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**The Gospel of John as Jewish Messianism:
Formative Influences and Neglected Avenues in the History of Scholarship**

James F. McGrath

Abstract:

Messianism is sometimes construed broadly in relation to a wide variety of savior figures, but within the context of Judaism, messianism has a more natural narrow focus on anointed figures – and within early Christianity, the Davidic king in particular. The study of the Gospel of John, however, has tended to veer away from focusing on such matters, often based on the conviction that the Gospel itself does likewise. The case can be made, however, that the exalted status of Jesus in the Gospel of John, as one who embodies the divine presence and power, is attributed to him precisely as messiah in the strict sense of the word. By way of introduction to the subject of the volume as a whole, this study surveys a range of historical examples of scholarly engagement with the intersection or convergence between the Fourth Gospel and Jewish messianism, and combines insights from older scholarship and very recent proposals to offer suggestions on how to do justice to the Christology of John’s Gospel as itself simply another form of first-century Jewish messianism.

Scholars studying the Gospel of John and its Christology have made extensive use of ancient sources and modern scholarship related to Jewish messianism. The term “messianism” can be defined narrowly or broadly, and has been used to denote the concepts related specifically to anointed figures in Judaism, or to a wider array of ideas about a larger number of savior figures of various sorts, in a variety of religions from all around the globe. This fact can be seen in the very title given to this essay. Messianism in the strict sense is an idea that is exclusively associated with the Israelite tradition and its offshoots. And yet we find ourselves having to specify that our interest is in *Jewish* messianism, precisely because the term has come to be applied and used much more broadly. But even with the specificity provided by the added adjective, the question of whether a broad or narrow meaning is intended must still be addressed. That the concept of the Davidic anointed one should be given attention under this heading is obvious. But what about Jewish traditions about prophets, and in particular the figure sometimes referred to as the “prophet like Moses”? As Wayne Meeks has explored, that figure cannot be treated in a manner that clearly delineates the role of prophet from that of king.¹ And some would argue that any figure presented as restoring Israel is inherently “messianic,” regardless of whether the specific term “Messiah” is used.² Both in the Gospel of John and other Jewish literature, the figure of the Davidic anointed one cannot be treated in isolation from other figures that were considered important (including God, angels, other kings, and other anointed figures such as high priests).

¹ Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovTSup 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 21–29.

² On this theme in the Gospel of John see John A. Dennis, *Jesus’ Death and the Gathering of True Israel*, WUNT II/ 217 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

Even when it comes to the narrower conceptual sphere of a Davidic Messiah, there can still be said to be a variety of “messianisms.” But neither can messianic ideas, even when defined narrowly, be isolated completely from important concepts such as the Wisdom/wisdom, Spirit/spirit(s), and Word/word(s) of God. This might well go without saying, since the very effort to bring scholars who focus on Jewish messianism, and those who focus on the Gospel of John, together to interact with one another involves recognition of the need to transgress boundaries that scholars often work within. It is perhaps worth stating it explicitly nonetheless, precisely because one can speak of the Gospel of John *and* Jewish messianism, as two areas which are separate and yet related, or of the Gospel of John *as* Jewish messianism, with the Fourth Gospel a subset of the broader topic. And it is difficult to know whether to leave such a matter open, or to take for granted one particular stance. Is the depiction of Jesus in the Gospel of John best considered as itself a form of Jewish messianism, or as something distinct which can nonetheless be illuminated and clarified in relation to Jewish messianism?

To begin to adequately address such questions, we must survey the history of scholarly discussion of this topic, and the historical contexts which have influenced scholars to ignore or to focus on these matters. In scholarship prior to the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and thus also prior to World War II, the assumption was widespread that the Gospel of John’s depiction of Jesus is so different from that of other early Christian literature precisely because it reflects a departure from Judaism, or at the very least reflects the significant influence of non-Jewish streams of thought on the work. Rudolf Bultmann’s two-volume *New Testament Theology* spends only one chapter on the “earliest church,” before turning its extensive attention to the “Hellenistic church.” Of the Gospel of John, Bultmann writes, “The distance which separates John both from the proclamation of Jesus and from that of the oldest church is straightaway apparent.”³ Bultmann’s statement is echoed by most scholars of his era, and of course, the majority of scholars even today would speak of great distance between John and the other Gospels, and are fully cognizant of the historical problems with treating the words attributed to Jesus in John as those of the historical Jesus. In the scholarship of previous generations, however, Judaism was typically the foil against the background of which Jesus’s superiority was highlighted, and Jewish ideas were brought into the picture in the study of John in much the same way, with the Fourth Gospel being viewed as having departed from Judaism, and so having made progress on the upward path that led to the Gentile church. While some theologians valued the simplicity of the Synoptic Jesus in comparison to the more complex and at times abstract theologizing of Paul and John, the idea of a “break with Judaism” was typically an unquestioned presupposition, as was the idea that this break was inherently a good thing. Anti-Semitism was often latent (and at times explicit) in the context in which the Gospel of John was studied, and the anti-Judaism detected in that Gospel served to fan the flames further still. For instance, in Shirley Jackson Case’s “The Rise of Christian Messianism,” he writes:

In general it is apparent that the Christian belief in a Messiah was derived originally from Judaism. But at the time of the new religion’s rise Messianism among the Jews displayed divergent tendencies, and it is not always easy to determine the specific type of Jewish thinking that exercised the most pronounced formative influence upon Christianity.... Furthermore, when the Jewish and the Christian Messianism of the first century are placed side by side, the

³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1955), 2:3.

difference between the two is so pronounced as to lead one to question the degree to which the Jewish inheritance had really been influential in shaping the Christian imagery.⁴

The remainder of the essay makes numerous claims which, from our perspective, are simply unsupportable. These including a facile contrast between nationalistic messianism and eschatologists who (unless they compromised with the nationalists) focused on God and the future age rather than on the figure of a Messiah; and the claim that “By the time of Christianity’s rise Jewish thinking had to a considerable extent swung away from Messianism.”⁵ This leads to the paradoxical (yet nonetheless widespread) view of Christianity as fulfilling the Jewish Scriptures in ways that Jews were themselves purportedly uninterested in. Going further, Case writes, “There were, it is true, some Christians who interested themselves in claiming for [Jesus] Davidic ancestry, but the credential is only a superficial one. Even had it been admitted that Joseph of Davidic lineage was actually the father of Jesus, it would not have been claimed that Jesus had accomplished the rehabilitation of the Hebrew monarchy. The kingdom that he was concerned ultimately to establish was of another sort.”⁶

This is the kind of confused treatment of early Christian sources in relation to their Jewish context that might be expected, historically speaking, given the theological and apologetic heritage of Christian scholarship. There was a concern from very early on to emphasize Jesus’s superiority and preeminence, to emphasize his fulfilment of Israelite prophecy, and yet at the same time to deal with his failure to fulfill what was predicted. For an example of this sort of approach as it relates specifically to the Gospel of John, we may turn to Herman Ridderbos, who wrote, “one cannot say...that the Prologue is set in the Israelitish or Jewish expectation of the Messiah. The Messiah is the Son of God in a broader, more universal sense than had been the case with the Son of God in Israel.”⁷ Along the same lines, William Wrede wrote (in the section on the Gospel of John in his famous book on the “messianic secret”):

The view of Jesus in the Gospel of John is not characterised by the concept of the Messiah. It is, of course, not without significance for the Gospel. Apart from anything else polemics against the Jewish church which pervade the Gospel from beginning to end makes it important to the evangelist. He has to show that his Messiah does not contradict what the Jews demand of the Messiah or that deficiencies in this Messiah, emphasized in relation to the fixed dogmas of messiahship, do not in fact exist or are of no consequence. But for his own and proper view of

⁴ Shirley Jackson Case, “The Rise of Christian Messianism,” in *Studies in early Christianity presented to Frank Chamberlin Porter and Benjamin Wisner Bacon by friends and fellow-teachers in America and Europe*, ed. Shirley Jackson Case (New York: Century, 1928), 313–32 (313).

⁵ Case, “Rise of Christian Messianism,” 317.

⁶ Case, “Rise of Christian Messianism,” 319. The attempt of Jesus to flee rather than be made king in John 6 could be construed as a rejection of Jewish messianism, at least of a royal sort. But it can also be construed as an expression of the kind of humility displayed by Moses and others who expressed their own inadequacy as human beings and were useful to God for precisely that reason. If Jesus’s kingdom was “not of this world” in the sense of being located elsewhere than on Earth or in material existence, but in the sense of having different values, this would make the allegedly apolitical Jesus of John less far removed from the kingdom-proclaiming Jesus of the Synoptics. In the Synoptics, Jesus does not get his followers to fight for him either, because that is not the ethos of his kingdom, but he rather awaits God to install him as king.

⁷ Herman Ridderbos, “The Structure and Scope of the Prologue to the Gospel of John,” *NovT* 8, no. 2 (1966): 180–201 (199).

Jesus “Messiah” is no longer the exhaustive and really apt concept. The only begotten Son of God, the *Logos*, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Bringer of Truth, these are predicates which not only have special reference to Israel but also give a meaning to the being and the work of Jesus which no Jew had ever attached to the idea of the Messiah.⁸

The social and ecclesiastical contexts that influenced much Johannine scholarship thus pulled in two different directions, albeit with an underlying shared assumption. For some, emphasizing the distinctiveness of Jesus’s identity and claims about him over against Judaism led to a positive appreciation for the Gospel of John, in which Jesus is “clearly not merely the Jewish Messiah” but is God incarnate.⁹ For others, the Liberal Protestant desire to recover a pristine pre-Nicene faith of the early followers, without philosophical and metaphysical accretions, led to a focus on the historical Jesus, associated far more with the Synoptics than John, if not indeed entirely with the former. In both cases, the assumption was that the Gospel of John stood apart, at some great distance from the Synoptics, whether as providing the correct insight into who Jesus really was, or as an inappropriate departure from the message of Jesus. The attempt to cling to both these points simultaneously may be illustrated through a quote from E. F. Scott about the Gospel of John:

Jewish conceptions are translated in almost every instance into the language of Greek speculation. It was impossible thus to transpose the Christian doctrine without modifying, often to a serious extent, its original character. The Greek ideas which John employs never correspond more than partially with the ideas of Jesus, and are some times alien to the whole spirit of His teaching. Yet it may fairly be argued that the Hellenic form is in some respects more adequate than the Jewish. There was a breadth and idealism in the thought of Jesus which transcended the limits imposed on Him by the Jewish modes of utterance. We cannot but feel in reading the Synoptic Gospels that He has sometimes to pour new wine into old bottles, to overstrain the language and imagery of traditional Hebrew thought in order to find expression for His message. The ideas of the Messiah and the kingdom of God, to take the most signal instances, meant infinitely more to the mind of Jesus than the names themselves could be made to signify. He was continually hampered by the inadequacy of the names, which as a Jewish teacher He was nevertheless constrained to use. The Fourth Evangelist, when he breaks with the literal tradition, and substitutes the language of Greek reflection for the actual words employed by Jesus, is not necessarily unfaithful to the Master’s teaching. On the contrary, he gives truer expression in many cases to the intrinsic thought. There were elements in the gospel message,

⁸ William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971), 181.

⁹ See for instance a relatively recent example in Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study on the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John*, WUNT II/158 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 233: “John intends to show that *Jesus is the Messiah of Jewish expectation, but he is also much more than this*” (italics original). Brunson goes on to emphasize that, on the one hand, any approach to the Fourth Gospel that neglects Jewish messianism is ignoring its explicit statement about its purpose. Yet he counterbalances this with an emphasis on Jesus at once fulfilling, and showing the insufficiency of, previously existing labels and categories.

and these among the most valuable, which could not come to their own until they had received a new embodiment in Hellenic forms.¹⁰

The horrors of the Holocaust are just one among several factors that have led to a re-examination of the anti-Jewish assumptions underpinning these perspectives.¹¹ But even in post-WWII scholarship, the ways that scholars have adjusted their approach has not been uniform. If some have been motivated to come to the New Testament with a new appreciation for its Jewish context and elements as something more than a negative foil for Jesus, others have found new reasons to repudiate the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel, with his vitriol aimed at “the Jews.” The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls also contributed to the aforementioned shifts. But their discovery and publication by no means led immediately to a changed perspective on the Gospel of John. Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, even in the second (1986) edition of their survey of the history of the interpretation of the New Testament, still felt able to write that “The Qumran documents represent not the classical traditions of Judaism, but the views of a sect – a sect that by strict Jewish canons must be classed as heretical.”¹² Since then, it has increasingly become accepted that there was no Jewish “orthodoxy” in the first century, so much so that some prefer to speak of “Judaisms” in the plural. This is important for our present interest, since without relinquishing anachronistic notions of Jewish orthodoxy, one may not be able to fully embrace John’s messianism as genuinely Jewish. Yet Neill and Wright do acknowledge that the evidence from Qumran had undermined the older distinctions between “Palestinian” vs. “Hellenistic” Judaism. And they hint at what then seemed like a mere tantalizing possibility, that perhaps “we must consider afresh the whole question of the origin and interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, and must take seriously the possibility that many things in that Gospel which have been confidently written off as ‘Hellenistic’ may really be Palestinian in origin.”¹³

It is easy for those who have entered the realm of Johannine scholarship more recently to fail to appreciate just how long it has taken for the impact of these changes to be fully felt—as taken for granted as they are in the present day, at least theoretically. C. H. Dodd, in discussing Jesus’s “I am” statements in his classic study *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, expresses openness to the possibility that “one of the most distinctive ideas in the Fourth Gospel, and one which has been thought most remote from the Judaism within which Christianity arose, has its roots in reflections of Jewish Rabbis....” And yet he does so in a chapter on Rabbinic Judaism which occurs subsequent to the first major chapter, devoted to the Hermetic literature. It was not at all a given in Dodd’s time, or in his own thinking, that Judaism is the place to look for the primary wellspring of Johannine concepts.¹⁴ Things

¹⁰Ernest F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 7–8. Cf. Michael F. Bird, *Jesus Is the Christ: The Messianic Testimony of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 139, where Bird emphasizes Jesus’s fulfilment of Jewish expectation rather than the inadequacy of Jewish categories.

¹¹Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel: Parallelism, Function, and Context*, WUNT II/220 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 1–12, 28–30.

¹²Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 329.

¹³Neill and Wright, *Interpretation of the New Testament*, 330. See also the statement they attribute to Israel Abrahams, a Cambridge Rabbinics scholar, to the effect that Jews view the Fourth Gospel as the most Jewish of the four New Testament Gospels (338).

¹⁴C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 96. See, on the other hand, Adela Yarbro Collins, “Epilogue,” in *John’s Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic*, ed. Catrin H.

that have begun to become taken for granted—at least in certain scholarly circles—were mere tantalizing suggestions half a century ago.

If we fast forward to the present day, we find an increased number of Jewish scholars working on early Christianity in general, and the Gospel of John in particular. And often the perspective of these scholars has been adamant in recognizing that the entire phenomenon of early Christianity is itself part of the history of Judaism and of Jewish messianism. For instance, Daniel Boyarin writes, “There is...a growing recognition that the Gospels themselves and even the letters of Paul are part and parcel of the religion of the People of Israel in the first century A. D. What is less recognized is to what extent the ideas surrounding what we call Christology, the story of Jesus as the divine-human Messiah, was also part (if not parcel) of Jewish diversity at this time.”¹⁵ So likewise Urban von Wahlde writes of the Gospel of John, “The author is not saying that the Jewish perspective is wrong; he is saying that his opponents do not have the true Jewish perspective!”¹⁶ This is a world away from the perspective of Joseph Klausner more than half a century earlier, who wrote, “there can be no doubt that, had it not been for the general influence – however obscure and remote – of...pagan stories, a Jewish Messiah would never have become the Christian Son of God.”¹⁷

Before proceeding it is worth pointing out that, in seeking to get away from certain theological biases that skewed the data in previous generations, it is not to be suggested that a contemporary (or indeed any) Jewish perspective is automatically preferable to a Christian one, any more than the reverse, nor that a purportedly non-theological or even anti-theological perspective will be superior to one that is recognizably shaped by theology. The Gospel of John, and all the works that we consider to be expressions of Jewish messianism, are theological works, and if theological concerns can color and distort, they may also place one in profound sympathy with the outlook expressed in a particular piece of literature. And so the aim here is not to eliminate theological perspectives or even biases (as though that were possible), but rather to highlight the ways that influences and assumptions have been a factor in interpretation in the past, in the hope that this information might help us not only to use earlier scholarship more cautiously, but also to recognize (to whatever extent we can) some of the influences, assumptions, biases, and baggage that we bring to the text in our own time. What we bring with us does not always result in misinterpretation, but it can. It must also be pointed out that, in focusing on the immediate Jewish context of the Gospel of John, we are not ignoring the work by scholars such as Martin Hengel,¹⁸ and more recently David Litwa, highlighting that all Judaism in this era was Hellenistic.¹⁹ Yet such observations do not undermine the distinctiveness of Judaism in its Greco-Roman setting. As an analogy, while one could emphasize that “Indian vs. British” would be a false dichotomy if applied to

Williams and Christopher Rowland (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 300–307 (304), which suggests that in context, “I am he” in John 8 means “I am the Messiah.”

¹⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, (New York: The New Press, 2012), 22.

¹⁶Urban C. von Wahlde, *Gnosticism, Docetism, and the Judaisms of the First Century: The Search for the Wider Context of the Johannine Literature and Why It Matters*, LNTS 512 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 168. Von Wahlde reflects the aforementioned history of scholarship when he turns his attention to Judaism after “two of the more widely discussed possibilities: Gnosticism and Docetism” (105).

¹⁷ Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 70.

¹⁸ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1974).

¹⁹ M. David Litwa, *Jesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as a Mediterranean God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 11–18.

South Asia in the colonial era, suggesting that there was nothing distinctive about Indian traditions and views when compared to the rest of the British Empire would likewise be a mistake. Doing justice to such both/and situations often proves surprisingly tricky, and the topic of John and Jewish messianism illustrates this at least as well as any other.

Returning to Boyarin and Klausner, their perspectives are separated not just by time, but also by very different assumptions about the nature of the development of Christology in early Christianity. These views represent major stances held in our time, as well as in the past, on the subject of the relationship of emergent Christianity to its Jewish context. Klausner begins with Judaism in its later form, after there had been a widespread rejection not only of Christianity, but also other viewpoints that could be understood to posit “two powers in heaven.”²⁰ Boyarin connects the Christian understanding of Jesus (viewed through the lens of Daniel 7 as the “Son of Man”) to the evocation in that text of the Canaanite story of El and Ba’al. On the one hand, this allows Boyarin to claim that Christianity, with its second god, was connected to earlier Israelite tradition—and thus in a sense was more conservative than what became mainstream Jewish monotheism. On the other hand, Boyarin’s understanding of the divinity of Jesus in the New Testament still places it at odds with that later Jewish monotheism. Other interpreters, however, would disagree with both Boyarin and Klausner, insisting that the Christian view of Jesus in the New Testament is not at odds with the kind of allegiance to one God alone that characterized Judaism in the first century, and even thereafter.²¹ And so we see here that the question of John and Jewish messianism intersects with other contested issues about the character of Judaism—or rather, the issue of which forms of Judaism it relates to, and how.²²

The question of John and/as Jewish messianism also cannot be separated from questions about the interrelationship between the Gospel of John, the Synoptic Gospels, and the historical Jesus. Academic study of Johannine Christology is not just concerned to relate that text as an isolated literary work to the Judaism of its time, but also seeks to triangulate it in relation to other early Christian literature. Often it has been assumed that the other Gospels in the New Testament are closer to the Jewish Jesus of history, his Jewish context, and mainstream Jewish messianism, with the result that the Gospel of John must by definition, to the extent that it represents a departure from the Synoptic Gospels, also represent a departure away from Judaism. At the foundation of this viewpoint—widespread even in the present—is a lack of appreciation of the extent of Jewish diversity, and thus the extent to which the Synoptics and John can be genuinely different and yet none be “less Jewish” than

²⁰ See the discussion in James F. McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in its Jewish Context* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009) 81–96.

²¹ James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Trinity International, 1991) 229; James F. McGrath, *John’s Apologetic Christology*, SNTSMS 111 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71–147; McGrath, *Only True God*, 2–22; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism. Volume 1: Christological Origins: The Emerging Consensus and Beyond* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015) 129–131, 189–191; J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016) 8–9.

²² Cf. von Wahlde, *Gnosticism, Docetism, and the Judaisms*, 105–79, who posits a connection between different forms of Judaism and different stages in the composition of the Gospel.

the other.²³ It must also be added that, on the subject of “the Messiah,” the Gospel of John may not be as different from the Synoptics as is sometimes assumed.²⁴

It would possible to create a list of categories into which views about John and Jewish messianism might be placed. Often such categories work typologically, focusing on Davidic/royal, Mosaic/prophetic, Philonic, Enochic, angelic, and other kinds of labels, related to specific literary works or distinctive mediator figures. All of the aforementioned terms, however, pertain to Judaism, and so one might think that, to the extent that these themes or literary influences are seen in John, its Jewish heritage would be undisputed. Yet that is not always the case. We could also trace different views of the relationship between John and the Synoptics, and each in turn to its Jewish context. The questions of literary dependence between New Testament texts are not unrelated to our present focus. Even when it comes to John’s distinctive material we find that, despite focus on figures like “our father Jacob,” and the inclusion of material that seems influenced by traditions of exegesis that are also represented in later rabbinic Jewish works, it is nonetheless possible for interpreters to view the Gospel of John being un-Jewish or even anti-Jewish. Given the number of different possible views that can be adopted on each of these points, and the fact that scholars who agree on one subtopic may disagree on another, there is little likelihood that an attempt to diagram or chart scholarly stances in relation to one another would help achieve greater clarity on this complex subject. Yet it may nevertheless be useful to mention some of the dichotomies and spectrums that have been posited (in no way presuming in our mentioning any of them that they depict the state of affairs accurately). For instance, Jewish messianic ideas have been viewed as always envisaging an anointed one who is “merely human,” or as always having been essentially binitarian, or as having always had both ideas side by side, or as having developed from one to the other (in either direction). The Synoptics and John have been viewed as all equally Jewish, as on a trajectory away from Judaism, or as all equally non-Jewish. One reason why our field is characterized by such a diverse range of viewpoints is not just the creativity of the scholars who work in it, but also the flexibility of the literary evidence, and the many ways that the pieces of the puzzle may be understood, and then subsequently arranged in relation to one another.

One point on which it seems that a great many scholars would agree, however, is in viewing John’s depiction of Jesus as representing, if not a departure from Judaism that reflects a “parting of the ways,” then at the very least a radical new innovation *within* Judaism that could not help but lead to a subsequent rupture. The fact that such views have in the past (and at times in the present) been motivated by Christian supersessionism does not automatically mean that they are incorrect. Christianity did eventually become a separate and distinct religion, and so at some point we are bound to identify earlier moments that are related causally to subsequent ruptures. But we must still ask what role was played by John’s Christology not just in the longer term, as understood by later generations, but in its own time and place. It has been too easy to view the debates between Jesus and “the Jews” as

²³ See for instance John Lierman, “The Mosaic Pattern of John’s Christology,” in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, ed. John Lierman, WUNT II/219 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 210–234 (233), where he sees John not as transcending the categories of Jewish messianism, but as developing a Moses-focused alternative to Davidic messianism.

²⁴ Cf. Richard Bauckham, “Messianism according to the Gospel of John,” in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, ed. John Lierman, WUNT II/219 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 34–68 (54). See too Yarbrow Collins, “Epilogue,” 301, on John as depicting Jesus not as something other than the Messiah, but as one particular kind of Messiah rather than another.

not merely reflecting antecedents to a parting of the ways, but as an indication that they had already occurred or were then unfolding. And yet the Qumran community might be said to have experienced a separation from the wider Jewish community, without it becoming necessary or appropriate to describe them as having “departed from Judaism.”²⁵

The case therefore can and should be made for speaking about the Gospel of John *as* Jewish messianism, and not merely about the Gospel of John *and* Jewish messianism. The assumption in most discussions of Johannine Christology is that this Gospel is not merely different, but “more” than others, in some way—whether *further* from Judaism, *higher* in its Christology and the divine status it attributes to Jesus, or something else along similar lines. The only question, it is often assumed, is not whether John represents a step on a path that eventually leads to Christianity becoming separate from Judaism, but whether it yet represents “a step too far.”²⁶ Another option has at times been proposed, however, and deserves consideration, precisely because we must raise, explore, and evaluate the specific topics that lie at the intersection between the Gospel of John and the broader phenomenon of Jewish messianism.

Decades ago, John A. T. Robinson made the case that the Gospel of John, while not the first Gospel, is *a* first Gospel, one that can genuinely reflect an early perspective on Jesus by someone who knew him.²⁷ Conservatives latched onto his book and touted it in favor of their own preference for dating John early. Liberals mostly dismissed or ignored the book, perhaps in part due to the conservative reception thereof. What unfortunately was lost in the process was a consideration of Robinson’s argument that the depiction of Jesus in the Gospel of John is not as far removed from that of the Synoptics as is typically thought to be the case. The prevailing wisdom tells us that John alone shows Jesus through the lens of a prologue depicting him as the Word become flesh, and so reflects a radically different view of Jesus than the other Gospels. Yet the earliest Gospel, Mark, begins with Jesus as the one upon whom the Spirit of God descends. The view that Jesus embodies the divine presence and divine power is not unique to John, but a perennial theme throughout early Christian literature. Moreover, it is almost universally assumed that the voice we are hearing from the lips of Jesus in John is that of the Logos—that the Logos is the subject of the “I” that is repeated with such frequency.²⁸

However, that is not necessarily the case. One key point at which John seems to develop a particular early Christian idea beyond what is found in earlier Gospels relates to the influence of the Parables of Enoch on early Christianity. The one who speaks in John is conscious of having preexisted, in a manner that is clearly different from every other New Testament Gospel. But it is the preexistent messiah, the Son of Man who came down from heaven, who so speaks, as “a man who told the truth [he] heard from God” (John 8:40).²⁹ The Son of Man in the Parables is full of the spirit of wisdom—or should that be rendered as Spirit of Wisdom? The connection between and perhaps fusion of the Son of Man and

²⁵ See further Dennis, *True Israel*, 350–51.

²⁶ Dunn, *Partings of The Ways*, 298–300.

²⁷ John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London: SCM, 1985).

²⁸ For the statistics of how frequently the first person pronoun occurs in John relative to the Synoptics, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus: The Impact of Scholarship on Our Understanding of How Christianity Began* (London: SCM, 1985), 34.

²⁹ For the view that the Messiah was not thought of as pre-existent in pre-Christian Judaism see Aquila H. I. Lee, *From Messiah to Preexistent Son: Jesus' Self-consciousness and Early Christian Exegesis of Messianic Psalms*, WUNT II/192 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005), 99–115.

Wisdom, in either 1 Enoch or early Christian literature, had the potential to raise the kinds of questions that Johannine Christology does: How does the preexistent messiah appear on Earth? Is it his soul that preexists, his whole person, or something else—and if so, what is that something else? What can the preexistent messiah reveal that no other could previously, precisely as a result of that access to celestial things? How does his preexistence relate to the pre-existence of God’s Wisdom? How does the descent of the Son of Man into the world relate to the descent of Wisdom into the world? How does the seating of Wisdom among the angels relate to the sitting of the Elect One on the throne alongside God? That Christianity debated these matters so directly and explicitly is certainly something that sets surviving Christian literature apart from its closest Jewish analogues. But such distinctiveness is not indicative that we need to place Johannine Christology in a completely different category. On the contrary, the later debates are about matters that were at least implicitly raised by more than one strand of Jewish messianism.

That the Gospel of John’s Christology represents an instance of Jewish messianism should never have been in dispute. Among the New Testament Gospels, only the Gospel of John uses the transliterated word “Messiah,” and John also has more occurrences of the Greek translation Χριστός than the other Gospels. The statement of purpose in the Gospel of John is clear and emphatic: the aim is for the reader to believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:30).³⁰ That it has taken so long for us to reach the point of treating the Gospel of John as giving expression to a form of Jewish messianism is due to concerns that have more to do with Christian theological commitments (and their influence even on some who may not hold to them), than with historical-critical exegesis. It is not that a scholar such as Marinus de Jonge is wrong when he says that “*Jesus’ kingship and his prophetic mission are both redefined in terms of the unique relationship between Son and Father, as portrayed in the Fourth Gospel.*”³¹ But the same could be said of the redefinition of the kingship and mission of the Son of Man in terms of his unique relationship to the Lord of Spirits in 1 Enoch. The Gospel of John is unique in certain respects, but so too are all expressions of Jewish messianism that are known to us. When Judaism and its messianism are treated as a mere foil for Christianity and its Christ, both are distorted—as for instance when Richard Bauckham treats the worship of the Son of Man in 1 Enoch as “the exception that proves the rule” (the rule being that Christian worship of Jesus was unique), rather than as a similar and yet different parallel, that can usefully be compared as well as contrasted, as one expression of Judaism with another.³²

The reasons that the approach, and the corresponding conclusions, being advocated here have long been resisted are, however, understandable, and are perhaps worthy of academic study in their own right. On the one hand, the same apologetic concerns that can be seen to have motivated the author of the Fourth Gospel also motivated his later interpreters—in particular the theological and Christological concern to emphasize Jesus’s superiority. Of course, it will be profoundly ironic if this *shared* concern proved to be a cause of much misunderstanding of the Gospel of John.³³ On the other

³⁰ See John A. T. Robinson’s response to E. F. Scott’s claim that Logos has replaced Christ as the dominant category in the Gospel of John: John A. T. Robinson, *Twelve More New Testament Studies* (London: SCM, 1984), 69; Robinson, *Priority*, 36–37. See also Bird, *Messianic Testimony*, 99–101, 137–138.

³¹ Marinus de Jonge, “Jesus as Prophet and King in the Fourth Gospel,” *ETL* 49 (1973): 160–77 (162).

³² Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 19–20.

³³ See Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, 157–58.

hand, the theological developments to which John contributed in the longer term led ultimately to Judaism and Christianity adopting theological views which differed, if not on monotheism per se, then at the very least on what it means to be a monotheist. And so it was perhaps inevitable that most readers would assume that the Gospel of John reflects and embodies that disagreement.³⁴ Yet there are other options which, if they were not as clear in the past, are known to us now as a result of the rediscovery and increased study of a wide array of Jewish literature, and greater scholarly familiarity with it. The options range from the view that Judaism could incorporate a second divine being, to the view that it could not but neither does John.³⁵ And those are by no means the only two options, since even among those who insisted on the unique glory and majesty of the one God, there was still much room for other figures of exalted status, provided that status was ultimately subordinate to the one God. As David Litwa writes concerning Philo's thought, "From Philo's perspective, there is a world of theological difference between becoming divine and being (the primal) God... Although it might seem strange to us, Philo can assert both a strong doctrine of monotheism and a realistic form of deification without contradiction."³⁶ Returning the Gospel of John to the framework of Jewish messianism has implications for how we view the relationship of its Christology to Jewish *monotheism*. If its depiction of Jesus as Messiah is not beyond the bounds of Jewish messianism, then we must consider seriously the possibility that the same can be true of its view of God.³⁷

Earlier we raised the possibility that it may be wrong to assume that the "I" we hear is that of the Logos. What if we were to treat the Jesus of the Gospel of John not only as Messiah but also as *mystic*, one who speaks out of a sense of intimacy and even oneness with the one God? Messianism and mysticism have, after all, regularly gone hand in hand in Judaism.³⁸ However, in view of the intense polemical debates between Jews and Christians which have shaped and sometimes distorted scholars' appreciation of John as an expression of Jewish messianism, it may be useful to step briefly outside of the context that has tended to focus on whether Jesus is superior, or whether Christians are polytheists, and to view the material (and those debates) from a different vantage point. The connection of the Sufi mystic Al-Hallaj to the depiction of Jesus in the Gospel of John has occasionally been noted.³⁹ According

³⁴ See Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 87–95.

³⁵ See Margaret Barker, *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel* (London: SPCK, 2014), 241; Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, 53–56, 99–100; McGrath, *John's Apologetic Christology*, 73–75.

³⁶ M. David Litwa, "The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria," *SPhilo* 26 (2014): 1–27 (8, 27). See also Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 310, on divinity as something that God may share.

³⁷ While it is possible to view the Christology of John as more or less Jewish, or more or less monotheistic, it is important to note that all across the spectrum, from those who view Jesus in John as a possessed human being to those who view him as a fully divine person, one can find scholars who believe that John's view of Jesus as they understand it was compatible with Jewish monotheism as understood in the first century.

³⁸ While not universally true as far as we can tell from the relevant sources, the evidence spans from the Dead Sea Scrolls to Hassidism. See further Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). See also Jay Kanagaraj, 'Mysticism' in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into its Background, JSNTS 158 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), on the intersection of mysticism, apocalypticism such as is exemplified by the Parables of Enoch, and the Gospel of John.

³⁹ See for instance David Brown, *The Divine Trinity* (London: Duckworth, 1985), 108; Anton Wessels, *Understanding the Qur'an* (London: SCM, 2000), 148; Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam* (London: Continuum, 2010), 86; Dorothee Sölle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 41; Paul-Gordon Chandler, *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road: Exploring a New Path Between Two Faiths* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 149; cf. also Robinson, *Priority*, 387.

to the Sufi legend, Al-Hallaj was crucified for saying something akin to “I am the Truth,” which was understood by some of his contemporaries to be a blasphemous equivalent of “I am God.” One individual who approved of his execution is said to have had a dream afterwards, in which he saw Al-Hallaj being welcomed into heaven. Disturbed, he prayed and asked God how this could be, when Pharaoh was condemned for making similarly audacious claims for himself. The answer he was given was that, while Pharaoh said “I am God” and thought only of himself and nothing of the one God, in the case of the Sufi mystic the reverse was true: the words were not an exaltation of himself, but on the contrary, reflected such a degree of self-emptying that there was no room for the human self but only the one God. If nothing else, the case of Al-Hallaj serves as a reminder that a sympathetic hearing of a mystic’s words perceives humble union with God, while an opponent hears arrogant hubris. Self-exaltation and self-abasement have both been perceived in the words of the Johannine Jesus—and perhaps both are genuinely present, and the challenge to the interpreter is to find an appropriate framework that allows us to do justice to both. In the case of the Gospel of John, it may be that Christians and Jews alike have been motivated to understand the words of the Johannine Jesus as primarily self-exalting, disagreeing for the most part only on whether the status was inherent and appropriate or falsely claimed and blasphemous. But the possibility that a mystical framework can do better justice to the Johannine dialectic between humanity and divinity deserves more attention. And while we have ventured outside the Jewish tradition for the sake of a particularly striking analogy, the kind of mystical union we are talking about here is very similar to the way Philo speaks about Moses being possessed or ensouled by God.⁴⁰ And both the figure of Moses, and other important elements in the thought world of Philo, are in turn closely related to the outlook of the Fourth Gospel concerning Jesus.⁴¹

Some may feel that to conclude that Johannine Christology simply *is* Jewish messianism is inadequate, since it appears to leave unexplained why Christianity and Judaism eventually ended up as largely distinct entities. Yet here too there is a risk of anachronism, given that the institutional authority structures necessary to explain the mutual separation were not yet in place. Let us assume for a moment that the worshipped Son of Man of 1 Enoch, or the “second God” of Philo, must surely have been considered objectionable in the eyes of at least one Jewish individual, somewhere, in the first century. If that hypothetical individual had had the authority to dictate who was or was not to be considered Jewish, then we would presumably have had a parting of the ways then—one involving the exclusion not just of Christianity, but Enochic, Philonic, and other perspectives as well. Without institutional power and authority to accomplish exclusion, however, all that can exist is debate and mutual condemnation. And so, without returning to the specifics of J. Louis Martyn’s proposal about a connection between the Gospel of John and the *birkat ha-minim*,⁴² we may nonetheless detect in and behind the Gospel of John’s concern about expulsion, and its ironic use of the designation “the Jews,” a changed reality—not a new doctrinal reality created as Christians moved beyond Jewish messianism and monotheism, but a new social reality created as the power to exclude came to reside in the hands of some Jews who disagreed strongly with Jews who believed Jesus was a/the Messiah.⁴³ We may draw a comparison at this point with the Mandaean tradition that was once posited as the background to the

⁴⁰ *Alleg. Interp.* 1:40. See further Litwa, “Deification,” 1, 14.

⁴¹ See Litwa, “Deification,” 14.

⁴² J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed., NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

⁴³ See further McGrath, *John’s Apologetic Christology*.

Fourth Gospel. Within the Gospel, we find evidence that the group around John the Baptist viewed Jesus as having broken away from their fold.⁴⁴ The Mandaean literature likewise views Jesus as an apostate from Mandaeism. And yet there has been nowhere near the attention to the question of a “parting of the ways” between the movement connected with John the Baptist and that connected with Jesus, as there has about the broader question of a “parting” or departing of Jesus, or Johannine Christology, from Judaism (or from Jewish “orthodoxy”). The difference between the aforementioned situations lies precisely in the degree of institutional authority and power (or lack thereof), as well as the social connections (or lack thereof), of the groups under discussion.

Having mentioned the Mandaeans, it is appropriate to emphasize that the situating of Johannine Christology as an example of Jewish messianism ought not to represent a simple pendulum swing away from the scholarship of an earlier generation. Bultmann and others sought the background for distinctive Johannine ideas and imagery in Gnosticism.⁴⁵ But the origin and background of Gnosticism itself remained unclear. There is growing support for the view that Gnosticism itself may have emerged from a Jewish context.⁴⁶ And so in situating John’s Gospel in its Jewish matrix, we may also be able to correlate this with the Jewish matrix of gnostic thought. If the Gospel of John does not derive from Gnosticism, nor Gnosticism from the Gospel of John, then the similarities and points of contact may require a third option, such as that both emerge from related streams of Jewish thought.⁴⁷ The similarities between Mandaean and Johannine terminology and imagery—often representing the very same words if one compares the Syriac translation of John with the Mandaic dialect of Aramaic—remain every bit as intriguing as the similarities of concepts and language between the Gospel of John and the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁴⁸ The study of the Mandaean texts also adds to the case for Gnosticism emerging out of the same context as the Gospel of John, namely the Judaism of the first century.⁴⁹ Whether they

⁴⁴ Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple*, 83–84.

⁴⁵ See the many examples provided throughout Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971).

⁴⁶ Gershom G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965); Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 125; Carl B. Smith, *No Longer Jews: The Search for Gnostic Origins* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004).

⁴⁷ On John’s Gospel not emerging from a Gnostic background, see von Wahlde, *Gnosticism, Docetism, and the Judaisms*, 33–57.

⁴⁸ James H. Charlesworth, “The Fourth Evangelist and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Assessing Trends Over Nearly Sixty Years,” in *John, Qumran, and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Sixty Years of Discovery and Debate*, ed. Mary L. Coloe and Tom Thatcher, EJS 32 (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 161–82 (165–72). Contrast the surprising assertion by John Ashton, *The Gospel of John and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 60: “There is no immediately obvious link between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel of John.”

⁴⁹ On this topic see further James F. McGrath, “Reading the Story of Miriam on Two Levels: Evidence from Mandaean Anti-Jewish Polemic about the Origins and Setting of Early Mandaeism,” *ARAMPrd* 22 (2010): 583–92; “Polemic, Redaction, and History in the Mandaean Book of John: The Case of the Lightworld Visitors to Jerusalem,” *ARAMPrd* 27 (2013): 379–86. It is also worth noting the way Boyarin (*Jewish Gospels*, 47–52) regards the New Testament Christology of a divine Father and Son as “far from being a radical innovation within Israelite religious tradition, is a highly conservative return to the very most ancient moments within that tradition, moments that had been largely suppressed in the meantime – but not entirely.” The possibility that Gnosticism emerges from a comparable conservative tradition, one which was more radical in its rejection of the imposition of monotheism, is worth exploring in connection with Boyarin’s view of the relationship between Daniel 7 and Christology. See also Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992); Adela Yarbro Collins and

stood as two shoots growing out of the same larger branch on the tree of this tradition, before being cut off both from the tree and each other, is a question that cannot detain us here. But the connections between gnostic ideas, and ideas found in Jewish mysticism and messianism, even in much later centuries, suggest that the connections were not in any sense completely severed in the time period that concerns us.

To the extent that we can recognize that the polemical concerns articulated in the Gospel of John and many other ancient texts are still with us, and can influence the framing of questions and posing of answers even among scholars, we can open up avenues of exploration that may help us make better sense of both the Gospel of John, and other ancient Jewish texts, and the varieties of messianisms found therein. The study of 1 Enoch, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Psalms of Solomon, Rabbinic literature, and other materials has the greatest potential for helping us to understand the Gospel of John when we recognize that each represents a unique variation on a shared heritage. The converse will also be possible to a greater extent, when the Gospel of John is allowed to illuminate those other texts as part of the phenomenon of Jewish messianism to which they belong. A historical-critical approach must eschew the religious apologetics that would treat the works as competitors in a game of “last messianism standing,” where the ongoing phenomenon of Christian Christology is treated as a demonstration of the shortcomings of other views found articulated in ancient literature, which are no longer adhered to in the same way. The fact of the matter is that, from the perspective of theology, no christological view held today is precisely that of the Gospel of John, however much quotes from that Gospel may play a role in its formulation. And the relative success of the Gospel of John in terms of its widespread and longstanding influence on Christian theology may be precisely because it incorporated popular elements found in other strands of Jewish messianism, rather than due to its differences from them. Perhaps here we arrive at the crux of the matter. Is the appropriate historical-critical approach one that seeks to look at the “victor” among the competing messianisms without allowing the outcome to color their understanding of the fight as it was happening? Or is the appropriate critical stance one that considers such outcomes as profoundly relevant to our making sense of the conflicts between different views when they were still ongoing? If we may all agree on the inappropriateness of allowing dogmatic concerns to unduly frame our discussion, the question of whether the past is better studied in synchronic slices or in diachronic trajectories is less easily settled.

In concluding, let us recall some of the avenues that were highlighted throughout this essay as worthy of further investigation. There is widespread agreement that the story in John is to be read through the lens of the prologue. Yet there is more than one way that that might be done. When we are told that the Word became flesh, we tend to assume that the Word is a person who becomes the “I” that speaks in the life of the human being Jesus. There are, however, alternative ways of approaching the meaning of the prologue, and thus of the Gospel. When the Johannine Jesus says that the Father is always with him, we might assume it is the preexistent Word speaking. But what if it is the human Jesus—who is the preexistent but nonetheless human messianic Son of Man—who says this confidently about the presence of God, the Father, who is with that human being precisely through the presence of the Word and/or through the Spirit that remains on him? Could not the Son of Man of 1 Enoch be envisaged saying something similar, if his story were told in narrative form in a Gospel, by someone who believed that an individual they had met was that long-awaited Messiah? What would happen if we

John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

were to play a “mix and match” game with the prologue of John and other Jewish messianic literature? Would it radically change the way we read the Similitudes of Enoch, or the Psalms of Solomon, or the Hymn of Self-Glorification from Qumran—or, for that matter, would it radically change the way we read the Synoptic Gospels—if the Johannine prologue were prefaced onto them? And, conversely, would it make an enormous difference if we were to read the Gospel of John without the prologue prefaced to it, assuming it proved genuinely possible for readers to put it out of their minds? It would be ironic if it proved to be the case that it was the convergence of two important sets of Jewish ideas—the Philonic-type Logos concept with an Enochic-type Son of Man—that led to the Gospel of John being viewed as either not at all, or at best a fringe example, of Jewish messianism.⁵⁰ Further comparative studies of the Gospel of John and other Jewish messianic texts are called for, which focus in a sustained and detailed manner precisely on the messianism articulated in them.⁵¹

Having surveyed key moments in the history of scholarship in this area, and provided a few select examples as illustrative of the broader whole, hopefully the crux of the matter with regard to John’s Christology and Jewish messianism has become apparent. The reasons John’s messianism is distinctive is not because of a departure from Judaism, but because of two factors which were characteristic of the broader Christian movement. The first is the fact that Christianity is a form of messianism expressed in relation to a historical person that had been encountered, and not just an individual that it was hoped would appear in the future. The second is the fact that Christian messianism had to adapt to the reality of Jesus’s crucifixion. The former is presumably the reason that there is so much more narrative and dialogue related to Jesus in the Christian sources, when compared with other sources giving expression to Jewish messianism around the same time. And thus it may be that the most crucial element that pushed Christian messianism towards its distinctive subsequent trajectory was nothing more than the fact that, in narrating conversations in which the preexistent Messiah was made to speak with other human beings on earth, puzzles were raised and highlighted as to what the Son of Man knew of heavenly things and about how the personhood of the Son of Man related to the personhood of God’s own Word, Wisdom, and/or Spirit. The entire subsequent Christological development in Christianity might be said to be an exploration of these questions, which are not exclusively Johannine questions, but questions that are a part of a broader shared heritage of Jewish messianism, of which the Gospel of John is but one example.

⁵⁰ On Philo and messianism, see further Richard D. Hecht, “Philo and Messiah,” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 139–68, and Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, WUNT 207 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2007), 359–63.

⁵¹ Several small but extremely important steps in this direction have already been taken, precisely under the auspices of the Enoch Seminar. See the discussions of the Gospel of John in Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).