

MOSES'S WRITTEN WITNESS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

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Abstract. This paper demonstrates that in John's Gospel the figure of Moses acts as a witness who fosters belief in Jesus. From the evangelist's self-designation as an "eyewitness" (ἑωρακῶς) in John 19:35, the gospel defines witnesses as those who lead others to belief. This paper discusses the role of witnesses in John's Gospel in general and then presents Moses as a written witness.

Keywords: Moses, witness, writing.

A character study of Moses in John's Gospel will yield many different results as the gospel presents Moses as a figure for investigation in various ways. Dorothy Lee identifies three roles that Moses plays throughout the gospel: as the writer of the Pentateuch, as a main "player," the one who leads Israel through the exodus, and as the giver of the law.¹ Catrin Williams believes that Moses's role "precisely in his capacity as giver/writer of the law—has been redefined in a way that allows continuity with the past insofar as it speaks to the present."² Thus, the Fourth Gospel presents Moses as a figure who not only connects the gospel's readers or hearers with the traditions of what God did for Israel in the past, but also connects them to what God is doing presently through Jesus's ministry. In this paper, I demonstrate that Moses primarily acts as a witness who fosters belief in Jesus. From the evangelist's self-designation as an "eyewitness" (ἑωρακῶς) in John 19:35, the gospel defines witnesses as those who lead others to belief. The paper seeks to answer this question: How does Moses's witness, which should foster belief in Jesus, relate to the other people and events presented as witnesses in the gospel? I will proceed by discussing the role of witnesses in John's Gospel in general and then present Moses as a written witness.

The first gospel text I examine is John 1:17, a verse in the prologue that presents both Moses and Jesus as instrumental to God's work. The Johannine Jesus

¹ Dorothy A. LEE, "The Significance of Moses in the Gospel of John," *ABR* 63 (2015): 52–66, here 54–55.

² Catrin H. WILLIAMS, "Patriarchs and Prophets Remembered: Framing Israel's Past in the Gospel of John," in *Abiding Words: The Use of Scripture in the Gospel of John*, ed. Alicia D. MYERS, RBS 81 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 201.