## Introduction

Since the groundbreaking work of Rudolf Bultmann, many Johannine scholars have shown that the Fourth Gospel is the product of the rich and diverse history of a distinctive early Christian community. In particular, scholars such as Raymond Brown and J. Louis Martyn have extrapolated a likely evolution of the Fourth Gospel through various levels of redaction.[1] These levels of redaction brought about the formation of a gospel that is distinctively rich in its christology. One of the many streams of Johannine christology that has been identified by scholars is one grounded in the traditions of Moses.[2] Through the levels of redaction, this christology of the Fourth Gospel develops in two distinct streams: (1) the first stream presents Jesus as the prophet and a type of Moses, and (2) the second stream presents Jesus in contrast and superior to Moses.

## The Prophet Like Moses

The evidence that the Fourth Gospel is grounded in the religious milieu of Palestinian Judaism has yielded important insights into the purpose, theology and christology of the Fourth Gospel. Among these insights is a developing hypothesis that the Fourth Gospel is strongly influenced by Mosaic traditions. In their respective works on Moses traditions in the Fourth Gospel, Boismard and Meeks have both demonstrated that many Jewish sects in Palestine and in the Diaspora possessed a zealous Moses piety that is reflected in their messianic expectations. These sects interpreted Deuteronomy 18:15-18 as a reference to an eschatological prophet like Moses (or even Moses-*redividus*) that would either precede the Messiah or would be the Messiah. The Fourth Gospel then would either serve as a polemic against these sects or evidences the integration of members of these sects into the Johannine community. Indeed, the Fourth Gospel does portray Jesus as this eschatological prophet and a type of Moses. The Evangelist

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[1] See Raymond E. Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1979) and J. Louis Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History: Essays for Interpreters*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 90-121.
[2] See Marie-Emile Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), T. Francis Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, (Great Britain: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1967).

accomplishes this portrayal in three ways: (1) documenting two explicit statements declaring that Jesus is the prophet, (2) the implicit self-identification by Jesus as being the eschatological prophet, and (3) drawing a typological connection between the signs of Moses and the signs of Jesus.

### *Explicit Statements that Jesus is the Prophet*

In the Fourth Gospel, the people listening to Jesus' message declare him to be the prophet. In John 6, after Jesus performs the sign of the feeding of the five thousand—a sign that the Evangelist likens to the feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness by manna from heaven—the people declare, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world" (v. 14). In John 7, when Jesus declares himself to be the source of living waters—a declaration that he makes as the people are performing a ritual that recalls the giving of water for the Israelites in the wilderness from a rock in the desert—the people declare, "This is really the prophet" (v. 40). On both occasions, the Evangelist has set the people's declaration that Jesus is the prophet alongside events and statements that allude to equivalent signs performed by Moses in Israel's wilderness wanderings. As such, the people quickly recognize Jesus as the prophet.

The Evangelist, however, does not leave the matter in the hands of the uneducated masses. Subsequent to the second declaration, the Evangelist documents the discussion of the Pharisees regarding the question of whether or not Jesus is the prophet like Moses. While the signs and words performed by Jesus have persuaded many people, the Pharisees remain unconvinced because they believe that the question hinges on a proper knowledge of Scripture (Jn 7:49). The Pharisees object to the declarations of the people that Jesus is the prophet by stating, "Search and you will see that the prophet does not come from Galilee" (Jn 7:52).[3] From this question and the comments in vv. 41-42, it appears that the eschatological hopes of a

[3] Among scholars, the reading of $P^{66}$ that includes the definite article is almost universally accepted. This reading is supported on a number of grounds: (1) if the subject is indefinite, it is an erroneous statement on the part of the Pharisees because Jonah was a prophet from Galilee, (2) $P^{66}$ is an early manuscript and the textual variant can be explained as a scribal error based on a failure to understand the theological nuance of the passage, and (3) the definite article for the subject fits the context given the declaration of the people that Jesus is the prophet in v. 40. Interestingly, Bultmann posited the definite article before the discovery of the Bodymer papyri, see Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 312. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel*

prophet like Moses and a Davidic Messiah coalesced. Indeed, Meeks' careful investigation of extant sources concerning Mosaic messianism demonstrates that these traditions include a view that the prophet like Moses would be the King of Israel and the Messiah. Therefore, the Pharisees raise as their objection an important criterion for the prophet-Messiah, namely, his birthplace. The Pharisees, however, erroneously believe that Jesus was born in Galilee. In actuality, he was born in Bethlehem, the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah. As such, the objection has the opposite effect for the reader than the effect Pharisees intend. The Pharisees, in their ignorance, affirm that Jesus is the prophet. Yet, does Jesus regard himself as the prophet like Moses?

### *The Implicit Self-Identification by Jesus as the Prophet*

While Jesus never explicitly declares that he is the prophet like Moses,[4] there are textual relationships between Jesus statements throughout the Fourth Gospel and the passages in the Torah concerning the prophetic office held by Moses and the prophet like Moses. Boismard identifies these textual relationships as a common "literary procedure used by the New Testament authors" (10). The NT authors use this procedure, which Boismard calls the imitative style, by alluding to Old Testament and Intertestamental texts through shared themes and similar or identical vocabulary. It is in this imitative style that the Evangelist documents that Jesus declared himself to be the prophet like Moses.

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*According to John I-XII*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1966), 325 for a discussion of the textual variant after the discovery of the Bodymer papyri.

[4] The research of Boismard, Glasson and Meeks suggests that the titles the prophet like Moses and King of Israel should be understood in the Fourth Gospel as closely linked. In a certain sense then Jesus does accept the title of the prophet from Nathanael in Jn 1:49 and from the people of Jerusalem at his triumphal entry in Jn 12:13 when they declare him to be the King of Israel. See Bosimard 30, Glasson 31 and Meeks. The research of Brown, Martyn and Meeks notes that Samaritan theology does not mention a Messiah figure until the 16th century and as such, the confession of the Samaritan woman that Jesus is the Messiah should be understood in light of the Samaritan eschatological Taheb, a prophet like Moses that would teach and restore all things. See Brown *AB* 171, J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 95-100 (97) and Meeks. Nevertheless, even if these are references to the prophet like Moses, Jesus, though he affirms these confessions of faith as opposed to his relative silence in Jn 6:14, 7:40, 52, still does not explicitly declare himself to be the prophet.

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| Torah Quotations Concerning the Prophetic Office Held by Moses and the Prophet Like Moses | I will be with you and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you<br>Ex 3:12 | This is how you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works; it has not been of my own accord.<br>Nm 16:28 | I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak<br>Ex 4:12 |
| | | | I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command<br>Dt 18:18 |
| Words Spoken by Jesus in the Fourth Gospel that Parallel the Torah Quotations | And the one who sent me is with me<br>Jn 8:29 | I can do nothing on my own.<br>Jn 5:30 | …I speak these things as the Father instructed me<br>Jn 8:28 |
| | | My teaching is not mine but his who sent me<br>Jn 7:16 | …[The Father] has given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak<br>Jn 12:49 |
| | | …I do nothing on my own…<br>Jn 8:28 | What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.<br>Jn 12:50 |
| | | …for I have spoken not on my own, but the Father has sent me…<br>Jn 12:49 | …for the words that you gave me I have given to them<br>Jn 17:8 |
| | | The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works<br>Jn 14:10 | |

So then, just as the words of Moses and the prophet are not their own but rather are the words of God so it is with Jesus. Furthermore, just as God sends and remains with Moses and the prophet so also it is with Jesus. As such, Jesus does affirm that he is the awaited eschatological prophet like Moses.

***The Signs of the Prophet***

In addition to Jesus' self-identification as the prophet, the imitative style is also used by the Evangelist to draw typological significance between the signs of Moses and the signs of Jesus. Just as God gave Moses power to perform signs and wonders (cf. Ex 4:17,21) to authenticate his message so also the prophet like Moses was expected to perform signs and wonders according to the power received from God. The Fourth Gospel, in agreement with extant sources, establishes that the Jews anticipated a Mosaic Messiah to perform signs pointing to the divine source of his authority:

> So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" (Jn 6:30-31).

In the Fourth Gospel, the signs of Jesus are consistent with the portrayal of Jesus as the prophet like Moses.

Though many typological connections exist between the signs of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel and the signs of Moses, the levels of redaction have likely obscured any systematic approach the Evangelist may have used. Douglas K. Clark identifies a correlation between the account of plagues against Egypt and its benefits for Israel in the Wisdom of Solomon with the signs of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel.[5] In both cases, there is "the same pattern of seven (six-plus-one) *sēmeia*, whose seventh member passes the previous six and effects what they indicate" (Clark 208). Yet, in some cases, the correlations are forced. Nevertheless, it does seem reasonable to hypothesize with Clark that the Evangelist may have written his gospel with the Wisdom of Solomon in mind. Of the seven corresponding signs, three signs strongly suggest the possibility of an intertextual relationship for the purpose of establishing that Jesus is the prophet:

(1) The first sign against Egypt in the Wisdom account is the turning of the Nile water into blood (Wis 11:6; cf. Ex 4:4:9, 7:14-24). In apposition to this sign, the Wisdom account comments on the provision of drinkable water from the rock in the desert

(Wis 11:4; cf. Num 20:2-13). In the Fourth Gospel, these signs correspond to the sign at Cana when Jesus turns the water into wine (Jn 2:1-11).[6] Symbolically, the Cana sign is an inversion of the first sign against Egypt. In a practical sense, Jesus provides the people at the wedding with drinkable wine from stone jars just as the Israelites received drinkable water from the rock.

(2) The fourth sign in the Wisdom account is the seventh sign in the Exodus account, the destruction of Egyptian food by thunder, hail and fire from God (Wis 16:15-19; cf. Ex 9:22-25). This sign is contrasted with the protection of the land of Goshen during this sign and the provision of manna for the Israelites (Wis 16:20-21, 23-27; cf. Ex 9:26, 16:4-7). In this case, the corresponding sign, the feeding of the five thousand, in the Fourth Gospel is strongly connected with the provision of manna for the Israelites by the declaration of the people that Jesus is the prophet (Jn 6:14).

(3) The final sign in the Wisdom account is the deliverance of Israel at the Sea of Reeds and the final destruction of the Egyptians (Wis 19:1-22; cf. Ex 14:21-31). In the Fourth Gospel, the final and greatest sign is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both signs provide the promise of new life and freedom; both signs are preceded by the Passover; and both signs result in a final, decisive victory over evil.

Apart from the relationship between the signs in the Wisdom of Solomon and the signs in the Fourth Gospel, the Evangelist draws further typological significance between Jesus and Moses in the greatest sign, that of Jesus' death and resurrection. In John 19:17-18, the Evangelist once again employs the imitative style to draw a comparison between the leadership of Moses in

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[5] See Douglas K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John," *CBQ Vol 45: April 1983*, 201-209.

[6] It might also have corresponded to a water miracle that may been in the Fourth Gospel just prior to the living water discourse in John 7:37-39. The purpose of John 6-7 is to connect Jesus with Moses by alluding to the provision of manna and water for the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. Furthermore, this purpose for John 6-7 is substantiated by the explicit confessions of the people that Jesus is the prophet in 6:14 and 7:40 as well as in the Pharisaic discourse in 7:45-52. The first confession follows the bread miracle and therefore, to maintain the pattern, it seems logical to conclude the existence of a water miracle prior to the second confession. As such, in an early version of the Fourth Gospel, a water miracle may have existed in conjunction with the living water discourse in John 7. This water miracle in John 7 was then suppressed or became the Cana sign in John 2. This type of structural change seems all the more likely in light of the problems scholars have had with the geographical awkwardness of John 2 and the apparent discontinuity, recognized by Bultmann (121), in John 2:12. This change may have taken place in order to weaken the Moses typology because, while it is still an obvious allusion to the plague of the Nile changed into blood, the Cana sign is can also be interpreted as a structured polemic arguing that Jesus is greater than Moses and the Law.

gaining victory over the Amalekites in Exodus 17:11-12 and the death of Jesus Christ. The passages are drawn together by setting, textual similarities, image and theme. The shared setting is a place of elevation; Moses at "the top of a hill" (Ex 17:10) and Jesus at "The Place of the Skull" (Jn 19:17). The textual similarities, using the Septuagint Greek translation of the OT text, are between the phrase εντευθεν εις και εντευθεν εις in Exodus 17:12 and εντευθεν και εντευθεν in John 19:18.[7] The shared image, portrayed by the textual similarity, is that of these two men, Moses and Jesus with arms outstretched, exhausted and tired and on either side there is a man.[8] The shared theme is that of victory over the enemy. For Moses and the people of Israel, there is victory over the Amalekites. For Jesus and the saints, there is victory over Satan and the bondage of sin.

These relationships between the signs of Moses and the signs of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel demonstrate that the Evangelist conscientiously perceives the work of Jesus Christ in view of the work of Moses. The Evangelist declares that Jesus is the prophet like Moses because the people, including the Pharisees, declare him as such, Jesus declares himself to be that prophet and his signs confirm their declarations. Yet, the Fourth Gospel goes beyond this typological connection between Moses and Jesus.

## The Prophet Greater than Moses

The socio-political turmoil of the Jewish people prior to the Christian era naturally influenced their religious traditions and as the Christian era approached, Jewish messianism began to reflect the influence of Jewish apocalyptic traditions, Hellenism and possibly, (proto-) Gnostic redeemer myths. While the Fourth Gospel draws on the messianic expectations that are grounded in traditions concerning Moses, it also incorporates a high christology as reflected in

[7] T. F. Glasson notes that the similarity is all the more striking as Delitzsch, in his Hebrew New Testament, translated John 19:17 as exactly the same phrase as its counterpart in Exodus 17:12. See Glasson 41. Interestingly, this phrase also appears in a slightly different form in the Theodotion Version of Daniel 12:5. In this case, the phrase is used to describe the relative position of two men with respect to Daniel. The two men are standing on opposite sides of a stream. One of these men then announces, "that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be accomplished" (Dan 12:7). The phrase occurs right after the first and only clear reference in the OT to the resurrection. As such, a textual similarity between a passage describing the death of Jesus Christ that leads to the end of the age and the fulfillment of the hope of the resurrection and Daniel 12 seems appropriate.

[8] Interestingly, the Fourth Gospel does not mention that the men on either side of Jesus are criminals. Though it is not an important omission, as the reader would assume they are criminals, it does maintain the allusion with more force.

titles like the λογος, Son of God and Son of Man. At some point in the development of the Fourth Gospel, the high christology replaced or offset the low christology in order to portray Jesus as greater than Moses, the Son of Man and God incarnate. Having established that selected discourses and the signs of the Fourth Gospel present Jesus as a type of Moses, it is evident that this tradition is remains an undercurrent of the high christology that dominates the canonical form of the Fourth Gospel. The prologue and most of the discourses suggest that the Moses typology is an inadequate expression of the person and work of Christ.

***The Prologue***

The prologue asserts the divinity of Christ by identifying Christ as the Word that is God and establishes that this unique relationship means that the revelation of Christ is superior to Moses. In light of the aforementioned parallels between the Wisdom of Solomon and the Fourth Gospel, the identification of Jesus as the Word of God in the prologue has enormous significance. In the Wisdom of Solomon, it is the Wisdom and the Word of God that is the executor of the signs (Wis 11:1, 16:12, 26, 18:15, 22). By composing this allusion, the redactor of the Fourth Gospel establishes in the prologue that the real significance of the parallel between the signs of Moses and the signs of Christ is that in both cases the executor is the same person. Just as the "all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed" (Wis 18:15) so also "the Word became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14).

Ironically, the language of the prologue draws on the Moses traditions to establish the superiority of the revelation of the Word in contrast to the revelation of Moses. In v.14, the use of the Greek εσκηνωσεν, which translated literally can mean "tabernacled," to describe the incarnation recalls the shekinah of God dwelling in the tabernacle. The shekinah of God now dwells in the Word. Furthermore, the Word has seen God whereas God did not even grant Israel's greatest prophet, Moses, this privilege (Ex 33:18-20). These attributes clearly set Jesus apart from Moses and it is in understanding the reality of this contrast that the redactor affirms

that only the revelation of grace and truth through Jesus makes the Father fully known to the world (Jn 1:17-18).

***The Discourses***

In the discourses, Jesus interprets his signs not as a testimony to his claim to be the prophet but as a testimony to his divine authority and correspondingly uses high christological titles such as the Son of Man and εγω ειμι. The discourses of the Fourth Gospel then are intended to bring the reader beyond a low christology that identifies Jesus with Moses to a high christology that identifies Jesus with his heavenly origins.

In John 3:14, there is an unequivocal example of this progression. In this passage, Jesus uses a common midrashic formula, καθὼς . . . ουτως, to compare his death on the cross with the lifting up of the serpent by Moses. In this typological formula, Jesus does not identify himself with Moses. On the contrary, Jesus states that the typological relationship exists between the serpent and the Son of Man. So, in precisely the phrase one would expect the Moses typology, Jesus presents a contrast between Moses and the work of the Son of Man.

In the discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4, there is also a progression from a low christology to a high christology. In the account, the Samaritan woman enters into a highly theological discourse with Jesus that centers on the issue of Jesus' identity. In v. 19, the woman affirms that Jesus is a prophet. The discourse, however, does not end at this point. Indeed, the next question concerning the true place of worship is crucial to the theological importance of this passage. By neither affirming Jerusalem nor Mount Gerizim as the true place of worship, Jesus' answer effectively invalidates Jewish hopes that a Davidic messiah would restore Jerusalem and Samaritan hopes that a Mosaic messiah would establish Mount Gerizim. At this point, the Samaritan woman is on the threshold of faith and so, she inquires as to whether Jesus is the messiah. Jesus responds, "εγω ειμι" (Jn 4:26). In this instance, Jesus leads a person from a relatively low christological perspective of his person to a higher christology.

Likewise, in the bread of heaven discourse, the Pharisees expect Jesus to defend the notion that he is the prophet (Jn 6:30-31). Yet, rather than appeal to the sign of the feeding of the five thousand that he had just performed, Jesus distinguishes himself from Moses. Jesus declares, "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:35). The typological relationship, therefore, is not between Jesus and Moses but between Jesus and the bread from heaven. The bread from heaven discourse, therefore, stands in tension to the feeding of the five thousand. While the sign presents Jesus as the new Moses, the discourse distances them. The important implication of the sign of the feeding of the five thousand is not that Jesus comes as the new Moses but that he comes from the Father as the bread from heaven giving and sustaining life.

This tension between a low christology and a high christology continues throughout the discourse of the Fourth Gospel. The blind man given sight initially confesses that Jesus is a prophet but eventually Jesus leads the man to confess a high christology by soliciting a positive response from his question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (Jn 9:35). When the people of Jerusalem shout that Jesus is the King of Israel, Christ reminds his disciples, "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (Jn 12:13, 23). The progressive christological development of the Fourth Gospel is only finally resolved in the farewell discourses.

The farewell discourses resolve the tension because in them, Jesus reveals the identity of the Son of Man not in relation to Moses but in relation to the Paraclete. The Son of Man is a Paraclete. He is the Revealer made visible only to believers to make the Father known and the Redeemer who descends to save the world and returns to heaven.[9] In turn, this high christology reinterprets the implicit self-identification by Jesus as prophet like Moses to be a self-identification by Jesus as the Paraclete who is the self-revealing Creator-Redeemer. As such, the high christology of the redactor supplants the low christology of the Evangelist and hence, dominates the canonical form of the Fourth Gospel.

[9] See Bultmann for a comprehensive commentary on the influence of the Revealer and Redeemer myths on the Fourth Gospel.

### *The Community Tension*

The tension that exists between the low christology and the high christology within the Fourth Gospel also reflects the progression of faith within the Johannine community. Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the royal official, the blind man that receives his sight and the rest of the believing Jews all represent the earliest community of faith that understood Jesus as a prophet in light of the traditions of the Old Testament. Jesus is the Messiah, Elijah[10] and the prophet like Moses. These affirmations of the work and person of Christ were substantial enough to place that fledgling community in conflict with the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin as can be deduced in the Pharisaic discourse of John 7:45-52 and most noticeably, the denunciation of the blind man that received his sight in John 9:24-34. Yet, it was not until this fledgling community developed a high christology that they were put out of the synagogues. In fact, as Jesus clearly defines this high christology in the farewell discourses, Jesus also predicts the community's expulsion from the synagogue on the basis of this new understanding of his work and person (Jn 16:2). So while many people come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, Elijah and prophet like Moses, this is only the initial stage in understanding the work and person of Jesus. The purpose and theology of the Fourth Gospel, encapsulated in John 20:31, reflects then the progression of the faith of the Johannine community until it reached its climax in the confession of Thomas in John 20:28, namely that Jesus is Lord and God.

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[10] As this essay primarily concerns the Moses traditions, I have not dealt with the stream of Johannine christology that affirms Jesus as the new Elijah. Yet, as Martyn develops in "We Have Found Elijah," the opening chapter denies to John the Baptist the three titles that it then in the original source gives to Jesus. The second title, namely that Jesus is Elijah, however, has been suppressed in the canonical form of the Fourth Gospel. Martyn posits the existence of that affirmation amidst the textual awkwardness of v. 43. Martyn reconstructs the source, arguing that the omission occurs with the instances of the verb said:

(1) He (Andrew secondly) *found* Philip
(2) *and said to him*, "We have found Elijah who comes to restore all things [or some such]."
(3) He led Philip to Jesus [or some such].
(4) And, looking at him,
(5) *Jesus said*, "Follow me!" (Martyn *Essays* 41, *italics his*).

Further evidence of the Elijah typology is the healing of the royal official's son as a comparison with the healing of the widow's son in 1 Kings 17:17-24. Also, Brown and Martyn both affirm that changing water into wine and the multiplication of loaves "have echoes in the Elijah-Elisha tradition which supplies the OT background for Jesus' miracles" (Brown *AB* 101). Thus, it seems that the earliest form of the Fourth Gospel also portrayed Jesus as Elijah. See Martyn *Essays* 9-54 for a complete discussion of the Elijah traditions in the Fourth Gospel.

## Conclusion

The development of the Moses traditions within the Fourth Gospel gives an indication of the spiritual development of the earliest Johannine Christians. The initial faith of these Christians developed from a primitive understanding of the work and person of Christ, through the ongoing revelation of Christ and the Paraclete as well as the persecution of the Jews, until they came to "the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4:13). The Fourth Gospel then is a community testimony of a community's spiritual growth. It testifies to tension, conflict and doubt but also to the community's election and perseverance as disciples of Christ, called and sanctified according to the Word of God. It is a testimony written "so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31).

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