the notion that early Judaism had a single conception of a messianic deliverer; more characteristic was a multiplicity of images of what God's redemptive agency would look like, leading also to

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<sup>3</sup> Paul N. Anderson, "Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Corrective Rhetoric of the Johannine Misunderstanding Dialogue: Exposing Seven Crises in the Johannine Situation," in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies*, ed. Roland Boer, SemeiaSt 63 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007) 290–318.

<sup>4</sup> Paul N. Anderson, "Interfluent, Formative, and Dialectical—A Theory of John's Relation to the Synoptics," in *Für und Wider die Priorität des Johannevangeliums*, ed. Peter Hofrichter, TheoTS 9 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2002) 19–58.

competing views between various groups.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, a good number of dialectical tensions are evident among diverse messianic expectations within early Judaism. While Davidic expectations of the anointed one and the divine son were predominant within monarchic hopes for a messianic leader of Israel (Isa. 11:1–16; Mic. 5:1–15), Second Isaiah contrasts the faithful servant of Yahweh to militaristic understandings of messiahship (Isa. 42:1–4; 45:1–9).<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Qumran’s anticipation of Aaron and Israel reflects both priestly and royal understandings of messianic deliverance (1QS IX, 10–11), indicating a diversity of perspectives. Even within that Qumranic passage, however, the Eschatological Prophet is also anticipated, reflecting a combination of expectations involving the Scripture-oriented leadership of the *Yahad* alongside priestly and royal hopes in God’s deliverance.

They shall deviate from none of the teachings of the Law, whereby they would walk in their willful heart completely. They shall govern themselves using the original precepts by which the men of the *Yahad* began to be instructed, doing so until there come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel. (1QS IX, 9b–11)<sup>7</sup>

In these ways it is evident that virtually all legacies of Israel’s historic past found their ways into typological hopes of how God might bring deliverance in the future.<sup>8</sup> This is understandable, and prophetic messianic expectations in Israel are often missed because they do not fit into royal or priestly associations. As Ferdinand Hahn points out, anticipations of the Eschatological Prophet were at times connected to the lament in Ps. 74:9, that “there is no longer any prophet” in Israel, and anticipations of such prophets as

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<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the diversity of messianic expectations in Second Temple Judaism, as noted by Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (London: Lutterworth, 1969) 352–406; John, J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Richard Bauckham, “Messianism According to the Gospel of John,” *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, ed. John Lierman, WUNT II/219 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 34–68.

<sup>6</sup> On the two Messiah’s of Qumran, see Karl G. Kuhn, “The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel,” in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. Krister Stendahl (New York: Harper, 1957) 54–64; Raymond E. Brown, “The Messianism of Qumran,” *CBQ* 19 (1957): 53–82; R. B. Laurin, “The Problem of Two Messiahs in the Qumran Scrolls,” *RevQ* 4 (1963–64): 39–52; Emil A. Wcela, “The Messiah(s) of Qumran,” *CBQ* 26 (1964): 340–49; Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, WUNT 207 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 333–40; Paul N. Anderson, “John and Qumran: Discovery and Interpretation over Sixty Years,” in *John, Qumran, and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Sixty Years of Discovery and Debate*, ed. Mary Coloe and Tom Thatcher, *EJL* 32 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 15–50.

<sup>7</sup> Translation from M. Wise, M. Abegg, and E. Cook with N. Gordon, “Serekh le’anshey ha-Yahad [1QS V 1–XI 22],” *DSSR* 1:35.

<sup>8</sup> Thus, a great proliferation of diverse messianic expectations can be seen in Qumran literature, and such a feature is also evident in the Fourth Gospel. See Dietmar Neufeld, “‘And When That One Comes’: Aspects of Johannine Messianism,” in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 120–41.

Elijah and Moses are rooted in the projections of Mic. 3:1–4:6 in prophesying the Lord's redemptive work. According to this passage, several elements are anticipated

- The Lord is sending his messenger to prepare the way, as he comes suddenly to his temple.
- The messenger of the covenant is indeed coming, but who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears, as he is like a refiner's fire and a fullers' soap.
- Then will the Lord draw near for judgment: swift to bear witness against evil doers and against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien and do not fear the LORD of hosts.
- If Israel will return to the Lord (manifested in full tithes, speaking well of the Lord, living faithfully according to the commandments Moses at Horeb), the Lord will return to Israel (manifested in opening the windows of heaven and prospering Israel, restoring family relationships, and elevating Israel's place among the nations).
- The Lord will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible Day of the LORD come; he will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, lest the land be stricken with a curse.

From these elements it is clear that the messianic age of blessing and bounty would be signaled by the coming of Elijah and the restoration of the Mosaic Covenant—calling for repentance—lest the land be smitten with a curse. Thus, while neither Moses nor Elijah is equated with Davidic or Aaronic views of the Messiah, they came to be associated with the Day of the Lord and the inauguration of the messianic age. Anticipations of Elijah build also on his memory, as typified by the hymn honoring Israel's ancestors in Sirach 48. Elijah arose as fiery prophet whose word burned like a torch (v. 1); he shut up the heavens and brought down fire (v. 3), raised a corpse (v. 5), sent kings to destruction (v. 6), furthered the judgments of Sinai and Horeb (v. 7), and anointed succeeding kings and prophets (v. 8). Elijah was taken up in a chariot of fire (v. 9), and at the appointed time, he will calm the wrath of God, turn the hearts of parents to their children, and restore the twelve tribes of Israel (v. 10). In the following tribute to Elisha (vv. 12–16), while he was filled with the Spirit, performed twice as many signs as Elijah, and confronted rulers, some still did not repent and were carried off into exile. Thus, despite the work of spiritually imbued prophets, their work is not always effective.

What we see here is an amalgam of honoring the memory of Elijah and Elisha in the Kings tradition and anticipating the return of Elijah in Malachi as a means of continuing that prophetic vocation. Further developments of the Elijah typology include the citing of his letter of judgment against Jehoram's idolatrous reign by the Chronicler (2 Chron. 21), followed by the praising of his honoring the Law (1 Macc. 2:58) and performing of wondrous signs (4 Ezra 7:109) in later writings. In the Apocryphon of Elijah (4Q382), the Kings tradition (frags. 1, 2, 9) provides a basis for anticipating the return of Elijah as a "mighty man" (frag. 31), leading to the restoration of relationships and the Mosaic covenant (frag. 104). Further, Elijah's association with opening the "eyes of the blind" (1QS IV, 1) and the raising of the dead (4Q521) clearly resonate with Jesus'

ministry in the Gospel of John (see John 9:39–41; 10:21; 11:1–52). Thus, the return of Elijah is central to messianic hopes in the coming Day of the Lord, and one can see how the work and message of John the Baptist would have been interpreted as the coming of Elijah among the populace of first-century Judaism.

The prophetic legacy of Moses, of course, is directly connected to Deut. 18:15–22, where it is promised that God will raise up a Prophet like Moses from amidst the congregation, for people to obey. This prophetic figure will speak to people directly on God's behalf, as people were smitten with fear at the thunder and lightning of the Horeb encounter and had requested relief from direct divine address in the future (v. 16; Exod. 20:18–19). God is portrayed, then, as condescending to their fear and promising to send a Prophet like Moses, in whose mouth God will put his own words, and who will speak only God's words (v. 18). God will hold accountable any who do not heed the words of this prophet, words delivered in God's name (v. 19), but any prophet speaking in the name of other gods or speaking presumptuously something that God has not commanded shall be put to death (v. 20). The means of distinguishing the authentic prophet from false prophets is that the true prophet's words always come true; if the prophet's words do not come true, he is neither to be heeded nor feared (v. 22). While Joshua was associated with this prophetic figure at the end of Deuteronomy (ch. 34), the author clarifies that the Mosaic prophet is still anticipated in Judaism's later contexts.

In Second Temple perspective, the wondrous signs of Moses are recalled with wistful favor (Isa. 63:11–12), and his giving the Law is rightly remembered (Ezra 7; Neh. 8–10; Dan. 9; Bar. 2:27–35; 4 Ezra 14). Indeed, the importance of following the Law of Moses is emblemized in the martyrdom of the seven brothers (2 Macc. 7) and embellished further in 2 Maccabees 8–17. His memory is also recounted in Sirach's Hymn in Honor of Our Ancestors, as Moses is equal in glory to the Holy Ones, performing swift miracles by his words, and giving God's commandments to the people in order that Jacob might be taught God's covenant, and Israel might learn God's decrees. This is why God's glory was revealed unto Moses, and why he was consecrated in faithfulness and meekness, chosen out of all humankind, and allowed to hear God's voice (Sir 45:1–5). By the time we get to Josephus, the prophetic authority of Moses is conflated with that of Joshua, applied in Maccabean perspective to political hopes of overthrowing the Romans and their collaborators with force. Thus, the Samaritan (*Ant.* 18.85–89), Theudas (*Ant.* 20.97–99), and the Egyptian (*Ant.* 20.169–71) are identified by Josephus as seeking to reenact deliverance from Egypt and into Canaan by Moses and Joshua, enkindling Jewish hopes of deliverance from Roman occupation, as they had experienced in days of old.

Lest it be imagined, however, that the memory of Moses was simply confined to political or religious figures, the Assumption of Moses presents him as being designed, devised, and prepared before that foundation of the world, that he should be the mediator of the divine covenant (As. Mos. 1:14). The Qumran community cites Moses as an intermediary between God and humanity (4Q175 I, 5–8), and again, in the Community Rule, the anticipated advent of the Eschatological Prophet like Moses heralds the coming of the royal and priestly Messiahs.<sup>9</sup> In Samaritan literature, Moses is even more elevated,

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<sup>9</sup> Moses is indeed anticipated in 4Q175 I, 1–4 (Deut. 5:28–29), and the test of a true prophet follows in 4Q375 (following Deut. 18:18–22), leading to the invoking of death sentences for presumptuous prophets. Ironically, Jesus is accused of being a presumptuous prophet in John 5

and as Wayne Meeks has shown, their view of the Messiah was Mosaic, seeing the Eschatological Prophet (the *Taheb*) as a royal fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15–22.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, when the crowd in John 6:14–15 seeks to rush Jesus off for a coronation as the Mosaic prophet-king, this presentation coheres entirely with Samaritan messianic expectations, apparently replicated in Galilean Judaism. Thus, Meeks concludes:

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.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, while the primary messianic expectation in Second Temple Judaism was royal and Davidic, the Eschatological Prophet was also anticipated as inaugurating the messianic age and God’s restoration of Israel, and in some cases representing an alternative messianic vision of God’s redemptive work. While this figure was at times associated with other prophetic figures, such as Joshua or the Son of Man of Ezekiel and Daniel, the legacies of Elijah and Moses were linked in a multiplicity of ways to the advent of the messianic age, in which God’s delivering and reconciling work would materialize, as prophesied in Malachi 3–4. Even the opening parable of 1 Enoch 1–5 envisions the Holy Great One coming from his dwelling place and treading the earth as a means of making peace with the righteous and judging the wicked. In mercy, light, and joy will the elect be confirmed, and God’s prophetic judgment will serve as a means of convicting the wicked of their need to repent, in order that God’s blessings might be poured out upon the righteous. Against this religious backdrop, the presentation of the Eschatological Prophet in the Fourth Gospel is helpfully illumined.

## **2. Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet Like Moses within the Johannine Tradition**

Against this backdrop, it is understandable that Jesus is presented in the Fourth Gospel as fulfilling the role of the Eschatological Prophet, which is lucidly associated with Son of Man, Elijah, and Moses typologies. When considering christological titles in New Testament, an interesting fact is that all the references to Jesus as “the Son of Man” are

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and 7, and just as the Spirit of Truth distinguishes the Teacher of Righteousness from the Wicked Priest in Qumranic literature (1QS IX, 3), so the Spirit of Truth guides believers in their negotiation of hostile situations in John 14–16.

<sup>10</sup> Especially in the poems of the *Memar Marqah* is Moses presented as the messianic Eschatological Prophet, who overcomes darkness with light, restores authentic worship, and inaugurates the final redemption. See Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovTSup 14 (1967; repr., JMS 5, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017) 246–50.

<sup>11</sup> Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 256.

used nearly exclusively by Jesus as self-references in the Gospels.<sup>12</sup> On this score, the work of the Enoch Seminar shows impressive continuity between the self-references of Jesus and the Parables of Enoch, which casts important light on the subject.<sup>13</sup> In Enochic perspective, Jesus as the Son of Man came delivering judgment, but also forgiveness and the inauguration of God's righteous reign. As such, Jesus as the self-proclaimed Son of Man in the Gospels poses a distinctively Jewish conception of divine agency, which is rendered differently in references to him by others in gospel narratives, and even more differently in New Testament confessional statements. While this essay explores the typologies of Moses and Elijah with reference to the Eschatological Prophet in the Fourth Gospel, John's presentation of Jesus as the Son of Man should be kept in view as a related prophet-agency corollary.

By contrast, Jesus is heralded as Son of God, the Lamb of God, and the King of Israel/the Jews by others in John, and it is also clear that Jesus is not presented as speaking of himself in those titular terms.<sup>14</sup> In that sense, they reflect attestations by his followers, including developing understandings, rather than self-designations by Jesus himself.<sup>15</sup> The point here is that John's presentation of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet coheres with several Jewish agency schemas, including attestations by others as well as his own sense of prophetic agency. Parallel to the parable of the tenants and the father who sends his son in Mark 12:1–12, the Johannine presentation of Jesus and his sense of mission emphasizes the Son's agency on behalf of the Father. This motif comes across more clearly in terms of Jesus's referring to God as the "having-sent-me-Father" in the Gospel of John, emphasizing his oneness-with-and-yet subservience-to the Father. Rather than a Davidic typology, however, the Father-Son relationship in the Fourth

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<sup>12</sup> Barnabas Lindars, *Jesus, Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984). See also other treatments of Jesus as the Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel: E. M. Sidebottom, "The Johannine Son of Man and His Antecedents," in *The Christ of the Fourth Gospel: In the Light of First-Century Thought* (London: SPCK, 1961) 69–83; Stephen S. Smalley, "The Johannine Son of Man Sayings," *NTS* 15 (1969): 278–301; Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence, Wisdom, and Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-Existence in the New Testament*, SNTSMS 21 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 197–242; John W. Pryor, "The Johannine Son of Man and the Descent-Ascent Motif," *JETS* 34 (1991): 201–18; Francis J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man*, BSR 14, 2nd ed. (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1978); Margaret Pamment, "The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel," *JTS* 36 (1985): 56–66. See also Benjamin E. Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, WUNT II/249 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Benjamin E. Reynolds, "The 'One Like a Son of Man' According to the Old Greek of Daniel 7:13–14," *Bib* 89 (2008): 70–80; Benjamin E. Reynolds, "The Johannine Son of Man and the Historical Jesus: Shall Ever the Twain Meet? John 9:35 as a Test Case," *JSHJ* 9, no. 2–3 (2011): 230–42.

<sup>13</sup> Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 1–15. As outlined by Geza Vermes, while others refer to Jesus as "Son of God," "King of Israel," "King of the Jews," "Messias," and "Lamb of God," in John, Jesus simply refers to himself as "the Son of Man," "the Son of the Father," or simply "the Son." See Geza Vermes, *The Changing Faces of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 25–62.

<sup>15</sup> Over a half-dozen implicit and typological fulfillments of Jewish scripture are presented in the Fourth Gospel, as are over a dozen explicit and textual fulfillments of the same. See Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel*, 83–85.



Gospel reflects a Mosaic agency-schema rooted in Deut. 18:15–22.<sup>16</sup> Thus, John’s presentation of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet like Moses employs a second Jewish typology of divine agency, which poses a prophet-typology parallel to his Son of Man references in the Gospels, and this prophetic association in the Fourth Gospel is furthered with specificity and clarity.<sup>17</sup>

Jesus is presented as fulfilling the typology of Moses in the Fourth Gospel in a variety of ways.<sup>18</sup> First, in keeping with the prophets of old, Jesus challenges religious institutions and standards, featuring the prophetic temple incident at the beginning of his ministry instead of at the end (John 2:13–23) and his challenging of Sabbath laws by healing on the Sabbath (5:1–15; 9:1–15).<sup>19</sup> Second, in following the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus is proclaimed by Philip to be the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote (John 1:45), and Jesus himself declares: “Moses wrote of me” (John 5:46). Third, the knowing character of Jesus is presented as a basis for his being recognized as the anticipated Prophet by others—both by Nathanael and the woman at the well (John 1:47–49; 4:16–19). Fourth, as Moses lifted up a bronze serpent in the wilderness—availing healing to those that looked at it (Num. 21:9), so will the lifting up of the Son of man bring redemption to any who look to him and believe (John 3:14–15; 12:32). Fifth, just as Moses also performed feedings in the wilderness and sea crossings for the children of Israel, so Jesus feeds the multitude in Galilee and delivers his disciples in the waves-tossed boat to a safe landing near Capernaum (John 6:1–59). Sixth, and most importantly, Jesus is portrayed as being the Eschatological Prophet predicted by Moses in Deut. 18:15–22, and his authenticity is confirmed by his words inevitably

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<sup>16</sup> As argued clearly in Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, NovTSup 10 (1965; 2nd ed. 1981; repr., JMS 4, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017); Meeks, *Prophet-King*; Jan-A. Bühner, *Die Gesandte und sein Weg im vierten Evangelium: Die kultur- und religionsgeschichtlichen Grundlagen der johanneischen Sendungschristologie sowie ihre traditionsgeschichtliche Entwicklung*, WUNT II/2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977); Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, 352–406; Paul N. Anderson, “The Having-Sent-Me Father—Aspects of Agency, Encounter, and Irony in the Johannine Father-Son Relationship,” *Semeia* 85 (1999): 33–57; see also Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered*, LNTS 321 (London: T&T Clark, 2006) 33–39, 59–60, 90–96, 107–10, 119–20, 138–42, 156–57, 161–62.

<sup>17</sup> Links with Elijah/Elisha are clear in John: see J. Louis Martyn, “We have Found Elijah,” in *Jews, Greeks, and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William David Davies*, ed. Robert Hammerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 181–219. Likewise clear are links with “the Prophet” or Moses in John: see Paul E. Davies, “Jesus and the Role of the Prophet,” *JBL* 64, no. 2 (1945): 241–51; Marie E. Isaacs, “The Prophetic Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” *HeyJ* 24 (1983): 391–407; T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (London; SCM, 1963).

<sup>18</sup> See the more extended treatments in Marie-Emile Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, trans. B.T. Viviano (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*, NovTSup 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1975); Sumkin Cho, *Jesus as Prophet in the Fourth Gospel*, NTMon 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> As a means of creating cognitive dissonance, in prophetic form, see Paul N. Anderson, “Jesus and Transformation,” in *Psychology and the Bible; A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, ed. J. Harold Ellens, 4 vols. (New York: Praeger, 2004), 4:305–28.

coming true (John 8:28; 12:33; 13:19; 14:29; 16:4; 18:9, 32).<sup>20</sup> While the Judean leaders search the Scriptures, thinking that in their written codes they have life, the Scriptures actually point to God's continuing saving-revealing work effected by in Jesus, as his prophetic agency is that of which Moses wrote (John 5:37–46).

Nearly all of the Father-Son references in John are to be found within this Mosaic agency schema—including Jesus's egalitarian and subordinated relations to the Father. Indeed, the Father in John does virtually nothing other than to send the Son, and the main point in the Father-Son references in John is to assert that the Son does nothing on his own and is thus totally subservient to the Father. This is why the words and works of the Son are to be equated with those of the Father, thus accounting also for the oneness of the Father and the Son.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, one of John's theological riddles—the apparent subordinationism and egalitarianism between the Father and the Son—is not a factor of disparate Christologies woven together from different sources by an editor. Nor are these features self-contradictory. Rather, they reflect flip-sides of the same coin: intrinsic factors of the Jewish agency schema rooted in the Mosaic Prophet typology of Deut. 18:15–22. The Son is equal to the Father precisely because he is totally subservient to the wishes of the one by whom he is sent.<sup>22</sup>

As Peder Borgen and others have shown, within the Mosaic agency schema of Merkabah mysticism and other Jewish literature, the agent is in all ways like the one who sent him, and therefore, the unity of Son with the having-sent-me-Father in John is a factor of agency rather than metaphysical ontology.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, there are no fewer than twenty-four parallels between the Father-Son relationship in John and the Septuagintal rendering of Deut. 18:15–22. The Johannine agency motif thus reflects a Jewish Mosaic agency schema rather than a Gnostic Redeemer-Myth or the presence of disparate sources underlying the Johannine text.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Jesus's fulfilling this Mosaic typology is confirmed by his proleptic word coming true: see Adele Reinhartz, "Jesus As Prophet: Predictive Prolepses in the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 36 (1989): 3–16.

<sup>21</sup> These messianic associations do not imply preexistence associations, although they do attest to the messianic agency of Jesus as one who is authentically sent from the Father (John 3:16–17, 34; 4:34; 5:23–24, 30, 36–38; 6:29, 37–40, 44, 57; 7:16–18, 28–29, 33; 8:16–18, 28–29; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44–45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18, 21–25; 20:21). As a result, Jesus and the Father are one (John 1:18; 5:18; 10:29–30, 33, 38; 12:41; 14:10–11; 16:32; 17:5, 11, 21), and yet the Son is subordinate to the Father (John 5:19, 30; 7:16; 8:16, 28; 12:49; 14:10, 28). This is why Jesus is able to say, "Moses wrote of me" in John 5:46: see Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 184–85, 229; Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel*, 27–29, 85–87, 131–34, 216–18.

<sup>22</sup> See also Craig Evans's 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*, JSNTSup 158 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Peder Borgen, "God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Interpretation of John*, 2nd ed., ed. John Ashton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997) 83–96. This important essay shows how the agent is in all ways like the one who sent him in Jewish Merkabah mysticism and also in John. Thus, the unity of the Father and the Son in John (as well as the subordination of the latter to the former) is a factor of a Jewish agency schema—not a Gnostic Redeemer-Myth nor an amalgam of disparate Christologies.

<sup>24</sup> Summarizing a more detailed outline in Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father."

a) 15a, 18a—*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me (Moses) from amidst the brethren.*

- *Jesus*—is identified as being *a prophet like Moses* (John 6:14–15).
- The role of “*the Prophet*”—is ceded by John the Baptist (1:21–25) and declared to be Jesus by the Samaritan woman (4:19), the Jews (7:40), and the blind man (9:17).

b) 15b—*You must listen to him.*

- The Son bears witness to that which he has *seen and heard* from the Father (3:32; 5:19, 30; 6:46; 8:26, 38, 40; 14:24; 15:15).
- *Rejecting* the Son implies neither having heard nor seen the Father (5:37–38; 8:47), and the one not hearing or keeping Jesus’s words evokes judgment (12:46–48).

c) 18b—*Yahweh will put his words in his (the prophet’s) mouth.*

- The words of the Father are spoken by Jesus (3:11, 34; 6:63, 68; 7:16–18, 28; 8:28, 38, 55; 12:44–50; 14:24, 31), and those who receive them receive the one on whose behalf he speaks (1:12; 3:36; 5:24; 12:44; 13:20; 14:21–24; 15:10).
- In John, Jesus not only speaks the word of God; he *is the Word* of God (1:1, 14).

d) 18c—*He shall speak everything Yahweh commands him (= in his name).*

- The Son’s word is to be *equated* with that of the Father precisely because he says nothing on his own, but only what he hears and sees from the Father (5:19; 10:18, 28–29, 32, 38; 12:49–50; 17:21).
- Jesus comes *in the name of* the Father (5:43) and the Lord (12:13), and he seeks to glorify the name of the Father (12:28). Jesus has manifested the name of the Father to those given to him, and they are kept in the name of the Father in unity (17:11–12).

e) 19—*Whoever does not heed Yahweh’s words, which the prophet speaks in his name, will be held accountable.*

- Those not receiving the Son or his words believingly *have already been judged* (3:16–18; 12:47), and the Father entrusts all judgment to the Son (5:22, 27) as the truthful words of the Son produce their own judgment if rejected (12:48).
- Eschatologically, the *judgment of the world* involves the casting out of the ruler of the world and the lifting up of the Son of Man (12:31–36; 16:11), and the *Paraklētos* will be sent as a further agent of revelation and judgment (16:8–11).

f) 20—*However, a prophet who presumes to say in the name of Yahweh anything Yahweh has not instructed, or one who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.*

- Jesus is accused of speaking and acting presumptuously in John (“breaking” the Sabbath 5:16, 18; 7:22–23; 9:16; “deceiving” the crowd 7:12, 47; and witnessing about himself 8:13, 53)—and, considered as blasphemy are his calling God his

*“father”* (making himself “equal to God,” 5:18) and accusations of making himself out to be God (10:33) and the Son of God (19:7).

- Thus, the Jewish leaders seek to kill Jesus (5:16, 18; 7:1, 19, 25; 8:37, 40, 59; 10:31; 11:8), or at least to arrest him (7:30, 32, 44; 8:20; 10:39; 11:57). They accuse him of having a demon (7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20)—or even of being “a Samaritan” (8:48)—and begin to orchestrate his being put to death (11:53; 18:12; 19:7—likewise Lazarus, 12:10).

g) 22a—*If a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and the word does not take place or does not occur, that is a message the Lord has not spoken.*

- *Predictions and earlier words of Jesus* are fulfilled in John, especially about his own departure and glorification (2:19–22; 3:14; 4:50–53; 6:51, 64–65; 7:33–34, 38–39; 8:21, 28; 10:11, 15–18; 11:4, 23; 12:24, 32–33; 13:33, 38; 14:2–3, 18–20, 23; 15:13; 16:16, 20, 28, 32; 18:9, 32).
- To remove all doubt, Jesus *declares ahead of time what is to take place* so that it will be acknowledged that he is sent from God (13:18–19; 14:28–29; 16:2–4; 18:8–9, 31–34).

h) 22b—*That prophet has spoken presumptuously; do not fear him* (Note the irony, given the fulfilled prophecies!).

- Jesus is accused of *testifying about himself* (see above under f), and not being from David’s city (7:41–52) becomes an ironic criterion for rejection.
- Ironically, in seeking to have the “presumptuous prophet” put to death at the hand of Pilate—in keeping with Deut. 18:20 (19:7)—*the Jewish leaders commit blasphemy* and hail Caesar as King (19:15).

In John’s presentation of Jesus’s fulfilling the Mosaic typology of the Eschatological Prophet, the dialectical approaches to the issue characteristic of Second Temple Judaism are evident. Within the prophetic tradition of contemporary Judaism, Jesus follows the lead of John the Baptist and challenges the institutional practices of priests and Pharisees alike, purging the temple and healing on the Sabbath. He is acclaimed as the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, and he is also declared to be the Prophet by others—even the Messiah. Such identities, however, are disparaged in Judea by religious authorities, posing a Davidic and royal requirement that goes (in their view) unmet by Jesus. Nonetheless, Jesus is hailed as the Prophet-King like Moses in John 6, reflecting Samaritan and Galilean perspectives on messiahship from the start. The signs of Jesus in the Gospel of John also fulfill Eschatological Prophet typologies, and these cohere with Elijah associations as well as Mosaic ones.

### **3. Jesus as the Prophet Elijah in John: In Dialogue with Mark?**

Following Mal 3:1–4:6, anticipations of “the Prophet” (Moses) and Elijah signaling the Day of the Lord in contemporary Judaism can be seen in all four canonical Gospels, but here we also find some degree of dialectical engagement as to how such typologies are fulfilled. Within the Synoptics, Elijah and Moses prefigure the coming of the Messiah in the ministry of John the Baptist and in the appearance of Moses and Elijah at the

Transfiguration. John's narrative, however, does not include the Transfiguration, and the Baptist oddly denies being either the Prophet or Elijah. If some dialogical tension with Mark can be inferred, however,<sup>25</sup> the first point made within the narrative itself poses a striking contrast to the identity and mission of John the Baptist in the Synoptics. Whereas Mark presents John as fulfilling the typologies of the prophet/messenger (Moses) and Elijah as prophesied by Malachi, in John 1:19–26 the baptizer denies being “the Prophet” or Elijah. Rather, the whole reason John the Baptist has come is to point to Jesus (v. 31), and this may explain why John is presented as denying that he is the one fulfilling the typologies of Elijah and Moses; these roles in the Johannine narrative are reserved for Jesus alone.

Again, in Mark's rendering of Jesus and his mission, the Malachi prophecy is fulfilled in two ways. First, John the baptizer (in the Fourth Gospel, John is not called “the Baptist” as he is in the Synoptics; he is centrally the witness who baptizes) is attested to be fulfilling the roles of Moses and Elijah by the populace (Mark 6:15) and even vaguely by Jesus (Mark 9:12–13). Second, Malachi's prophecy is again fulfilled on the Mount of Transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus (Mark 9:2–7). Mark also seeks to distinguish Jesus as the Messiah from Moses and Elijah, as Peter's confession clarifies in Mark 8:28–29. Perhaps it is precisely this distinction that the Johannine narrator seeks to challenge.<sup>26</sup>

Given the baptizer's insistence in John 1 that he is neither Elijah nor the Prophet, this ceding of typologies by his predecessor thereby allows Jesus to fulfill them. Jesus is then presented as performing signs similar to those performed by Elisha, who in receiving the mantle of his predecessor had succeeded Elijah with a double portion of divine empowerment. Like Elisha's feeding of the hundred with barley loaves, crossing the Jordan, blindness/sight-related miracles, and raising of the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kgs 4:42–44; 4:14; 6:8–23; 4:8–37), the Johannine Jesus also performs signs demonstrating his divine agency. Not only does Jesus feed the five thousand (also with *barley loaves*, κριθίνου in the LXX), but he also delivers his followers across the water (John 6:1–15, 16–21); not only does he restore the sight of the man born blind, but he

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<sup>25</sup> With Richard Bauckham and Ian Mackay, John reflects at least general familiarity with Mark, while at the same time correcting and augmenting Mark with intentionality: Richard J. Bauckham, “John for Readers of Mark,” in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard J. Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 147–71; Ian D. Mackay, *John's Relationship with Mark: An Analysis of John 6 in Light of Mark 6–8*, WUNT II/182 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004). Here Mackay's inference that John's author may have heard Mark's story of Jesus performed among the churches makes sense. He would thus have been familiar with Mark's narrative in general ways, but he is neither dependent on Mark's text, nor is access to one likely, given the fact that of the 45 similarities between John 6 and Mark 6 and 8, none of them is identical: Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 97–104.

<sup>26</sup> Of course, not much can be made out of arguments from silence, and the Johannine Prologue certainly attests that “we beheld his glory” (John 1:14; note that Luke adds this Johannine motif to his redaction of Mark's account of the Transfiguration in Luke 9:32). Stronger is the view that the Johannine evangelist sought not to duplicate what was already reported in Mark (especially in the first stages of the Johannine narrative's development), as his interest lay in seeking to provide an alternative, bi-optic perspective on the ministry of Jesus: see Paul N. Anderson, “Mark and John—the *Bi-Optic* Gospels,” in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 175–88.

also raises Lazarus from the dead (John 9:1–41; 11:1–45). Therefore, parallel to the succession of Elijah by Elisha in the Kings tradition, Jesus is presented in the Fourth Gospel as superseding John the baptizer by means of his wondrous signs. The prophet-Elijah expectations of the populace are also shown to be fulfilled in John’s story of Jesus, in that while John performed no miracles, the signs performed by Jesus compel his audiences to believe in him as the authentic Messiah (John 10:40–42).

In addition to setting the record straight here and there, over and against Mark’s story of Jesus,<sup>27</sup> John’s presentation of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet also seems to have served an augmentive function—filling out the picture both chronologically and geographically. As Richard Bauckham points out, John’s narrative appears to have been crafted for hearers and readers of Mark, as the events narrated in its first three or four chapters are presented as happening *before* John was thrown into prison (John 3:24), as referenced in Mark 1:14.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Jesus in the early Johannine narrative is presented as ministering alongside John the baptizer, and some of his followers become the first followers of Jesus (John 1:35–51), while others question whether they should follow Jesus or stay with John (John 3:22–30). Given that the baptizer points his followers to Jesus, the Johannine narrator takes great pains to feature John as the lead witness to Jesus, who was after John in terms of sequence but was before John in terms of status (John 1:15, 30; 3:28–30).

While Rudolf Bultmann and Robert Fortna assumed that the numbering of the first two signs performed by Jesus in Galilee indicated the numerical ordering of a signs source (John 2:11; 4:54),<sup>29</sup> a more plausible inference is that these two signs were added by the evangelist as a means of augmenting Mark’s rendering of Jesus’s ministry chronologically. Thus, the first miracles of Jesus were neither an exorcism nor the healing of Simon Peter’s mother-in-law in Capernaum (versus Mark 1:21–34). Rather, the first signs of Jesus were performed in the presence of his own mother at the Cana wedding feast (John 2:1–11) and as a healing from afar on behalf of the royal official, whose son was ill in Capernaum (4:46–54). While features of these signs do not seem to further prophet associations explicitly, the exclamation of the steward plays a prophetic role in foreshadowing the endpoint of Jesus’s mission as one who saves the best for last

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<sup>27</sup> For an overall Johannine composition theory, my best judgment is represented in Paul N. Anderson, “On ‘Seamless Robes’ and ‘Leftover Fragments’—A Theory of Johannine Composition,” in *The Origins of John’s Gospel*, 3 vols., ed. Stanley E. Porter and Hughson Ong (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 2:169–218. If the first edition (or composition stage) of John were produced between 80 and 85 CE, it thus would have been the second gospel narrative to have been written, not the fourth. Assuming the Johannine Epistles reflect some familiarity with the Johannine narrative (written by “the Elder” between 85 and 95 CE), it is plausible to see the Johannine Prologue and chapters 6, 15–17, and 21 (along with 19:34–35 and a few other passages) as added by the final compiler after the death of the Beloved Disciple (hence the reference to his writing and death in John 21:23–24).

<sup>28</sup> Bauckham, “John for Readers of Mark.” Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24, also argues that part of John’s intention was to augment the other Gospels chronologically, including content early in the ministry of Jesus as a complement to the other Gospels.

<sup>29</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches, JMS 1 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014); Robert T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel*, SNTSMS 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

(2:10), and the fulfilled word of Jesus at the exact hour that the official's son was healed (the seventh hour, 4:50–53) confirms Jesus as the authentic prophet predicted by Moses.<sup>30</sup> In both cases, people believed in Jesus on account of his prophetic signs (2:11; 4:54), and the apologetic character of these narratives is thereby furthered. Interestingly, Matthew corroborates John's chronological augmentation of Mark, in that he locates the healing from afar in Capernaum (showing intriguing similarities with John's second sign) just prior to the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:5–13, 14–15), which is Mark's first healing miracle.

If John 6 and 21 were added to an earlier edition of John (along with 1:1–18 and chs. 15–17, etc.), the other three signs in its first edition reflect a geographic augmentation of Mark in addition to its chronological augmentation. Thus, two healings in Jerusalem and the raising of Lazarus of Bethany demonstrate that Jesus did not simply minister in Galilee and Jericho on the way to Jerusalem. Rather, he also performed miracles in Jerusalem and Bethany, and these aspects of his ministry do show signs of prophet associations and interests, which result in the challenging of priestly and other Judean religious leaders. On his second trip to Jerusalem in John 5, Jesus heals the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, and in John 9 he heals the man born blind near the pool of Siloam. These two events happen on the Sabbath, and that becomes a matter of consternation for Pharisees and religious leaders of Jerusalem. Corroborating the Sabbath healings of Jesus in the Synoptics, part of the interest might have involved the creating of cognitive dissonance within the populace, seeking to transform people's thinking and moving it to higher level of moral reasoning regarding the restorative and salutary function of the Sabbath.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in the trajectory of the Hebrew prophets and their concern for the poor and the marginalized, opposition to the prophetic signs of Jesus is explained as persons' failing to have the Father's love in their hearts and seeking the praise of humans rather than the glory of God (John 5:41–44). And, if they do not recognize his divine commission, perhaps this is due to their lack of knowing the divine commissioner (7:28; 8:19, 55; 16:3). While the religious leaders accuse Jesus and those he healed of being sinners, their sin is that they wrongly claim to see (9:41).

With the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the predictive words of the Cana steward in John 2:10 are also fulfilled, as Jesus indeed saves the best for last. While Jesus refers to Lazarus being "asleep" after hearing of his illness, he demonstrates prophetic knowledge in stating bluntly that Lazarus is dead (John 11:11–15). Again, in the typology of Elijah and Elisha, who performed miracles on the sick and raised people from the dead, Jesus performs the climactic miracle of his ministry in bringing forth Lazarus from

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<sup>30</sup> Like the prophecy of Micaiah ben Imlah, the word of the authentic prophet invariably comes true (1 Kgs 22). And, the healing from afar also bears suggestive similarities with dealing with leprosy regarding Moses and Miriam (sending her away for seven days, Num 12) and Elisha and Namaan (sending him to wash seven times in the Jordan, 2 Kgs 5). Miriam's healing is only implied, but both involve prescriptions at a distance by the prophet.

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus*, 140–41; Anderson, "Jesus and Transformation." Certainly the Hebrew prophets also created cognitive dissonance in the experiences of their audiences with intentionality, seeking to make incisive points: from Jeremiah's burying and wearing a linen belt to Hosea's marrying a harlot. Jesus's temple demonstration, healing on the Sabbath, dining with "sinners," and embracing Samaritans follows within that prophetic trajectory.

the tomb (11:39–45). Thus, in contrast to the raising of the daughter of Jairus who had just died (Mark 5:21–43), the raising of Lazarus cannot be interpreted as a resuscitation, as he had been dead for four days. The divine power at work in the healing hand of Jesus thus becomes a threat to the religious leadership of Jerusalem, and they not only continue to plan his demise, but they also begin planning to put Lazarus to death (John 11:46–57; 12:9–11). Again, like the religious leaders who were threatened by the healing work of Jesus on the Sabbath in John 5 and 9, the Pharisees and chief priests of Jerusalem are threatened by the demonstration of divine power because they loved the praise of humans rather than the glory of God (12:42–43).

What we see in the first stage or edition of John's story of Jesus is the presentation of Jesus as fulfilling the Jewish expectation of the Eschatological Prophet, inviting belief in him as such. In addition to these five signs being unique to John, the number may also have been significant in showing that Jesus was indeed to be regarded as a prophetic agent from God. Parallel to the five collections of Jesus sayings in Matthew, the five signs of Jesus in John's early material present him as fulfilling Mosaic typologies: the five books of Moses are thus echoed rhetorically in the five signs of Jesus. Therefore, while the evangelist accounts for other reports of Jesus's signs already in circulation in the first ending of John's gospel narrative (i.e., signs not written in *this* book—as in, I know Mark's out there, stop bugging me for leaving material out; it's not by accident), these signs are written that people might believe in Jesus as the Messiah and divinely commissioned Son of the Father, and believing have life in his name (John 11:27; 20:30–31).<sup>32</sup>

#### **4 North-South Tensions over the Messiahship of Jesus: Mosaic not Davidic Typologies**

An interesting feature of John's presentation of Jesus as the Messiah is that it seems to be at odds with Davidic understandings of Messiahship, especially those associated with Judean and Jerusalem-based expectations of what the Messiah would be like.<sup>33</sup> Despite the fact that some Judeans, including their leaders, believe in Jesus on behalf of his prophetic signs and compelling words, the collective majority of Jerusalem leaders oppose Jesus and disparage those inclined to believe in him (John 2:23; 7:31, 40–41; 8:30–31; 10:42; 11:45; 12:19, 42). While much of the Judean opposition to Jesus is explicable as the resistance of centralized religious and established leaders being threatened by the nonaccredited charismatic figure from the hinterlands (John 7:15), some of it appears regional and partisan.<sup>34</sup> Whereas an ethnocentric slam is evident in Jesus's being accused of being a Samaritan and demon possessed (John 8:48), Jesus is welcomed by the Samaritans and extended hospitality among them (John 4:40). And, despite his coming from Nazareth, his first followers still believe in him (John 1:48), although his being the authentic Messiah is questioned in Jerusalem because the Messiah

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<sup>32</sup> For a full argumentation of John's relation to Mark and the other gospel traditions, see Anderson, "Interfluent, Formative and Dialectical—A Theory of John's Relation to the Synoptics"; Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus*, 101–26.

<sup>33</sup> On this issue, see the essays by Beth Stovell, Marida Nicolaci, and Joel Willitts in this volume.

<sup>34</sup> Wayne E. Meeks, "Galilee and Judea in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 85 (1966): 158–69.



is not supposed to come from Galilee (John 7:40–42). Thus, the biblical teaching that the Prophet would come from Bethlehem, the city of David (Micah 5:2), is cited as proof that Jesus cannot be considered the authentic Messiah by the religious leaders in Jerusalem as a means of disparaging those inclined to believe in Jesus (7:43–52).<sup>35</sup>

This issue is extremely important, as the resistance to Jesus by the Judean religious leaders is not a reflection of Johannine anti-Semitism. Virtually none of the generic references to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (thus, “the Jews”) are negative, except perhaps for the questioning of the meaning of Jesus’s words by οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (either “the Jews” or “the Judeans”—the association is unclear) in John 6:41, 52. Thus, all the references to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as “the Jews” and all the references to Israel in John are all either positive or neutral.<sup>36</sup> As a positive reference to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, salvation is “of the Jews” in John 4:22, and it is even prophesied by Caiaphas Jesus would die for the Jewish nation as well as extending Jewish blessings to the entire world (11:51). As neutral and descriptive references to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, Jewish customs and festivals are simply described for non-Jewish audiences, accounting for developments in the narrative (John 2:6, 13; 4:9, 20; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; 18:20; 19:40). That being the case, all of the negative references to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι refer to particular religious leaders in Judea and Jerusalem, while even some of the Judeans do believe in Jesus and/or are portrayed in a positive light (7:15; 8:31–32; 11:18–19; 35–36, 12:9–11). Even Nicodemus, a leader among the Judeans, comes round and stands up for Jesus in John 7:50–51, and he also helps to bury Jesus after the crucifixion (19:39–40).

As a product of Second Temple Judaism, John’s presentation of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet is radically Jewish, written by Jewish author, seeking to convince hearers and readers that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Therefore, inferences of Johannine anti-Semitism are exegetically flawed from start to finish. Put otherwise, while Paul’s tensions with Jewish and Gentile audiences negotiated the boundaries of Jewish faith and practice, John’s tensions with the same focused on the heart of Jewish faith and practice. That being the case, the rejection of Jesus by some of the Judean leaders (not all of them) must be seen as either Jerusalem-centered disparaging of the Galilean itinerant or the rejection of the rustic prophet by the officials of centralized religion and society. It is not the supersession of one religion over another.

On this matter, John’s presentation of Jesus as fulfilling the Mosaic prophet schema rooted in Deuteronomy 18:15–22 makes a good deal of socio-religious sense. Note that John’s northern, Galilean presentation of Jesus as a Mosaic Prophet rejected in Jerusalem coheres with Samaritan sympathies, including their messianic anticipation of the *Taheb*—the Mosaic Prophet, who would speak on God’s behalf. As Wayne Meeks

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<sup>35</sup> See Sean Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Sean Freyne, “The Galilean Jesus and a Contemporary Christology,” *TS* 70 (2009): 281–97.

<sup>36</sup> Paul N. Anderson, “Anti-Semitism and Religious Violence as Flawed Interpretations of the Gospel of John,” in *John and Judaism*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson, RBS 87 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 265–311. In addition to the positive reference in John 4:22, all the other references to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as “the Jews” in the Fourth Gospel are neutral: 2:6, 13; 4:9; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; 18:33, 35, 39; 19:3, 19, 21, 31, 40, 42. And, all references to “Israel” are positive: 1:37, 47, 49; 3:10; 12:13; there is no ambiguity there.

has demonstrated in his research on the presentation of Jesus as a Prophet-King like Moses in John 6:14–15, Samaritan expectations of the Messiah focused on a Prophet like Moses rather than a King like David.<sup>37</sup> They even envisioned Moses as a royal figure who would make things right in the land and restore broken relationships with God and humanity. As a result, the crowd's wishing to rush Jesus off for a hasty coronation as a Mosaic prophet-king following the feeding of the five thousand rings true with understandings of Samaritan and Galilean aspirations.

One can thus understand why Jesus fled their designs on his future, escaping to the hillside (v. 15). While John's Jesus was rejected in Jerusalem for not cohering with religio-political understandings of what the Messiah should be like, in John 6 it is Jesus who rejects the crowd's religio-political designs on his future. This is because he saw his mission in the truth-imparting trajectory of the Mosaic Prophet—speaking truth to power and empowering liberating truth—rather than aspiring to power or seeking political gain. Even on that score, Jesus was accused of being the presumptuous prophet of Deut. 18:20–22, who would forfeit his divinely commissioned authority if he spoke of his own initiative or his word did not come true. This is why Jesus claims to say or do nothing on his own, but only what he is commissioned to do and say by God (John 3:31–34; 7:16–18; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). Thus, his goal is to accomplish the work of the Father who sent him (4:34; 5:17, 36; 9:3–4; 10:25–38) and to further his will (4:34; 6:40; 9:31). Thus, in the trajectory of Israel's faithful prophets, who spoke truth to power and challenged kings and priests alike in the name of God's values, so the Johannine Jesus challenges religious and political leaders in the name of the Father who commissioned him. In their response to the Galilean prophet, however, his audiences' stances toward God are exposed. Therein lay the judgment-oriented effect of the Eschatological Prophet's work, and such is ever the liberating and convicting power of truth in every day and age (John 8:32; 16:8–15).

## 5. Apologetic Thrusts of Jesus as Fulfilling and Being Greater than Moses

Over the last half century in Johannine studies, J. Louis Martyn and Raymond Brown have reminded us that there is always more than one level of history in any narration of past events.<sup>38</sup> And, Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us that just as there is never a narrative's

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<sup>37</sup> In addition to Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, see his "Moses as God and King," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner, SHR 14, (Leiden: Brill, 1968) 354–71. See also John Bowman, "Samaritan Studies," *BJRL* 40 (1957–58): 298–327; George Wesley Buchanan, "The Samaritan Origin of the Gospel of John," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner, SHR 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 149–75; Edwin D. Freed, "Samaritan Influence in the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 30, no. 4 (1968): 580–87; Margaret Pamment, "Is there Convincing Evidence of Samaritan Influence on the Fourth Gospel?" *ZNW* 17 (1982): 221–30; James D. Purvis, "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans," *NovT* 17, no. 3 (1975): 161–98.

<sup>38</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979); Paul N. Anderson, "The Community that Raymond Brown Left Behind—Reflections on the Dialectical Johannine Situation," in *Communities in Dispute: Current*

first word, neither is there a last, as each of us is involved in the making of meaning.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, a multiplicity of levels of history and theology must be considered when reading biblical narratives, and this is especially the case when assessing the characterization of Moses in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>40</sup> If it can be assumed that we have a basic synchronicity of tradition in John's story of Jesus, developed within a diachronicity of situation, several dialogical engagements regarding religious authorization can here be inferred, functioning apologetically within the Fourth Gospel's presentation of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet.

First, regarding the north-south engagements of Judean leaders by the Galilean prophet, Jesus is presented as challenging religious institutions, customs, and leaders in Jerusalem and its environs, and Mosaic authority is key on both sides of these engagements. Whether or not John's presentation the temple incident is rendered as an inaugural prophetic demonstration instead of a culminative event at the end of Jesus's ministry for chronological reasons, its rhetorical thrust is clear. The Galilean prophet is presented in John 2:13–25 as expelling animals and merchandizers from the temple and predicting a rebuilding of “this temple” (meaning his body) following its destruction (v. 19). This prediction was not understood at the time, but its recognition is described as being recalled later, in post-resurrection consciousness. Interestingly, his prediction is even referenced twice in Mark, perhaps as a corroboration of the prophetic word of Jesus in the temple (Mark 14:58; 15:29). Jesus continues his teaching and ministries in the temple in John 7–10, and what we see is a prophetic set of actions and teachings appealing for justice and the right treatment of persons within the center of Jewish religious life. Whereas the temple managers likely saw themselves as keeping the Mosaic Levitical codes and even the teachings of Malachi on fit offerings to the Lord, Jesus challenged well-intended systems with Mosaic conviction and cohering with the justice-oriented ethos of the prophets, characterized in Hosea, Amos, and Micah.<sup>41</sup>

A second set of prophetic actions brings a direct set of Mosaic challenges by the Jerusalem leaders, whereby Jesus also appeals to Mosaic authority in his defense. Upon healing the lame man in John 5 and the blind man in John 9, Jesus is confronted for breaking the Law of Moses regarding working on the Sabbath (5:16; 9:16). Even the walking lame man is accused of breaking the Sabbath by carrying his mat, and following the healing of the blind man, Jesus is labeled a “sinner” by the religious leaders in Jerusalem for working on the Sabbath (5:10; 9:16). In defending his prophetic actions, Jesus appeals to Mosaic authority in several ways, claiming to be operating not on his own authority but as a factor of a divine commission in the trajectory of the Prophet like Moses as predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15–22, and also pointing out that Sabbath circumcisions also “break” the Law (John 7:16–24). Therefore, in doing only what the

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*Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ECL 13, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 47–93.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in Katarina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1986), 348–49.

<sup>40</sup> Stanley Harstine, *Moses as a Character in the Fourth Gospel: A Study of Ancient Reading Techniques*, LNTS 229 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Maarten J. J. Menken, “Allusions to the Minor Prophets in the Fourth Gospel,” *NTSSA* 44, no. 1 (2010): 67–84.

Father had commanded him to do, Jesus claims that Moses wrote of him and that he was doing the Father's work and will, not his own (5:37–46; 10:25–38).

This leads to a third set of prophetic actions and challenges in Jerusalem, this time reflecting consternation over claims of authorization by Jesus. Whereas his Sabbath healings evoke charges of being a sinner, his claiming to speak and act identically with the will of the Father evokes challenges of blasphemy: accused of claiming to be equal to God or the Son of the Father (John 5:18; 10:33; 19:7). As Jesus claims divine authorization for his actions as the Mosaic Prophet, several further assertions are made. First, he claims to be one with the Father—not carrying out his own will, but only what the Father has instructed (John 5:19–23, 36; 10:25–38).<sup>42</sup> Second, Jesus appropriates the thematic authority of Jerusalem's feasts toward himself and his mission—around festivals of water, light, and bounty, Jesus offers living bread and water, and he himself is the light of the world (6:35–58; 4:11–14 and 7:37–39; 8:12 and 9:5).<sup>43</sup> Third, he claims to offer continuing revelation from the Father—declaring that God is still working and speaking (5:17, 37–46; 6:32, 45). Fourth, the authority of Jesus is pitted against that of Israel's patriarchs—Abraham, Jacob, and Moses (8:53; 4:12; 1:17)—raising further consternation among the Judean leaders.

Against these appropriations of Jewish authority the name of his Mosaic agency, Jesus is accused of breaking the codes of Moses in terms of blasphemy (John 10:33), and the religious leaders of Jerusalem begin making plans, from his second trip to Jerusalem forward, to put Jesus to death (5:15; 7:1, 19, 25; 8:47, 40, 59; 11:50–57), which is the penalty for blasphemy (Lev 24:16). Employing dramatic irony, the evangelist portrays Pilate as claiming to have full authority to release Jesus or put him to death, while finally being exposed as a helpless pawn at the mercy of the crowd (John 19:10–16). Likewise, the religious authorities insist that Jesus must be put to death for blasphemy and claiming to be God's Son, and yet they then commit blasphemy, claiming to have no king but Caesar (19:7–15). The crowd also challenges Pilate's loyalty to Caesar, charging that anyone claiming to be king is in opposition to Caesar, and that if Pilate does not discipline such insurrection, he is no friend of Caesar (19:12). Thus, within John's story of Jesus, all sources of authority are presented as being yoked to competing sides in the Johannine narrative, and the authority of Moses and the prophets is one of the key sources of legitimation employed by both Jesus and his adversaries.

While the first edition of John shows Jesus to be the Eschatological Prophet (the five signs of Jesus cohere with the five Books of Moses; the signs of Elijah and Moses are replicated by Jesus), the later material shows evidence of continuing discussions within the Johannine situation. And, in that sense, John 6 serves as a superior window to the evolving Johannine situation than does Martyn's work with John 9.<sup>44</sup> From the Galilean ministry of Jesus of Nazareth to the finalization of John's narrative around the

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<sup>42</sup> In that sense, Jesus also echoes the prophetic faithfulness to speaking only what the Lord has instructed, as declared by Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chron. 18:13).

<sup>43</sup> Paul N. Anderson, "The Origin and Development of the Johannine *Egō Eimi* Sayings in Cognitive-Critical Perspective," *JSHJ* 9, no. 2–3 (2011): 139–206.

<sup>44</sup> For an endeavor to achieve with John 6 what J. Louis Martyn accomplished with John 9, see Paul N. Anderson, "The *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and its Evolving Context," in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, *BibInt* 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1997; repr. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2006) 1–59.

turn of the century, the legacy of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet continues to be furthered throughout six or seven dialectical engagements over as many decades within the emerging Johannine situation. Within that traditional development, the engagement of the authority of Moses and the prophets comes through with striking clarity. As the signs performed by Jesus in John 6 continue to show him to be fulfilling the typologies of Elijah/Elisha and Moses, the exhortation of Jesus to seek the life-producing food versus lesser alternatives (v. 27) addresses several audiences within the emerging Johannine situation. First, the Synoptic and conventional valuation of the feeding is challenged—away from a food wonder to a sign of revelatory significance; second, it is not Moses who gave (either manna or a text) that is of value—but what God gives (both the Revealer and revelation) that abides; third, in the face of the rising imperial cult and pressure toward assimilation, to ingest the flesh and blood of Jesus implies martyrological faithfulness if required by the truth; fourth, as a challenge to rising institutionalism in the early church, Christ alone has the words of eternal life, and his Spirit-effected guidance is available to all. This is not a rejection of church leadership; it well describes effective ecclesial leadership, as its goal is ever to facilitate attending, discerning, and minding divine guidance within community and in unity.<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusion

The presentation of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet in the Gospel of John coheres entirely with the ethos and messianic expectations of first century Galilee and Samaria, reflecting also tensions with Judean Davidic aspirations and nationalistic zealotry. In so doing, characteristic dialectical engagements over disparate messianic associations and their fulfillments are evident in the Fourth Gospel every bit as much as within early Judaism—even within the Jesus movement. In addition to Jesus's self-references as the eschatological Son of Man, John's prophetic presentation of Jesus as the Messiah features him as fulfilling the typologies of both Elijah/Elisha and the Prophet like Moses, involving the performance of wondrous signs, speaking on Yahweh's behalf, and holding people accountable to what God requires. The Johannine Jesus begins his ministry with a prophetic demonstration in the temple, and his Jerusalem healings on the Sabbath raise the consternation of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. In their challenging him regarding Mosaic Law, Jesus responds claiming to be the Eschatological Prophet of whom Moses wrote. His words and deeds are not his own, but are those of the Father who sent him; thus, in one's response to the agent one also responds to the one who sent him. The word of Jesus invariably comes true, showing his fulfillment of the Mosaic typology of Deut. 18:15–22. This schema becomes central to the narrative's apologetic thrust, and the bread of life discussion following the feeding addresses existentially the condition of several audiences in the emerging Johannine situation. In these and other ways, Jesus is presented as the Eschatological Prophet in John, and to respond to him is likewise to respond to the one who sent him.

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<sup>45</sup> Anderson, "Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Corrective Rhetoric of the Johannine Misunderstanding Dialogue: Exposing Seven Crises in the Johannine Situation."

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