

## Μονογενής Θεός – the Prophet-like-Moses Par Excellence and the Unique Exegete of the Father: An Exegetical and Text-Critical Study of John 1:17-18<sup>1)</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο.

<sup>18</sup> Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, (himself) God, who has the closest communion with the Father, is the Exegete who made him known. (My translation)

The above passage that I am studying is the last two verses (vv.17-18) of the Johannine Prologue (1:1-18). Most modern scholars admit that the Prologue of John's gospel is expanded from an earlier christological hymn. R. Brown, for example, claims that the Prologue is "an early Christian hymn, probably stemming from Johannine circles, which has been adapted to serve as an overture to the Gospel narrative of the career of the incarnate Word."<sup>2)</sup> There is

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- 1) 이 논문은 2018학년도 서울기독교대학교 학술연구비 지원을 받아 수행된 연구임을 밝힌다.
- 2) R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), cxxxviii, 1-23, here 1. Also see Thomas H. Tobin, "The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation", *CBQ* 52 (1990), 252-269; M. Gordley, "The Johannine Prologue and Jewish Didactic Hymn Traditions: A New Case for Reading the Prologue as a Hymn", *JBL* 128 (2009), 781-802.

no scholarly consensus in assigning what belongs to the earlier hymn and what belongs to the Evangelist's additions. In general, from their observation of different style, content, and flow of the hymn, scholars detect two sets of additions into the original hymn: material pertaining to John the Baptist (vv.6-9, 15) and explanatory interpolations into the hymn (vv.12c-13, 17-18).<sup>3)</sup> Thus the above passage (vv.17-18) is the second part of the explanatory expansions to the early Christian hymn.

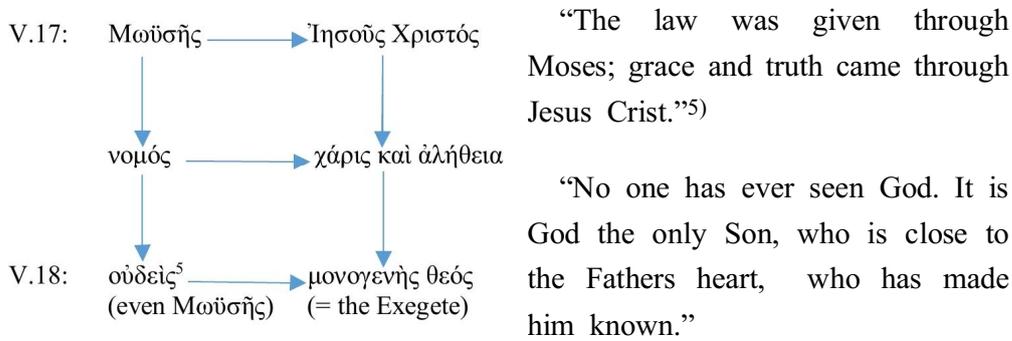
John 1:17-18 not only forms a climax of the Prologue, but also prepares the readers to read the rest of the Gospel. The comparison between Moses and Jesus at the end of the Prologue anticipates a complex Moses tradition that is developed throughout the fourth Gospel. In this passage, readers face arguably the most important question in the Johannine studies – “Does John 1:18 say that Jesus is ‘God’ or ‘Son’?” – for they have to make a textual choice between the reading *μονογενῆς θεός* and the reading *ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός*. The Greek manuscripts are divided as to whether the Evangelist really wrote Jesus as God or Son. In this paper, I argue that the Evangelist, by Moses-Christ parallelism, proposes Jesus Christ as a new Moses *par excellence*. In Judaism, Moses is a great revealer of God. For the Evangelist, however, *μονογενῆς θεός*, who is at the Father's side (*ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς*), and thus shares in full secrets of Deity, is the *unique* Exegete/Revealer of the Father. In support of this thesis, particular attention is paid to the text-critical reading *μονογενῆς θεός* and its related exegetical problems because it highlights the meaning of the passage in light of the Prologue and the entire Gospel. I will demonstrate how the Moses-Christ parallelism functions in the passage and how it leads us to make the correct text-critical choice between the reading *μονογενῆς θεός* and the reading *ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός*.

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3) R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 22; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, vol. 1, Kevin Smyth, trans. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 276-281; R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 113-115; F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998), 33-34; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 1-5; G. M. Burge, *John: The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 51-64.

## 1. A Structural Analysis: Antithetic vs. Synthetic Parallelism

John 1:17-18 presents a complex parallelism between Moses and Jesus. Two statements are made in parataxis in each verse.<sup>4)</sup> There is no connecting particle between them. A comparison is made within each verse, then they resonate each other. At this point, interpreters face an important exegetical question: is this juxtaposition between Moses and Jesus antithetic or synthetic? Of which one will lead us to the correct meaning of the passage in the Prologue as well as in the entire Gospel. We can make a graphic parallelism as follows:



In v.17, Moses is directly compared with Jesus. The comparison in v.18 is more emphatic. Not even Moses (who has been believed to be a great revealer of God) can be compared with μονογενῆς θεός.<sup>6)</sup> Now what has been said about Moses in v.17a corresponds to the statement in v.18a, “no one has ever seen God.” And what has been said about Jesus in v. 17b corresponds to the statement in v.18b, “μονογενῆς θεός who is in the bosom of the Father has made him known.”<sup>7)</sup>

Questioning what kind of connection is being made between these two statements in parataxis, some scholars see an antithesis between Christ and Moses like that of the Pauline kind of grace and law. R. Bultmann argues that the Evangelist is drawing a contrast between Moses and Jesus Christ, that is,

4) E. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 63.

5) Biblical translations are from NRS unless otherwise indicated.

6) See below for this reading against the reading ὁ μονογενῆς θεός υἱός.

7) H. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 58.

between νομός and χάρις.<sup>8)</sup> Likewise, E. Haenchen finds an absolute contrast between Torah and Christ.<sup>9)</sup> Other scholars find a synthetic parallelism between Moses and Jesus. For them, “a continuity is seen between Moses and Jesus in that it is the grace and truth already found in the law that is found fully in Jesus Christ.”<sup>10)</sup> Thus they render v.17 as this: “*Just as the law was given through Moses, so grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*”<sup>11)</sup> A partial glory of God was revealed through Moses; now by the Incarnation of the Logos, full glory of God is revealed in Jesus Christ (vv.14, 18). Thus, the two sides of 1:17 in parataxis “are not opposed to one another, but instead it is Moses and the νομός that point to χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια” which come διὰ Χριστοῦ.<sup>12)</sup>

As such, the last two verses of the Prologue should be understood as synthetic parallelism, not as antithetical. In the Greek text there is nothing that requires antithesis. As we shall see later, John develops a *continuity* between Moses and Jesus throughout his Gospel.<sup>13)</sup> For him, Moses is a mediator of divine revelation, who becomes “a type of Him who brought the full revelation of God.”<sup>14)</sup> As J. Jeremias has pointed out, the same God who brings the full glory in his Son, stands behind the passive ἐδόθη (“The law was *given* διὰ Μωϋσέως.”).<sup>15)</sup> Here the divine passive along with the proposition διὰ affirms that God is the agent of the action.<sup>16)</sup>

John does not oppose the law. He uses the term νομός to designate Scripture as a source of revelation (1:45; 8:17; 10:34; 12:34; 15:25). John has honorific

8) R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, G. R. Beasley-Murray, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 79; S. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to John* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 534-546.

9) E. Haenchen *John 1*, R. W. Funk, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 120.

10) E. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist*, 65. Also see R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 16; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (Greenwood: Attic, 1952), 97-98; P. M. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 214.

11) D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 13.

12) C. A. Maronde, “Moses in the Gospel of John”, *CBQ* (2013), 29.

13) J. R. Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 90.

14) J. Jeremias, “Μωϋσῆς”, *TDNT* 4, 848-873.

15) Dong-soo Chang, “A Study on Passages of the Divine Passive”, *JBTR* 7 (2000), 117-148.

16) Chang-nack Kim, “How to Translate the Propositional Phrases? – Focusing on διὰ (Part I) –”, *JBTR* 15 (2004), 52-53. Also see C. A. Maronde, “Moses in the Gospel of John”, 26, who states that the divine passive “indicates that the Law did not originate within Moses, but instead came to the people of Israel ‘through’ (διὰ) him.”

references to Moses (1:45; 3:14; 5:46). The Jews are rebuked not because the Fourth Gospel opposes the law but because they do not believe what Moses wrote, for if they had believed Moses they would have believed Christ (5:45-47; 7:19, 22-23).<sup>17)</sup> In the Gospel the authority of the law is accepted, and serves as the justification for Jesus' teaching: “ἐραυνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς, ὅτι ὑμεῖς δοκεῖτε ἐν αὐταῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔχειν· καὶ ἐκεῖναί εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ” (5:39). For John, Moses is not merely the lawgiver (7:19, 22-23). Moses has a certain typological role (3:14; 6:32). Certainly John sees no contradiction between Moses to whom the law was given and Jesus Christ who brought grace and truth.<sup>18)</sup>

Further, the law itself is understood to be an earlier display of grace.<sup>19)</sup> John 1:15-18 does not deal with a Pauline contrast between grace and law. In fact, in the giving of the law, Exodus 34 mentions God's grace and truth. God reveals himself to Moses as the God of grace and truth, steadfast love, and faithfulness: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (דסח תמא, v.6). The phrase דסח תמא in Exodus 34:6 clearly corresponds to χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια (John 1:17).<sup>20)</sup> This clearly shows that the difference between Moses and Jesus Christ in John 1:17 is not that the law of Moses stands outside the realm of grace and truth.<sup>21)</sup> Grace and truth are found in the law as well. That Jesus is the true bread of life (6:35) does not mean that the original manna was not a gracious gift. When Jesus is likened to the snake in the desert (3:14), it presupposes that the original was itself a fine display of grace as well. Here at the end of the Prologue, the Moses-Christ parallelism is intentionally introduced to develop Christ as the Prophet-like-Moses par excellence in the Fourth Gospel. V.17 indicates that the earlier display of grace “has been surpassed by the reality of the grace of Jesus Christ.”<sup>22)</sup>

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17) D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 133.

18) R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, 277.

19) D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 132.

20) See C. A. Maronde, “Moses in the Gospel of John”, 28-29; M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, B. T. Viviano, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 96. For a discussion of the equivalence between דסח and χάρις, see J. A. Montgomery, “Hebrew *Hesed* and Greek *Charis*”, *HTR* 32 (1939), 92-102.

21) H. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary*, 57-58.

22) R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, 277; cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 43; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 133.

Such a prophecy/fulfillment motif by way of Moses-Christ juxtaposition runs all through the Gospel of John.<sup>23)</sup> In support of the proposed thesis, now we need to study how the Evangelist develops the motif throughout his Gospel.

## 2. Moses-Christ Parallelism in John's Gospel

### 2.1. The Prophet like Moses

Many scholars have observed Moses-Christ parallelism in John's Gospel.<sup>24)</sup> They believe that the Evangelist presents Jesus as the second Moses promised in the Old Testament. In Deu 18:15-18, God declares to Moses: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command" (v.18). The promise that God will raise up an eschatological "prophet like Moses" has served to develop the view in Judaism that "Moses is a prototype of the Messiah."<sup>25)</sup> According to the rabbinic evidence of the Messianic expectation, for example, the Messiah is the second Deliverer who repeats the signs of the first Deliverer: "What did the first redeemer do? He brought down the manna. And the last Redeemer will bring down the manna" (*Koh. R.* 1.9).<sup>26)</sup> Thus we see Jesus in John 6 as the second Deliverer who repeats the deeds of the first. In fact, Deu 18:18 is never explicitly cited in John's Gospel. But M.-E. Boismard, among others, in *Moses or Jesus*, argues that Deu 18:18 governs Johannine Christology; the Evangelist presents Christ as a new Prophet like Moses.<sup>27)</sup> As a matter of fact, in the gospel of John Jesus is called "the true Prophet" (Joh 7:40, 52; 6:14; cf. 1:45; 4:19; 9:17), and Jesus also applies the title to himself (4:44). What is further striking is that, as Boismard has pointed out,

23) C. A. Maronde, "Moses in the Gospel of John", 23-44; D. A. Lee, "The Significance of Moses in the Gospel of John," *ABR* 63 (2015), 52-66.

24) T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (London: SCM, 1963); W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 6-30; P. Trudinger, "'A Prophet like Me' (Deut. 18:15): Jesus and Moses in St John's Gospel, Once Again", *Downside Review* 113 (1995), 193-195.

25) For such discussion, see J. Jeremias, "Μωϋσῆς", 856-873.

26) See T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, 45.

27) M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 6-30.

the parallelism between the titles “the Christ” and “the Prophet” appears in these verses and elsewhere:<sup>28)</sup>

7:40 “This is really the prophet.”

7:41 “This is the Messiah.”

6:14 “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

11:27 “You are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

In the parallelism above, the prophet is in some way equivalent to Christ (Messiah). For John, Christ is the Prophet “who is to come.” For the Evangelist, the law of Moses witnesses to Jesus Christ. For example, in 1:45, Philip declares to Nathanael: “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote.” Likewise, Jesus says in 5:46, “εἰ γὰρ ἐπιστεύετε Μωϋσεῖ, ἐπιστεύετε ἂν ἐμοί· περὶ γὰρ ἐμοῦ ἐκεῖνος ἔγραψεν.” Having been fed with the loaves, the crowd remembers Moses’ manna which their ancestors ate in the wilderness, and they then declares, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world” (6:14). Certainly these words take us back to a text such as Deu 18:18 which announces the arrival of an eschatological prophet like Moses.<sup>29)</sup>

An important feature of Johannine Moses-Christ typology is “the idea of being sent into the world.”<sup>30)</sup> The Evangelist presents Jesus as God’s agent like Moses as *shaliach* (שָׁלִיחַ or שְׁלִיחַ, “one who is sent”).<sup>31)</sup> A prominent feature of Moses in the book of Exodus is a *shaliach*: “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh” (3:10); “this shall be a sign that I have sent you” (3:12); “The God of your fathers has sent me to you” (3:13, 15); “I AM has sent me to you” (3:14); “The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you” (7:16). Likewise, this idea of *shaliach* (ἀποστέλλειν) is found in Johannine Christology. To present here only

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28) A similar parallelism between “the Christ” and “the Prophet” is found in 1:21-22. When his identity is asked, the John the Baptist answers: “I am not the Messiah ... Are you the Prophet?” For such discussion, see M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 6-30.

29) M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 26.

30) See C. A. Evans, “Moses and Jesus as Agents of the Lord”, in his *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John’s Prologue* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 135-45; M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 60-61.

31) L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2001), 1511-1518.

a few instances among many, “God sent not his son to condemn the world” (3:17); “the Father has sent me” (5:36); “the living Father has sent me” (6:57); “I did not come of myself, but he sent me” (8:42).<sup>32)</sup>

The *shaliach* speaks and acts in the name of and authority of the one who has sent him.<sup>33)</sup> God says to Moses: “I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak” (Exo 4:12); “You will speak to Paraoh all that I command you” (7:2). Similarly, Jesus as the prophet like Moses, announced in Deu 18:18, says to the disciples: “I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me” (Joh 8:28); “I did not speak from myself, but the Father who sent me has given commandment to me what I should say and what I should speak” (12:49). Boismard claims that “when the Johannine Christ makes references to his teaching, to his words, he expresses himself as Moses himself would have done to affirm the perfect identity between what he tells us and what God wants to tell us through his mouth.”<sup>34)</sup>

The *shaliach* offers the commandments of the sender. Moses says that “you will only heed his every commandment that I am commanding you today – loving the LORD your God” (Deu 11:13). Likewise, Jesus says: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another” (Joh 13:34; 15:12, 17).

The *shaliach* performs “signs confirming his claim that he spoke and acted for God.”<sup>35)</sup> To authenticate his mission to the Hebrews in Egypt, Moses is commissioned to perform “signs” (Exo 4:1-9). Interestingly, the Evangelist calls Jesus miracles “signs” in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 2:11; 4:54; 20:30). He tells us that the crowds follow Jesus because of the “signs” that he works for them (6:2). Nicodemus, a teacher of the law, confesses to Jesus, “you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these *signs* that you do apart from the presence of God” (3:2, emphasis added; cf. Exo 3:12). These instances clearly indicate that the Evangelist develops the theme of the prophet like Moses.<sup>36)</sup>

Furthermore, the ministries of both Moses and Jesus are associated with death

32) Also see 5:38; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; cf. 4:38; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; 20:21.

33) C. A. Evans, “Moses and Jesus as Agents of the Lord”, 38-39; P. Trudinger, “‘A Prophet like Me’ (Deut. 18:15): Jesus and Moses in St John’s Gospel, Once Again”, 194.

34) M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 62.

35) From these features, Evans concludes (143-144) that “the Johannine portrait of Jesus as one sent from God, who speaks the words of God, who does the deeds of God, and who returns to the one who sent him seems to reflect Jewish *shaliach* tradition.”

36) M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 65.

and life. After transmitting the law to the Hebrews from God, Moses exhorts them to observe it: “This law is no trifle for you, but it is your *life*” (Deu 32:47, emphasis added); “I have set before you *life and death*, the blessing and the curse: choose life, that you and your seed may live” (30:19, emphasis added). Likewise, the theme of life and death appears in the ministry of the new Moses that the Fourth Evangelist presents us. According to Boismard, such a theme of eschatological life occurs 36 times in the Gospel of John. For example, we are told: “anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has *eternal life*, and does not come under judgment [*death*], but has passed from *death to life*” (5:24, emphasis added). These complex *shaliach* traditions in John’s Gospel, I argue, force us to affirm that the Evangelist develops Moses-Christ typology.

The Evangelist’s purpose of Moses-Christ comparison in 1:17 and throughout the Gospel, however, is not simply to point out a sort of typology between these two figures. His purpose is to present God’s agent that is far greater than Moses, to which we now turn.

## 2.2. The Prophet Par Excellence

Throughout the Fourth Gospel, the ideas that the new order in Christ fulfills, replaces, and surpasses the law of Moses abound. As T. Thatcher contends, Jesus’ superiority to Moses is “a key theme in John ... and in fact provides the substance and content for much of the Fourth Gospel’s presentation.”<sup>37)</sup> For example, at the wedding at Cana (2:1-12), the notion of old and new appears: “the wine of the new creation is better than the water which was used in Jewish religion.”<sup>38)</sup> According to the Evangelist, Jesus has performed “the first of his signs” in which he is revealed as “good wine.”<sup>39)</sup> In the story the comparison between old and new is clearly made. Having tasted the wine of new creation, the steward or the master of the ceremony says that “Everyone serves the good

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37) T. Thatcher, *Greater Than Caesar: Christology and Empire in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 9.

38) F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 43.

39) Interestingly, T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, 26 connects Jesus’ first miracle with the first miracle of Moses, the changing of water to blood. He further finds a verbal echo of the Exodus story. Exodus 7:19 says that “there shall be blood throughout the whole land of Egypt, even in the vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.” Glasson argues that the Evangelist has the Exodus story in mind when he refers to “six stone water jar” in John 2:6.

wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have been drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now” (v.10). The steward’s words do not deny that something good was in the old wine, the law of Moses. More important, in his words, the emergence of the good wine at the final stage of the wedding is symbolized by Jesus’ appearance at the culmination of salvation history.<sup>40)</sup> When the story is applied to the problems raised in 1:17, it implies the continuity between the law of Moses and the new order in Christ by the emergence of the good wine out of the waters of Jewish purification. At the same time, it speaks of the surpassing new order of Christ over the law of Moses: the last wine, not the first, is best. When the water jars which “stand for the entire system of Jewish ceremonial observance” now serve for Jesus’ ministry, they “symbolize the religion of the Law, now replaced by the festive wine of the gospel.”<sup>41)</sup>

John, then, writes about Jesus cleansing of the temple (2:13-25) which is usually found at the end of Jesus’ ministry in the synoptic Gospels. In the story, the same ideas of Jesus’ surpassing the old order of Moses appear as well. At the confrontation with Jewish authorities, Jesus says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (v.19). By this Jesus implies that the new temple supersedes the old one.<sup>42)</sup> Likewise, in his conversation with Nicodemus, a good representative of Moses, Jesus claims that the new birth is the gateway into a sphere of life, i.e., an entry into the eschatological kingdom of God (3:1-15).<sup>43)</sup> At the end of the story, the connection between Moses and Jesus is clearly made with the surpassing idea of the latter: “No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (3:13-14). Then further surpassing idea with Jesus’ ministry is associated with the term “eternal life”: “that whoever believes in him may have *eternal life*” (v.15, emphasis added).

Furthermore, the ideas of superiority of what Jesus gives to what Jewish ancestors under the law of Moses gave, are found in three more chapters. In the dialogue with the woman of Samaria in chapter 4, a sharp distinction between the

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40) D. M. Smith, “John”, James L. Mays, ed., *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), 1050.

41) T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, 26.

42) F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 43.

43) E. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist*, 79.

thirsty-again-water and never-thirsty-water (vv.13-14). The living water of the Spirit which Jesus imparts is far superior to the water of Jacob's well. Here again Jesus' mission is clearly connected with "eternal life": "The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (v.14). A further striking metaphor of the living water appears in chapter 7 where the water which Jesus gives is compared to the water which was ritually poured out in the temple court at the feast of Tabernacles (vv.37-39). At the Feast of Tabernacles, daily libations of water were brought from the pool of Siloam (9:1, 11) near the foot of the Temple Mount. On the last (seventh) day, Jesus utters his pronouncement: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" (v.38). By this invitation to his water, Jesus implies that something is lacking in the well of Moses from which they have drunk. This notion is more clearly made in connection of the manna in the wilderness with the bread of life in chapter 6. Moses provided "the food that perishes," whereas Jesus provides "the food that endures for eternal life" (v.27). The wilderness generation who ate the manna that Moses provided eventually died, never having entered the land of promise, but Jesus is himself "the bread from heaven" to eternal life (v.35). Therefore, for the Evangelist, Jesus Christ is a new Moses par excellence, the unique one who brings fullness of grace and truth (1:14).

To sum up, I have argued that John 1:17-18 presents a synthetic parallelism between Moses and Christ that runs throughout the Gospel. For the Evangelist, both figures are revealers, and there exists continuity between them in bringing divine grace; one brings the "law" and the other "grace and truth" (v.17). By this synthetic parallelism the Evangelist presents Christ as the non-comparable Revealer in fullness (v.18). Now I will proceed to discuss the textual problems in the passage and show how the context of the synthetic parallelism demands one particular textual reading against the other reading between μονογενῆς θεός and ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός.

### **3. Μονογενῆς Θεός: the Unique Exegete of the Father**

In Judaism, Moses is extolled as the mediator of revelation.<sup>44)</sup> Philo describes

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44) For a brief study on the view of Moses in later Judaism, see J. Jeremias, "Μωϋσῆς", 848-873.

Moses as the intermediary between God and human beings par excellence (e.g., *Mos.* 1.162).<sup>45)</sup> Moses is not a mere servant of God. He is the divine prophet for the whole world. God has revealed to him “all the secrets of the times and the end of the hours.”<sup>46)</sup> It seems that the Moses-Christ parallelism in John’s Gospel reflects such a “high” Moses-ology. The Evangelist, however, makes it clear that the one “who is close to [εἰς τὸν κόλπον] the Father’s heart” is the unique revealer of the Father because “he is from God; he has seen the Father” (6:46). Εἰς τὸν κόλπον is a metaphorical phrase that “denotes the closest communion.”<sup>47)</sup> Thus, “ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς expresses the intimate relationship of love between the Son and the Father.”<sup>48)</sup> From this immediacy and this unique and direct communion with the Father, the Son can speak and reveal the Father. For the Evangelist, not even Moses who had a mountain-top experience at Sinai<sup>49)</sup> could come εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς. For the Evangelist, none other than Christ occupies “exklusiven Einzigartigkeit” in revealing the Father.<sup>50)</sup>

Moreover, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο is very emphatic: “This One (or ‘This is the One who’) revealed [the Father].” The aorist verb (ἐξηγήσατο) indicates a

45) W. A. Meeks, “The Divine Agent and His Counterfeit in Philo and the Fourth Gospel”, E. S. Fiorenza, ed., *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London and Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1976), 43-67; also see J. Jeremias, “Μωϋσῆς”, 851.

46) 4Es 14:5; cf. *Ass.Mos.* 11:16.

47) W. Baur, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1979), 442.

48) J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 32. In the Old Testament the metaphor is used of the infant at the side of (1Ki 3:20) or in the lap of (1Ki 17:19) its mother, of married life (Gen 16:5; Deu 13:7; 28:54, 56), and of God’s care for Israel (Num 11:12). Similar expressions appear in the New Testament: Lazarus is in Abraham’s bosom (Luk 16:22-23), and John, the beloved disciple, occupies a similar position of nearness to Jesus at the Last Supper in John 13:23.

49) Scholars generally agree that the background to John 1:17-18 is the Sinai theophany in Exodus 33 and 34. When Moses desired to see the glory of God, God said to Moses: “you cannot see my face; for no one shall see my face and live” (33:20). Moses was directed instead to stand in a hollow in the rocky slope of the sacred mountain while the glory of God passed by, and there, said God, “I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you will shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen” (33:22-23). Thus it is true that Moses could behold “the form of the LORD” (Num 12:8). However, by “no one has ever seen God,” John means that even Moses could not see the full glory of God; what Moses saw at Sinai was simply the afterglow of the divine glory (cf. 2Co 3:7-18). See F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 44; cf. M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 94.

50) Volkker Stolle, “Jesus Christus, der göttliche Exeget (Joh 1,18): Zur theologischen Standortbestimmung neutestamentlicher Exegese”, *ZNW* 97 (2006), 70.

particular period of the Son's salvific ministry on earth whereas the participle ὢν stands for *eternal* being.<sup>51)</sup> The verb ἐξηγέομαι (*hapax legomenon* in John's Gospel), from which we derive an English word *exegete*, means to 'explain', 'interpret', 'tell', 'report', or 'describe'.<sup>52)</sup> This verb is used elsewhere in the New Testament by Luke alone (Luke 24:35; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19). In Greek literature, ἐξηγέομαι is used as a technical term to declare divine mysteries.<sup>53)</sup> This is "a word which from earliest times was used in a technical sense for the interpretation of the will of the gods by professional diviners, priests and soothsayers, but which can also be used of God himself when he makes known his will."<sup>54)</sup> In Genesis 41:8-24, the official interpreters of dreams are called ἐξηγήται (cf. Jdg 7:13; 1Ma 3:26). In Job 28:27, we are told that God "declared" (ἐξηγήσατο) wisdom, which is hidden from humankind. By this technical term along with the emphatic form, the Evangelist proposes that Christ is the unique Revealer; "no one" (οὐδεὶς) but "this one" (ἐκεῖνος) is the exegesis of God. Most important, he makes it clear that the "Only Son, God by nature" (μονογενῆς θεός) can communicate God's innermost nature to humankind.<sup>55)</sup>

At this stage, interpreters now have to make a text-critical choice between μονογενῆς θεός and ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός in John 1:18.<sup>56)</sup> The following charts of critical editions of the Greek New Testament, and English and Korean translations indicate the textual problems:<sup>57)</sup>

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51) J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 33.

52) W. Baur, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 275.

53) For a brief discussion of how ἐξηγέομαι is used in Greek literature and other literary texts and the papyri, see C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, vol. 2, J. D. Ernest, trans. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 21-23.

54) R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 83; cf. R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, 279.

55) M. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 366.

56) Concerning the two variant readings (ὁ μονογενῆς and μονογενῆς υἱός θεου), textual critics and commentators virtually eliminate these two readings because of insufficient Greek documentary evidence for their existence.

57) For critical editions of the Greek New Testament and English translations, see Kei Eun Chang, "Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34", M.Div. Thesis (Emmanuel Christian Seminary, 1997), 53-54.

**Critical Editions of the Greek New Testament:**

[ὁ] μονογενῆς θεός	<i>Greek New Testament</i> by Tregelles (1879)
(P <sup>66</sup> P <sup>75</sup> ⋈* ⋈ <sup>1</sup> B C* L 33) <sup>58</sup>	<i>NT in the Original Greek</i> , Westcott-Hort (1881)
	<i>H KAINH ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ</i> , London, (1926)
	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine</i> , Vogels (1949)
	<i>Greek NT SBL Edition</i> (2010)
	Nestle-Aland <sup>28</sup>
	UBS <sup>5</sup>
ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός	<i>Textus Receptus</i> , Stephen (1550)
(A C <sup>3</sup> K W <sup>supp</sup> X D f <sup>1, 13</sup> 063)	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Tischendorf (1859)
	<i>Expositor's Greek New Testament</i> , Alford (1897)
	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , A. Souter (1910)
	<i>Neuen Testaments</i> , von Soden (1913)
	<i>Greek New Testament</i> , Spencer (1947)
	<i>Greek New Testament</i> , Tasker (1964)

**English Translations:**

<i>the only begotten Son</i>	Tyndale (1534); Geneva Bible (1560); AV (1611) Moffatt (1922); Knox (1945); NKJV (1982)
<i>the only Son</i>	RSV (1952); JB (1966)
<i>God's only Son</i>	NEB (1971)
<i>the first-born of God</i>	Lamsa (1957)
<i>the only begotten God</i>	Beck (1976); NASB (1973)
<i>God the only Son</i>	NAB (1970); NIV (1978); NRS (1989)
<i>the only Son, who is the same as God</i>	TEV (1979)
<i>one and only Son, who is himself God</i>	TNIV (2001); cf. NLT
<i>the only God</i>	ESV (2008)

**Korean Translations:**

<i>the only begotten God</i>	[New] Korean Revised Version 『개역한글/개역개정』
<i>the only Son, who is the same as God</i>	Revised Common Translation 『공동개정』

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58) These MSS read θεός. Strictly speaking, the anarthrous μονογενῆς θεός is found in P<sup>66</sup> ⋈\* B C\* L, while the reading ὁ μονογενῆς θεός is found in P<sup>75</sup> ⋈<sup>1</sup> 33.

<i>the only Son</i>	Korean Living Bible 『현대인의 성경』
<i>God, the begotten One, who is close to the Father</i>	Agape Easy Bible 『쉬운성경』
<i>God [who is] the only Son</i>	Revised New Korean Standard Version 『새번역』

As shown above, the textual traditions are divided. The reading [ὁ] μονογενής θεός is supported by the evidence of the best Greek manuscripts (MSS), as noted above, and by versional MS evidence (cop<sup>bo</sup> syr<sup>p, hmg</sup> eth<sup>ro</sup>).<sup>59)</sup> It is true that the reading ὁ μονογενής υἱός is also supported by a good number of Greek MSS, by versional MS evidence (it<sup>pl</sup> vg syr<sup>c, h, pal</sup> arm eth geo slav), and by Greek and Latin Patristic sources.<sup>60)</sup> English translations reflect these different MS traditions; in general, earlier translations (e.g., RSV, 1951) read υἱός whereas the most of the newer versions follow the critical Greek text (μονογενής θεός) (e.g., NRS, 1989; TNIV, 2001; ESV, 2008). This is basically the same case with the Korean translations. It seems that major Korean versions prefer μονογενής θεός though actual wordings are slightly different among translations as shown above.<sup>61)</sup> This indicates that Korean translations of John 1:18 are not alienated from the current critical editions of the New Testament (Nestle-Aland<sup>28</sup> and UBS<sup>5</sup>) and from the recent English versions.

What is short among the Korean versions, however, is their rendering of the term μονογενής. For example, New Revised Korean Version 『개역개정』 (and Revised Korean Version 『개역한글』 as well), which is most widely used among Koreans, translates μονογενής as “only begotten”. This expression could be misunderstood by modern readers. Scholars have made a thorough study of the use of μονογενής in Greek literature, and they agree the term μονογενής means, in most cases, “only” or “unique”.<sup>62)</sup> Thus, I believe that the “only”

59) B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Bible Societies, 1994), 169-170.

60) For Greek and Latin Patristic evidences, see Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 51-52.

61) Of course, there is a translation that reads ὁ μονογενής υἱός. The Korean Living Bible (“The Bible for Moderns”) is the case.

62) For such discussions, see J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 416-7; F. Büchsel, “μονογενής”, *TDNT* 4, 737-741; D. Moody, “God’s Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version”, *JBL* 72 (1953), 213-219. Perhaps the thorough study on the use of the term in Greek literature is that of Gerard

rather than the “begotten” is the correct translation of *μονογενής* in John 1:18 as that of NIV and NRS. Following the scholarship, no English Bible as far as I know at least from 1980s translates *μονογενής* as “begotten.” Among Korean versions, the Revised Common Translation 『공동개정』 (“*the only Son, who is the same as God*”) or Revised New Korean Standard Version 『새번역』 (“*God the only Son*”) best represents the current New Testament scholarship as well as the best MS traditions. Neither of them is as popular as the New Revised Korean Version in Korea, however. These two translations of John 1:18 parallel with English NIV, TNIV, and NRS (cf. ESV). Likewise, our “New” Revised Korean Version should apply the current scholarship in dealing with the phrase *μονογενής θεός* in John 1:18 because its proper meaning better or correctly explicates and enhances the meaning of the text.

As the above charts indicate, we still find contrary views among the commentators and translators. Still many of them accept the reading *μονογενής υἱός* as authentic.<sup>63)</sup> Their primary reason for choosing *μονογενής υἱός* is their understanding of Johannine context of a Father-Son relationship. John 1:18 says that the *μονογενής* is to reside in the bosom of the Father. How can the *μονογενής θεός*, the unique God, stand in such a relationship to (another) God? They argue that that “Jesus can be the *unique* God only if there is no other God; but in the Fourth Gospel, the Father is God as well.”<sup>64)</sup> Rather, the occurrence of the word “Father” in the context makes “Son” more natural.<sup>65)</sup> Another argument for the reading *ὁ μονογενής υἱός* is that it conforms to Johannine usage (3:16, 18; I John 4:9) whereas *μονογενής θεός* is not a usual Johannine expression. Therefore, *ὁ μονογενής υἱός*, for them, may be the best reading *in view of the context*.<sup>66)</sup>

In spite of these objections, I argue that the reading *μονογενής θεός* is the

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Pendrick, “MONOGENΗΣ”, *NTS* 41 (1995), 587-600. Most recently, P. Coutsoumpos well sums up the current scholarship and consensus on the meaning of *μονογενής*. See his “The Difficulty of MONOGENΗΣ ΘΕΟΣ in John 1,18: A Reassessment”, *Bib* 98 (2017), 435-446.

63) In what follows on textual problems, I owe much to Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 54-66.

64) For example, B. Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 80.

65) L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 100.

66) E. Haenchen, *John* 1, 121.

authentic one for several reasons.<sup>67)</sup> First, as already noted, the reading [ὁ] μονογενῆς θεός has superior MS support. It has the support of Bodmer papyri P<sup>75</sup> and P<sup>66</sup>, both dated to the early third century.<sup>68)</sup> Thus, more and more textual critics, commentators, and translators have adopted θεός as Nestle-Aland<sup>28</sup>, UBS<sup>5</sup> and SBL Edition read μονογενῆς θεός.

Second, μονογενῆς θεός represents the *lectio difficilior*.<sup>69)</sup> It is clearly the more difficult reading, whereas υἱός is familiar term in the Gospel of John. Tregelles, who accepts the reading μονογενῆς θεός as the authentic one, holds that μονογενῆς θεός might easily be altered by scribes to the more familiar ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός from 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9.<sup>70)</sup> This becomes the most popular explanation of textual problems in John 1:18.<sup>71)</sup> Thus, the variant reading (ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός) “may be a scribal attempt to assimilate a difficult text to a more Johannine traditional reading.”<sup>72)</sup>

Third, from a grammatical perspective,<sup>73)</sup> an increasing number of scholars read μονογενῆς and θεός as appositional nouns. As to the difficulty that the reading μονογενῆς θεός does not seem to suit the sense of the verse/context, “the difficulty disappears when one understands the entire phrase as a series of appositions.”<sup>74)</sup> In other words, μονογενῆς is not to be taken as an adjective qualifying θεός, but instead μονογενῆς, θεός, ὁ ὢν are seen as three distinct designations of the One who is the Revealer of the Father.<sup>75)</sup> Thus, John 1:18 goes this way: “No one has ever seen God; (the) Only Son, (himself) God, who

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67) Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 56-62.

68) B. M. Metzger, 169-170.

69) See Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 61-62.

70) S. P. Tregelles, *The Greek New Testament, Edited from Ancient Authorities, with Their Various Readings in Full, and the Latin Version of Jerome* (London: Bagter and Sons, 1857-79), 378.

71) For example, see J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 31; R. Brown, “Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?” *Theological Studies* 26 (1965), 553; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 45; B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 169; A. J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 50; J. R. Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 92, n.78.

72) Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 61.

73) E. A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 42.

74) Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 56.

75) Ibid.

is in the bosom of the Father.”<sup>76)</sup> Such English translations as TNIV, NLT, and TEV (cf. NIV and NRS), as shown above, take the reading *μονογενῆς θεός* in *apposition*. So do the Revised Common Bible 『공동개정』 and Agape Easy Bible 『쉬운성경』 among Korean translations. As these English and Korean translations have correctly displayed, “*μονογενῆς θεός* is a carefully formulated linguistic construction.”<sup>77)</sup>

Fourth, the Moses-Jesus parallelism demands the “high” christological reading *μονογενῆς θεός*. Above I have argued that John 1:17-18 presents a complex synthetic parallelism between Moses and Christ. The Evangelist, by setting the two sides in parataxis, not only develops a continuity between them, but also more importantly emphasizes *uniqueness* of Jesus in his relation to the Father, in his mission and revelation in particular.<sup>78)</sup> This understanding, I argue, is a key to the intrinsic probability of the reading *μονογενῆς θεός*, that is, what the author actually wrote. In v.18, the Evangelist accepts the Jewish belief that no human being (οὐδεὶς), not even Moses, was able to see God, but, by his careful formulation of the phrase *μονογενῆς θεός*, the Evangelist “is able to insist that only God can reveal God while at the same time he distinguishes the Revealer from the Father.”<sup>79)</sup> Against the argument that context demands the reading *υἱός*, I argue that the context in v.17 of the superiority of Jesus over Moses is continued in v.18, and the v.18 alludes in particular to the fact that even Moses was not permitted to see the LORD. What is seemingly difficult with the reading *μονογενῆς θεός* is “the strangeness of the affirmation that God reveals God and that only God has seen God.”<sup>80)</sup> But the Evangelist by Moses-Christ parallelism

76) J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 31; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, 280; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 98-9; L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, 100-1; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 139; D. A. Fennema, “John 1:18: ‘God the Only Son’”, *NTS* 31 (1985), 131; P. McReynolds, “John 1:18 in Textual Variation and Translation”, E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee, eds., *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 115. Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 56; A. J. Köstenberger, *John*, 49.

77) Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 58.

78) Cf. P. Coutsoumpos, “The Difficulty of ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΣ ΘΕΟΣ in John 1,18: A Reassessment”, *Biblica* 98 (2017), 440-441.

79) B. A. Mastin, “A Neglected Feature of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel”, *NTS* 22 (1975), 41.

80) R. Brown, “Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?”, 553.

“makes a point that *only* God *can* reveal God.”<sup>81)</sup> If this is the context, as I argued above, the reading μονογενῆς θεός could be the right reading; the Evangelist would intend not only to emphasize the continuity between Moses and Christ, but also to highlight the uniqueness and superiority of the latter, for which he definitely employs θεός.

Therefore, the reading μονογενῆς θεός intrinsically fits the Prologue well (vv.1-18).<sup>82)</sup> For those who prefer the reading ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός, “the unique phrase μονογενῆς θεός is hardly to be expected after the first clause of the verse 18, Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε, and thus ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός would more naturally precede the description ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς.”<sup>83)</sup> For Hort and many other scholars, however, the *context* rather favors μονογενῆς θεός. The three verses (1, 14, and 18), for Hort, are “salient” verses of the Prologue: “Verse 1 declares the Word to have been ‘in the beginning’ θεός; verse 14 states that the Word, when He becomes flesh, was beheld to have a glory as of a μονογενῆς; verse 18 shows how His union of both attributes enabled Him to bridge the chasm which kept the Godhead beyond the knowledge of [even Moses].”<sup>84)</sup>

Against the view that the “unique” reading μονογενῆς θεός does not seem to fit the context, Hort argues that “the whole Prologue is unique, and μονογενῆς θεός seems to belong essentially to a single definite step in the Prologue.”<sup>85)</sup> It is true that the phrase μονογενῆς θεός itself is found nowhere else in John, but its individual terms occur elsewhere in the Prologue. The term θεός occurs *seven* additional times in the eighteen verses of the Prologue, whereas the title υἱός has not been previously mentioned. Terms found elsewhere are now combined in the climax of the Prologue. As he sums up the Prologue, the Evangelist carefully formulates the phrase μονογενῆς θεός, echoing back to the uniqueness

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81) Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 57; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 99.

82) F. J. A. Hort, *Two Dissertations* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1876), 12-18; D. A. Fennema, “John 1:18: ‘God the Only Son’”, 124-135; Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 57.

83) Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 57.

84) F. J. A. Hort, *Two Dissertations*, 15; Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 57-58.

85) F. J. A. Hort, *Two Dissertations*, 16.

(μονογενής, v.14) of Christ and his full deity (θεός, v.1), to affirm that only God can reveal God.<sup>86)</sup> Thus, the Evangelist makes a point that God’s revelation is “self-revelation,” and Moses is just a mediator as he clearly states with proposition *διὰ* (i.e., “through” Moses).

Furthermore, the Prologue reaches its culmination with the Moses-Christ parallelism and with the reading *μονογενής θεός*. In fact, as many scholars have observed, the Prologue is a Johannine *inclusio*.<sup>87)</sup> The Evangelist, by deliberately returning to the word *θεός* in v.1, culminates the Prologue with *μονογενής θεός*. Moreover, the verb *ἐξηγέομαι* (“to narrate,” “to make fully and clearly known”) supports the climactic phrase *μονογενής θεός*. After the first part of the strong negative construction (“No one has ever seen God”), the context, along with the verb *ἐξηγέομαι*, anticipates that “only One who is the same as God (*μονογενής θεός*) . . . has made him fully and clearly known.”<sup>88)</sup> By this *inclusio* and by Moses-Christ comparison, John clearly shows that the only Son, himself God (*μονογενής θεός*), is the *ἐξήγησις*, that is the full narration of God for the world.<sup>89)</sup>

#### 4. Theological *Tendenz*

Lastly, before winding up this study, we need to mention briefly if any theological or scribal *Tendenz* is involved in the variant readings of John 1:18. The phrase *μονογενής θεός* may be seen to a few scholars as a theologically-developed later reading because it represents the “high” Christology. For example, Boismard, who thinks that the reading *ὁ μονογενής* was original, contends that the *θεός* was introduced as a weapon against those who questioned the divinity of Jesus.<sup>90)</sup> More recently, in his *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*,

86) D. A. Fennema, “John 1:18: ‘God the Only Son’”, 128.

87) For example, M. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 366-368; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 99; B. A. Mastin, “A Neglected Feature of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel”, 41-42; D. A. Fennema, “John 1:18: ‘God the Only Son’”, 129; C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 426; A. J. Köstenberger, *John*, 49; P. M. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading*, 217.

88) J. P. Louw and A. N. Eugene, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, 2nd ed., (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 340.

89) C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 21.

90) M.-E. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, 65.

Bart D. Ehrman argues that the reading *μονογενής θεός* in John 1:18 comes from an orthodox corruption of the text. For Ehrman, orthodox scribes, against adoptionist Christology, altered the reading *ὁ μονογενής υἱός* to *μονογενής θεός* “in which the complete deity of Christ is affirmed.”<sup>91)</sup> As Hort and Brown have noted, however, no theological *Tendenz* in the early transmission of the text was involved in the reading *μονογενής θεός* since elsewhere in John as well as in the Prologue Jesus is clearly called God.<sup>92)</sup> If “orthodox scribes altered *υἱός* to *θεός* to stress the complete deity of Christ,” as Ehrman contends, “then in other contexts where the term *Son* occurs, it should have been altered, but no such problems are found elsewhere in the Johannine literature.”<sup>93)</sup> For sure, *μονογενής θεός* is the original reading by the hand of the Evangelist.

## 5. Conclusion

The last two verses of Johannine Prologue (1:17-18) are not only the climax of the Prologue but also prepares the Moses-Christ comparison that runs throughout the Gospel. The complex parallelism in John 1:17-18 is a synthetic parallelism, not an antithetic one. The Fourth Gospel does not oppose the law of Moses. Rather the law of Moses testifies to the One who brings the full glory of God. By synthetic parallelism between Moses and Christ, the Evangelist presents Jesus Christ as the Prophet-like-Moses *par excellence*.

John 1:17-18 declares the coming of the revelation of the Father in fullness. For the Evangelist, this can be made only by the One who shares the full Deity and who fully knows the Father. Moses, through (*διὰ*) whom only a partial glory of God was revealed, serves to be a type for this Final Revealer. John stresses

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91) B. Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, 78-92, here 78.

92) F. J. A. Hort, *Two Dissertations*, 9; R. Brown, “Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?”, 553. Cf. M. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 366-368.

93) For more discussion of the theological tendency, see Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 62-66, here 65; also see M. Edwards, “Orthodox Corruption? John 1:18”, *Studia Patristica* XLIV (Peeters, 2010), 201-205; B. J. Burkholder, “Considering the Possibility of a Theological Corruption in Joh 1,18 in Light of its Early Reception”, *ZNW* 103 (2012), 64-83.

that *only God* can reveal God. In revealing who this Great Revealer is, the Evangelist carefully constructs his Prologue and the rest of the Gospel. At the beginning of the Prologue, he begins his *inclusio* by affirming the deity of the Word as θεός. Then at the end of the Prologue, he seals the *inclusio* by using the word θεός once more to stress the nature (himself God) of the Revealer.<sup>94)</sup> Again the *inclusio* of the Prologue (vv.1, 18) forms an *inclusio* with the climatic end of the Gospel, where Thomas confesses, “My Lord and My God” (20:28). As the verb ἐξηγέομαι suggests, the author makes a point that the Son (himself God) is “der göttliche Exeget” of the Father.<sup>95)</sup>

Thus the two terms μονογενής θεός *in apposition* excellently summarize the entire Prologue attributing two qualities to the Logos; He is the only Son (μονογενής), (himself) God (θεός). In the words of Hort, “θεός is the luminous word which recites afresh the first verse within the last, and in its combination with ὁ μονογενής crowns and illustrates the intervening steps.”<sup>96)</sup> By this climatic proclamation,<sup>97)</sup> the author of the Fourth Gospel, having in mind the question left unanswered by Ben Sira (43:31) (“who has seen God and can describe him?”<sup>98)</sup>), affirms that μονογενής θεός or “the Only Son, (himself) God” reveals God.

#### <Keywords>

John 1:17-18, Johannine Prologue, Moses-Christ parallelism, Jewish shaliach tradition, μονογενής θεός.

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94) D. A. Fennema, “John 1:18: ‘God the Only Son’”, 129. Cf. B. A. Mastin, “A Neglected Feature of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel”, 41-42.

95) Volkker Stolle, “Jesus Christus, der göttliche Exeget (Joh 1,18): Zur theologischen Standortbestimmung neutestamentlicher Exegese”, 64-87; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 45; Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 67-68.

96) F. J. A. Hort, *Two Dissertations*, 16; Kei Eun Chang, “Theologically Oriented Scribal Alterations of the New Testament Text in Relation to Early Christological Debates with Special Attention to John 1:18 and 1:34”, 68.

97) Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

98) This means that no one in Judaism, including Moses, has seen God to describe him fully enough until Jesus.

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<Abstract>

**Μονογενής Θεός – the Prophet-like-Moses Par Excellence  
and the Unique Exegete of the Father:  
An Exegetical and Text-Critical Study of John 1:17-18**

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This paper studies the last two verses of the Johannine Prologue (1:1-18), in which readers face arguably the most important question in the Johannine studies: Does John 1:18 say that Jesus is “God” or “Son”? This is because they have to make a text-critical choice between the reading of μονογενής θεός and the reading of ὁ μονογενής υἱός. John 1:17-18 not only forms the climax of the Prologue, but also prepares the readers to read the rest of the Gospel in light of the Moses tradition. In this paper, I argue that the Evangelist, by Moses-Christ parallelism, proposes Jesus Christ as the Prophet-like-Moses *par excellence*. In Judaism, Moses is the great revealer of God. For the Evangelist, however, μονογενής θεός, who is at the Father’s side, and thus shares in full secrets of Deity is the *unique* Exegete of the Father. I demonstrate how the Moses-Christ juxtaposition functions in the passage and beyond, and how it leads us to make the correct text-critical choice of μονογενής θεός against ὁ μονογενής υἱός. To make the case, I first analyze the structure of the passage in parataxis, two statements of Moses and Christ in particular. I argue that the two clauses in 1:17 are synthetic rather than antithetic parallelism, by which one points to the other, and the latter is far greater than the former. Second, I show how the Evangelist develops Moses-Christ parallelism throughout the Fourth Gospel. Here particular attention is paid to the Jewish *shaliach* (שליח; “one who is sent”) tradition to disclose how Johannine Christology carries this tradition in presenting Christ as the Prophet far greater than Moses. Third, I analyze textual problems in 1:18 and show how Greek manuscript traditions are split, and how modern English and Korean translations differ from one version to another. Here I suggest that Korean versions apply the current New Testament scholarship. Against the view that the context prefers the reading ὁ μονογενής υἱός, I make a counter claim that the *context* rather demands the reading μονογενής θεός. For this

case, I argue that the Moses-Jesus parallelism demands the reading of  $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta$   $\varsigma$   $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$  because the Evangelist in the immediate context as well as in the entire Gospel intends to propose that “only Son, himself God” is the  $\acute{\epsilon}\xi\eta\gamma\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  or the full narration of God for the world. Finally, I briefly mention if any theological or scribal *Tendenz* is involved in the variant readings of John 1:18.