The Paraclete and Prophecy in the Johannine Community

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Introduction

A quick survey of all the studies on the five Paraclete\(^1\) sayings reveals that scholars dedicate just limited space to the treatment of the fifth saying in John 16:13–14. Although they all agree that this is a distinctive saying, they tend to see it as a restatement or an explanation of the second Paraclete saying in John 14:26, where the reader is told that the Paraclete will teach all things and will bring to remembrance all things Jesus taught his disciples. In my view this interpretation fails to explain fully the role of the Paraclete in the believer’s life, because it overlooks a very important function of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel, namely, the prophetic function.

Although the idea of the Paraclete’s teaching was already introduced in 14:26, the reader of the Gospel should note that in John 16:12–15, the teaching of the Paraclete is no longer oriented toward the past ὑπομνήσει, but towards the future (καὶ τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἀνογγελείημι). The Evangelist points out that the Paraclete is not only an interpreter of the “old revelation” (the words of the earthly Jesus) but that he is also instrumental in disclosing the “things to come.”

Using as the point of departure the statement in John 16:13, where we are told that the Spirit-Paraclete reveals the “things to come,” I will argue in this essay that the Paraclete not only interprets the “old revelation” (the words of the earthly Jesus), but also brings “new revelation,” predicting future events related to the life of the community and individuals, and providing direction for the community in its witnessing ministry. This is one of the major points of departure between me and the majority of scholars, who, in my opinion, overlook the fact that the Gospel of John needs to be read primarily against the Jewish religious background, a background that emphasizes the predictive role of the Spirit-inspired prophecy.

\(^1\) For a survey of the scholarly work on the five Paraclete sayings including a possible background for the term Paraclete see Gary M. Burge, The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 3–42.
It is my contention that in the Johannine community all believers were potential prophets. They all had the same anointing; the same Spirit that rested (μένειν) on Jesus, the Prophet, remained in them as well.\(^2\) It seems that for John,\(^3\) prophecy was too important to be left to the prophets alone. Usually scholars have been content to mention briefly that there may have been some prophets in the Johannine community, but they have not attempted to point out who these prophets were, what they did, and how they did it. The Johannine community was a charismatic community in which the exalted Christ was still speaking through the Paraclete to the believers. The Gospel itself may be the product of both the oral tradition and of the prophetic utterances delivered by the Evangelist or some prophets in the community.

According to John, the Paraclete will not only continue Jesus’ revelatory work but will complete it. This seemingly bold affirmation needs further clarification, however. Therefore in this essay I will attempt to explain the way in which the Paraclete continues and completes the revelation brought by Jesus, and how it relates to prophecy. In order to do so, I will examine the work of the Paraclete under three different headings: (1) the Paraclete and prophecy, (2) the Paraclete and “the things to come,” and (3) the Paraclete and the prophets.

**The Paraclete and Prophecy**

There is a growing number of Johannine scholars who point to the significance of prophecy in the Johannine community.\(^4\) Although not all of them assign the same importance to it, many acknowledge that the element of prophecy is one of the keys, if not the key, to understanding the community in which the Gospel was written.\(^5\) Thus David Aune says that

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\(^2\) This does not mean that Jesus’ relationship to the Spirit is similar to the believer’s relationship to the Spirit. Whereas in this essay I will argue that John presents Jesus as the Prophet, I do not imply that he prophesied due to his anointing with the Spirit.

\(^3\) In this essay the designation of John as the author of the Fourth Gospel does not necessarily refer to John the Apostle, neither does it imply that a male wrote the Gospel. Henceforth the use of the masculine pronouns when referring to the author occur only as a consequence of using the name John as the writer of the narrative.


“the primary characteristic of the Johannine community is precisely that of a prophetic, charismatic or pneumatic community.” In such a community one of the main functions of the Paraclete was to inspire the Johannine believers, enabling them to interpret the words of the earthly Jesus and to communicate the words of the exalted Christ.

Before any attempt to detect prophetic features of the Paraclete in the Johannine community, we need to specify what the term Christian prophetism entails. Although scholars who have studied the prophetic phenomenon in the early Christian communities (especially as it is related in Acts and 1 Corinthians) differ in their views at some points, they all seem to agree with Aune that “Christian prophecy functions to edify, exhort, and console Christians.” Prophecy in the New Testament is generally described as “the reception and subsequent communication of spontaneous, divinely given apokalypsis... the declaring of a revelatory experience.” A Christian prophet is one who delivers what he or she claims are divinely inspired messages in oral or written form to Christian individuals or groups, often in a cultic setting.

Many scholars have noticed that prophecy might include the prediction of the future, a disclosing of the things and events to come. The predictive function of Christian prophecy may be clearly seen when we consider the following points. First, it was the general view that the Old Testament prophets had been predictors of the future. In the Pentateuch Moses is presented as prophesying about the future coming of a great prophet (Deut. 18:15–18, cf. John 4:19). He also established that the criterion for knowing the true prophets was the fulfillment of their predictions (Deut. 18:21–22). The prophet Jeremiah predicted that Israel would suffer military defeat and exile (Jer. 3:12–14) and would also return to the land (Jer. 3:18; see also Jer. 23:8; Ezek. 11:17; Hos. 1:11; Mic. 2:12; Zec. 10:6–10).

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7 This is Aune's conclusion after reviewing different definitions given by several scholars. See David E. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 19. The first chapter of his book is an excellent overview of the scholarly debate on the issue of prophecy.


As we shall see in our study, the predictive function of prophecy played an important role in the Johannine community as well. Since in this study we will often emphasize the Paraclete’s role in bringing “new revelation,” it is appropriate to clarify what we mean by this term. This term will be used to describe the Paraclete’s function of disclosing future events and things previously unknown to the believers. I shall argue that in John 16:13–14 the Evangelist draws the reader’s attention to the predictive function of the Paraclete, a function materialized through the prophetic utterances of the Johannine believers. We will also argue that in the Johannine community all believers were potential prophets, whose prophecies might include prediction of future events.

We do acknowledge, however, that the term new revelation may be used to describe the inspired interpretation of the scriptures as well. In fact, we agree with those who consider the inspired interpretation of the scriptures as a part of the role of a prophet. Since according to John there were no distinct “offices” of teachers, preachers, and prophets in the community, we will not insist on differences between them. Suffice it to say that in John’s community teaching, preaching (witnessing), and prophetic utterances are performed by the Spirit-Paraclete through the believer.

Most scholars divide the early Christian prophets into three categories: (1) wandering prophets, who travel from place to place, (2) resident prophets, whose ministry does not extend beyond their congregations, and (3) Christians who, though not considered “prophets” in a formal sense, occasionally prophesied. As we shall see, we can detect in the Johannine community the form of prophecy described by scholars as “congregational prophecy,” which points to the second or third category mentioned above. The Johannine community was probably one in which prophecy was a function rather than an office.

There are many reasons to believe that in the Fourth Gospel one of the functions of the Paraclete was prophetic, that is, to reveal to the members of the community the words of the exalted Christ. In an article that attempts to find a background for the title Paraclete in the activities


11 For good surveys of these three categories see Jannes Reiling, Hermas and Christian Prophecy. A Study of the Eleventh Mandate (NovTSup 37; Leiden, 1973), esp. chapter 1; Robeck, “Gift,” 36; Aune, Prophecy, 195–98; and Forbes, Prophecy, 241–46.
and experiences of early prophetism, M. E. Boring brings together much evidence of the Paraclete’s prophetic functions. He points out that the simple fact that John identifies the Paraclete with the Holy Spirit should indicate that prophecy is involved. In early Jewish and Christian circles, the Holy Spirit was equated with the “Spirit of Prophecy.” This is strengthened by the fact that the verbs describing the ministry of the Paraclete are directly related to speech functions (λαλεῖν, ἀναγγέλλειν, διδάσκειν, μαρτυρεῖν and even παρακαλεῖν), suggesting “a pneumatic speech charisma.” Boring also notes a correspondence between what he calls the Johannine “revelatory chain-of-command” found in the (prophetic) book of Revelation, and in the Gospel of John. Thus in Revelation 1:1–2 the Seer describes the chain of command as follows: Father/Jesus/Angel/Prophet/Community/World. A quite similar chain (with two differences) occurs in John 14:16; 15:26 where the sequence is: Father/Jesus/Paraclete/Community/World. Comparing the two chains, Boring concludes that “the Paraclete seems to combine the roles of the revelatory angel and the Christian prophet.” In the same manner as in the book of Revelation the pair Angel/Prophet communicates to the community the words of exalted Christ, so in the Fourth Gospel the Paraclete communicates the words of Christ to the community (cf. 16:13). Finally, Boring notes, both the close dependence of the Paraclete on Jesus’ words and the absence of any of the Paraclete’s intrinsic authority (16:13b) point to the prophet’s responsibility to transmit only what has been given to him.

Overall we may say that Boring has read the evidence correctly, as general parallels between the Paraclete and early prophetism do exist. One of the main weaknesses of Boring’s thesis, however, is the way in which he describes the Paraclete. Boring argues that since the Paraclete is presented as distinct from the disciples in general, and also since the “chain of command” requires a distinction between the Paraclete and the community, the Paraclete’s prophetic function is performed by a certain

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13 See E. Sjöberg, “Πνεῦμα” TDNT 6:381–82. Also Turner, The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 5–18. Yet, we have to acknowledge that although in first-century Judaism prophecy was the most pervasive effect of the Spirit, there are examples in which the presence of the Spirit does not effect an experience of prophecy. For such examples see John R. Levison, The Spirit in First Century Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 244–54.
15 Ibid., 115.
group of believers in the community. This is surely in contradiction to the general tone of the Gospel that the Spirit is given indiscriminately to all believers (cf. 3:5; 7:37-38; 14:17; and 1 John 2:27). As Schnackenburg has rightly pointed out, the unique unifying factor within the Johannine community was the universal experience of the Spirit.

In the Fourth Gospel the Spirit and prophet together seem to be conceived as one functioning entity. The textual evidence does not support the idea of some elite group of people in the community, people who acted as the Paraclete. Nor can we find support in the Gospel that the Paraclete was a human figure (i.e., the Beloved Disciple). This theory has been mainly advanced to explain how the Paraclete can witness, teach, and speak. However, the Evangelist is clearly identifying the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:26), and not as a particular person (disciple) or group. Apparently, John did not see any problem in assigning these rather "human" functions to the Spirit. For him the words of the Spirit that inspired the believer were not human words, but the words of the Spirit-Paraclete. This means that John does not have to mention the word prophets in order to affirm that the Spirit is speaking through them. It is not the human channel that is important, but the one who speaks through that channel; the ultimate speaker is the Paraclete, not the believer (although in a sense the one who actually speaks is the believer).

John is not the only Christian writer who holds such a view. In the New Testament we find many occurrences in which, although prophets communicate the message, the speaker is clearly identified as the Spirit. Thus in Acts 21:11 Agabus is depicted as introducing his prophetic utterance with the words: "Behold what the Spirit says . . ." More pertinent to our situation are the occurrences in Acts 13:2 ("While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'"), 1 Timothy 4:1 ("Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons"), and Revelation 14:13 ("And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'"), in which there is no mention of human intermediaries for what the Spirit says. The same situation is found in the address

16 Ibid., 114.
to the seven churches of the Revelation where the expression “he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” is used seven times (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). A similar idea is reflected in the Montanist oracles where we have the expressions: “the Spirit says/speaks” (5, 9), and “the Paraclete says” (9, 12).  

A similar expression is found in Ignatius’ letter to Philadelphians (Philad. 7:2) where the text reads:

Some, however, suspected I was saying this because I had previous knowledge of the division caused by some; but he for whose sake I am in chains is my witness, that I had not learned it from any human source. No, it was the Spirit who kept preaching in these words: “Apart from the bishop do nothing; preserve your persons as shrines of God; cherish unity, shun divisions; do as Jesus Christ did, for he, too, did as the Father did.

Here we find together some of the elements we have talked about in this section; we are told that although the message was delivered by Ignatius, the words are not his own, but the Spirit’s words, and we are also told that the utterance was a predictive one. Similarly, the Fourth Evangelist prefers to elevate the importance of the Spirit and to diminish and even nullify the role of the human messenger. In the Gospel of John the Paraclete is not (as Boring suggests) a function within the community performed by an elite group; the Paraclete performs his functions through every believer.

Still the question remains why the Evangelist does not use the title prophet at all. The reader may note that in the Fourth Gospel, besides the Old Testament prophets, the title prophet is reserved for Jesus only. Even in the First Epistle where prophetic activity is obvious (cf. 1 John 4:1–6), the term prophet does not appear with reference to any individual in particular. The only occurrence of this word is with the prefix pseudo (ψευδοπροφήτης) in order to describe the false prophets (1 John 4:1).

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19 Whereas neither Montanus nor his followers appear to have written any treatises, a number of Montanist oracles have survived in quotations made by some early Christian writers. For a collection text and translation of these oracles see Ronald E. Heine, The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia (Patristic Monograph Series 14; Leuven: Peeters/Macon: Mercer University Press, 1989). The above quotations are from the oracles generally considered as authentic; the numbering adopted here follows Heine (pp. 2–7).

20 Aune, Cultic Setting, 38. He suggests that the best category with which the Johannine Jesus should be categorized is that of “prophet.” In doing this, Aune refers to the Second-Temple Judaism expectation of a new Moses that is clearly seen in the Fourth Gospel. See also Wayne A. Meeks, The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology (NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967).

21 Here we must acknowledge with Boring that “false” prophets in 1 John 4:1 are rejected not because of their prophetic claims but because of their heretical theology. See M. E. Boring, The Continuing Voice of Jesus: Christian Prophecy and the Gospel Tradition (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1991), 78–79.
The avoidance of the term prophet or true prophet may signify not only that Jesus is the only one worthy to bear that title, but also the Johannine tendency to diminish the role of the prophet in order to emphasize the role of the Spirit that inspired the prophets and authenticated their message.\textsuperscript{22}

The prophetic activity of the Paraclete is further reflected in the fact that he will not speak on his own authority (John 16:13) but only of what he hears from Jesus. This is surely the defining feature of the prophets: they speak only what they hear from God. Another prophetic feature deals with the Paraclete’s function of convicting the world of its sin (John 16:8–11). The same feature appears in 1 Corinthians 14:24–25 where Paul speaks of Christian prophecy.

Our main task in this section was to establish the inspiring function of the Paraclete in the Johannine community. Although the direct evidence is meager, we have pointed out some features that reveal this function of the Paraclete. Only by acknowledging this function can we better explain how the Spirit-Paraclete communicates with the believers, teaching and inspiring them in their witness. In the next two sections we will look in more detail at some other evidence that reveals the prophetic function of the Paraclete, and examine how this function was performed in the community.

\textit{The Paraclete and the “Things to Come”}

While many commentators agree that prophecy played a significant role in the Johannine community, not all of them have the same opinion about how prophecy operated within the community.\textsuperscript{23} A major point of disagreement is the correct interpretation of the fifth Paraclete saying, more precisely the meaning of the expression “τα έρχόμενα αναγγέλει ύμίν.” In their attempt to avoid any form of predictive-prophecy in the Johannine community, some scholars have suggested that this saying needs to be interpreted in light of the (second) Paraclete saying in John 14:25–26, in which the Spirit’s role is to bring to remembrance the words of the earthly Jesus.\textsuperscript{24} In their view, to affirm that the Paraclete will disclose hidden

\textsuperscript{22} This would be in accordance with Aune’s observation that “the prophet was unique among early Christian leaders in that, unlike other functionaries, he claimed no personal part in the communication which he conveyed.” See David E. Aune, \textit{Prophecy}, 204.


things would overshadow the old revelation brought by Jesus. As a result, their exegesis of the text tends to obscure the meaning intended by the Evangelist. When interpreting the verb \( \text{αναγγέλω} \) they point to P. Jöuon's study, in which he argues that the key to interpreting this verb is the prefix \( \text{άνα} \). This prefix corresponds to "re" in Latin, showing that the meaning of this verb is "to re-announce, to re-proclaim." Nevertheless, Jöuon's argumentation is unjustifiably forced, because it fails to explain the use of \( \text{αναγγέλλω} \) in John 4:25, where the Samaritan woman says that the Messiah "will proclaim all things to us" (\( \text{αναγγελεῖ ἡμίν ἄπαντα} \)). Needless to say, it is impossible to adopt Jöuon's rendering of \( \text{αναγγέλλω} \) here; the Messiah's role cannot be that of "re-announcing" certain things.

The meaning of \( \text{αναγγέλλω} \) in John 4:25 is of great importance for our study for, as W.C. van Unnik rightly argues, the same meaning has to be rendered in John 16:13–15. As the first Paraclete (Jesus) proclaimed all things (John 4:25), so the other Paraclete will proclaim \( \tauά \varepsilonρχόμενον \) (John 16:13). After examining many first-century Greek and Jewish texts in which the two words \( \text{αναγγέλλω} \) and \( \text{πάντα} \) are connected, van Unnik concludes that these words usually describe prophets who make known things previously hidden from people. The best translation of \( \text{αναγγέλλω} \) would therefore be "to make known." Such translation will underscore the revelatory function of the Paraclete, a function that, as we already seen, characterizes not only the Spirit-Paraclete but also the first Paraclete (Jesus).

This translation also fits the meaning found in some Isaianic passages that could have influenced John in the process of composition. Besides the distinct quotations from the Book of Isaiah (John 1:23; 6:45; 12:38–41), and the (Isaianic) lawsuit metaphor that dominates the Gospel of John, we may note that John's use of the verb \( \text{αναγγέλλω} \) resembles those in

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26 Even Brown, who argues against any predictive prophetic function of the Paraclete, acknowledges that this verse cannot prove Jöuon's argument (John 2:708).


29 The same translation is given in the New International Version of the New Testament. At best Jöuon's interpretation of \( \text{αναγγέλλω} \) may refer to a spatial context (the Paraclete will re-announce on earth what he has heard in heaven) and not to a temporal context (the Paraclete will announce to the disciples and the subsequent generation what he heard from the earthly Jesus).
the LXX version of Isaiah.\(^{30}\) In the Septuagintal version of Isaiah this verb is most frequently used for Yahweh’s predictive word, meaning “to announce or declare” (Isa. 41:26; 42:9; 43:9, 12; 44:7; 46:10; 48:14). Interestingly enough the fulfillment of God’s predictions is a key element in Israel’s witness to the true God. For example, Isaiah. 44:8 reads: “Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.” The reader of John’s Gospel cannot help but notice that part of the disciples’ witness was the fulfillment of both the OT prophets’ predictions (Isa. 6:9; 53:1; cf. John 12:38, 41), and Jesus’ predictions (John 12:32–33; 13:19).

Of particular interest for our study are Isaiah 41:23 and 44:7, where \(\alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega\) takes the object \(\tau\alpha\varepsilon\rho\chi\omicron\omicron\epsilon\nu\alpha\) as in John 16:13.\(^{31}\) In both these Isaianic verses the ability to make known the things to come legitimates the claim to a prophecy of divine origin; only those able to proclaim the things to come are real prophets; trustworthy mediators of the revelation from God.\(^{32}\) Considering John’s dependence on Isaiah, and also the similar use of the words \(\alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega\) and \(\tau\alpha\varepsilon\rho\chi\omicron\omicron\epsilon\nu\alpha\), we are entitled to conclude that in the Fourth Gospel the Paraclete is the real and trustworthy mediator of the revelation from the exalted Christ, speaking not on his own authority, but only what he hears from Christ.


\(^{31}\) The text in Isaiah 41:23 reads:

“Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified.”

The LXX version reads as follows:

\(\alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega\ \eta\mu\imath\nu\ \tau\alpha\varepsilon\rho\chi\omicron\omicron\epsilon\nu\alpha\ \epsilon\kappa\iota\ \varepsilon\sigma\chi\alpha\zeta\omicron\omicron\nu\alpha\ \kappa\i\alpha\i\iota\sigma\alpha\sigma\omicron\mu\iota\omicron\beta\omicron\alpha\ ο\tau\iota\ θ\e\o\i\ \varepsilon\tau\e\tau\ \varepsilon\o\delta\ \kappa\o\i\kappa\o\i\sigma\a\tau\e\tau\ \kappa\i\alpha\i\iota\ 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A second major reason for inferring that the Paraclete will bring new revelation is the expression τὰ ἔρχομενα, which means “the things to come.” Although all commentators translate this expression in the same way, not all of them believe it refers to some future events after Jesus’ glorification. The majority of commentators take τὰ ἔρχομενα as pointing to the Spirit’s leading the believing community on its way into the future.33 This leading, however, is based on the Spirit’s interpretation and application of the revelation given by Jesus while on earth. Such an interpretation makes the fifth Paraclete saying merely a repetition of the second saying (John 14:26), or at best an explanation of it.

While it is true that one of the main activities of the Paraclete is that of reminding and interpreting the words of Jesus to the believers, the expression τὰ ἔρχομενα clearly shows that in this saying John does not point to that particular activity. Obviously, the many things Jesus wants to say are neither a repetition nor an interpretation of what he has already said. Since the Farewell Discourse is full of new information, and in John 16:12 Jesus clearly says that he has many things (πολλά) to say to the disciples, the reader expects that the word πολλά in John 16:12 refers to new information, as well. The Spirit-Paraclete will go beyond what Jesus has said during his earthly ministry, as he will guide the believers in “all the truth.”34 Whereas the truth in John is always the truth of Jesus, it does not mean that the truth is confined to what Jesus said during his earthly ministry. The Paraclete (identified again here with the Spirit of Truth) will guide the disciples in the “whole sphere of truth.”35 Upon Jesus’ departure to the Father, the Spirit will unfold the future for the disciples. This unfolding is not for their own curiosity, but in order for them to continue in the truth. The last Paraclete saying is surely referring to the Paraclete’s role of bringing new revelation. It is only unfortunate that some scholars, for dogmatic and other reasons, prefer to evade the meaning of τὰ ἔρχομενα.

Yet, one cannot simply say that the Paraclete will bring new revelation; this statement needs further explanation. As the Evangelist clearly shows, the new revelation brought by the Paraclete has a specific origin and content. The origin of the revelation is the exalted Christ (cf. ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ) while the content of it are his words (as reflected in John’s use of λήμψει and respectively ὃσα ἰκούσει λαλήσει). The new revelation

33 See for example, Ridderbos, John, 536; Brown, John 2:708; and Carson, John, 540.
brought by the Paraclete will not be a “new doctrine.” For the Johannine community any revelation denying the Word’s incarnation is false. The same thing can be said for any revelation that does not originate from the earthly or exalted Jesus. Although the Paraclete will bring new revelation, he will speak only what he hears. But according to John 14:26 the new revelation the Spirit-Paraclete brings is in fact a continuation of the revelation brought by the first Paraclete (Jesus); Jesus in his exalted state continues to speak to the believers through the Spirit. As Betz rightly puts it, “on earth the ever abiding paraclete works side by side with the exalted Lord Christ who is in heaven.” The Paraclete is the only one who “reveals the mind of Christ” to the community.

Whereas it is difficult to pinpoint the content of the “new revelation” brought by the Paraclete, we believe it is similar to other examples mentioned in some New Testament books and other Second Temple Jewish writings. Josephus, the one to whom we are so indebted for our knowledge of prophetic phenomena during the late Second Temple period, emphasizes the role of the ancient prophets as predictors. For example, Josephus mentions that just before his death Moses prophesied to each of the tribes “the things that in fact were to come to pass” (Ant. 4.320). Also, both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus Ant. 10:79–80 reads:

This prophet [Jeremiah] also announced the misfortunes that were to come upon the city, and left behind writings concerning the recent capture of our city, as well as the capture of Babylon. And not only this prophet predicted these things to the multitude, but also the prophet Ezekiel, who left behind two books which he was the first to write about these matters.

Josephus himself predicted that Vespasian and his son Titus would become emperors (B.J. 3.400–402). This was not, however, the only prophetic utterance of Josephus. In the passages describing the Jewish revolt he repeatedly emphasizes the inevitability of Jerusalem’s fall (B.J. 6.312). In B.J. 3.405 we read about his prediction that the city of Jotapata

36 Betz, Der Paraklet, 149.
38 See also the examples and conclusion given by Rebecca Gray, Prophetic Figures in the Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 31–34.
39 Aune notes that Josephus was not the only Jew who predicted the ascension to the throne of these two; the famous Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai is reported in haggadic tradition to have said to Vespasian that he would become emperor. See Aune, Prophecy, 141. Aune quotes Lam. Rab. 2:2.
would fall to the Romans after forty-seven days. After the fulfilling of his prophecy he says that his "power of insight into the future was no longer discredited" (*B.J.* 4.629). From Josephus we also know that some of the Essenes claimed the ability to predict the future:

> There are some of among them who profess to foretell the future, being versed from their early years in holy books, various forms of purification and apophthegms of prophets; and seldom, if ever, do they err in their predictions.\footnote{Josephus, *B.J.* 2.159.}

Thus Judas the Essene had predicted that Antigonus would die on a particular day at Strato's Tower on the Palestinian coast (*Ant.* 13.311–12; *B.J.* 1.78–80).\footnote{See especially L. H. Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus," *JTS* 41 (1990): 396–400. Feldman argues that for Josephus, prediction is one major feature of prophecy that does survive into his own time.} Simon interpreted the dream of Archelaus, predicting that his reign was about to end (*B.J.* 2.112–13; *Ant.* 17.345–48), a prophecy fulfilled in five days. Another Essene by the name of Menahem had predicted to Herod the Great, when he was still a boy, that he would become king of the Jews (*Ant.* 15.373–79). Of Menahem Josephus states that he possessed "foreknowledge of the future from God" (πρόγνωσις ἐκ θεοῦ τῷ μελλότων, *Ant.* 15.373).

Second, the New Testament writers attested to the fact that the Old Testament prophecy included predicting the future. In their view, what God had done in Christ had been predicted long ago through the prophets (Mark 1:2, 7:6, 12:9, 13:24; Luke 3:4; 4:21, 7:27, 10:24, 24:44–47; Rom. 1:2, 9, 25; 1 Cor. 15:4; 1 Pet. 2:6–8; 2 Pet. 3:2–4). Similarly, in the Fourth Gospel we find evidence that John had the same idea about Old Testament prophecy. In John 12:38–39 we are told that the prophet Isaiah predicted the Jews' unbelief in Jesus' miracles (cf. Isa. 6:10, and 53:1). Also Jesus' triumphal entrance in Jerusalem is taken by John as the fulfillment of the prophecy uttered by Zechariah (*Zech.* 9:9). Jesus, the Prophet, predicts his own death and resurrection (2:19) and the persecution of the disciples by the world (16:1–4).\footnote{The same view was sustained by the post-apostolic authors, who also saw the Old Testament prophets as predictors of the future work of God. See, for example, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, especially 90:2 and 114:1, his first *Apologetic*, chap. 31; Irenaeus' *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 5, 30, 34, and *Adversus Haereses* 4:34ff.; and Tertullian's *Apologetic*, 18:5.}

It is also worth noting that the predictive dimension of Christian prophetism is clearly seen in three different passages in the Acts of the
Apostles (11:27–28; 20:23; 21:10–11). Thus while in Acts 11:27–28 Agabus prophesies about the coming famine, in Acts 21:11 he prophesies about Paul’s future arrest. Similarly, the Paraclete may predict some important events related to the life and the ministry of the community, or provide direction for the church as is the case in Acts 16:6 (“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them”).

In the book of Jude we are told that the apostles were predictors, too (Jude 17–18). After a detailed analysis of Paul’s view regarding this issue, Christopher Forbes concludes that “it would be extraordinary if Paul did not think prediction was part of prophecy.” In light of this evidence it is hard to believe that the Johannine Christians did not think prediction was part of prophecy.

There is no reason whatsoever to conclude that in John 16:12–15 the Paraclete is described as only recalling and interpreting Jesus’ earthly words. If that were the case, the Evangelist should have used the past tense of the verb ἀκούω, which would imply that the Paraclete “will declare what he heard.” But such a rendering of the verb is not found in any of the manuscripts. While the present tense is found in some manuscripts, the authentic reading is ἀκούσει, a reading required by the future tense of the verbs δώσει (John 14:16), πέμψει διδάξει ὑπομνήσει (John 14:26) used by the Evangelist to describe the work of the Paraclete. Upon Jesus’ exaltation, his voice will continue to be heard by the community via the Paraclete. It is only natural that in a Gospel in which the believers are born from above, they would be depicted as able to hear the words of the One who is “above.” Thus Christ in his exalted state will continue to speak giving direction to the church. Since during his earthly ministry Jesus’ words included predictive prophecies (John 12:32; 13:19; 16:4), it is only natural to assert that he will continue to predict things (through the Paraclete) even after his exaltation.

44 Forbes, Prophecy, 224.
45 See Barrett, John, 489. Barrett rightly states that the future tense of ἀκούω is due to “John’s careful emphasis upon the future operation of the Spirit.”
To argue that the Paraclete brings new revelation in John 16:13 does not diminish the Christology of John. On the contrary, John uses pneumatology in order to elevate the person of Christ (cf. John 16:15). The Paraclete's role is not only to remind the disciples of the words of the earthly Jesus but also to assure them that the exalted Christ still speaks. Surprisingly, those scholars who reject the Paraclete's role of bringing new revelation are in fact distorting John's Christology, because they in fact deny that the exalted Christ still speaks (through the Spirit) to his followers. Nowhere does John say that the Paraclete will bring independent revelation; the new revelation he brings is still Christ's revelation. The Paraclete is only the mediator of this revelation. As the believing community makes its way into the future, the voice of the exalted Christ is still heard through the Spirit-Paraclete, the spokesperson of Christ.

Yet, we could say that there is a certain degree of "independence" in the work of the Spirit. This independence results from the similarity between Jesus and the Spirit-Paraclete when described as spokespersons for the Father, and, respectively, for Jesus. The Spirit-Paraclete, like Jesus, will not speak "from himself, or on his own, but whatever he hears (John 5:19, 30; 8:26, 28, 40; 14:10); in the same manner in which Jesus speaks for the Father, so the Spirit-Paraclete speaks for Jesus. Whereas Jesus speaks what he hears from the Father, the impression the Evangelist gives to the reader is not that each of Jesus' utterances is a repetition of something he just heard from the Father, but rather that Jesus speaks on behalf of the Father. In the same vein, it is more logical to assert that the Spirit-Paraclete does not necessarily speak what he hears from the exalted Christ, but rather he speaks for Christ. Nevertheless, both the Evangelist and the community would take the Paraclete's words as Jesus' words.

The Paraclete and the Prophets

Once we have established that the fifth Paraclete saying does point to predictive prophecy, it remains to be seen how this function of the Spirit-Paraclete is reflected in the life of the Johannine believers. Given the lack of ecstatic, "pneumatic," phenomena in this Gospel, many commentators do not consider the role of the prophets as being important for the Johannine community. In doing so they join Schnackenburg, who says that in the Johannine writings

[n]othing is said . . . about the appearance of early Christian prophets. There may have been such prophets in the community and it is possible that a
bad experience of false prophets (4:1) resulted in the silence with regard to early Christian prophets. In any case, prophets seem to have played no part in the community at the time the letter was written.47

Even those who argue for prophetic activities in the Johannine community often fail to give examples of such activities in the Johannine corpus.48 As John Ashton points out, these scholars "usually confine themselves to establishing the principle without seeking the examples of the practice within the text of the Gospel itself."49 Their failure to point out such passages shows how difficult it is to detect examples of prophetic utterances in the text of the Gospel itself. Nevertheless, since we concluded that one of the main functions of the Paraclete is related to prophetism, we will endeavor to show that the Johannine community did not lack prophets.

As we have already seen, the reference to the false prophets in 1 John 4:1 implies the presence of the true prophets in the community.50 The false prophets are probably people who once belonged to the community (2:19), claiming to have the anointing (χρίσμα), but whose anointing has proved to be a lie (ψεύδο 2:27). These false prophets are, in fact, the Antichrists, for they deny that Jesus is the Christ (2:22). On the other hand, those who remained in the community know the truth because they have the anointing (χρίσμα) that teaches them all things and remains in them. Thus, the main difference between the "false prophets" and the true Johannine believers is the "anointing."

There is a general consensus among scholars as to the meaning of the metaphor of anointing in 1 John 2:20,27: it refers to the Spirit.51 In favor
of this interpretation we may point out some parallels between the Spirit in the Gospel of John and the anointing in the First Epistle. The expressions "you have" (2:20) and "you received" (2:27) point to the act of receiving the Spirit in John 14:16; 20:22. As the Spirit of Truth abides in believers (John 14:17), so the anointing remains in believers (1 John 2:27a). Similarly, the Spirit is the one who teaches the believer in both John 14:26 and 1 John 2:27. Unlike the false prophets who are led by the spirit of Antichrist (1 John 4:3), true believers have the anointing (the Spirit of Christ). In fact, the anointing is the sign of one's belonging to the community.

At this point we may raise the following question: Is 1 John 4:1–6 describing an antithesis between false prophets and believers, or between false and true prophets? Linguistically and logically the answer should be that the latter would be the case; the context is between a pseudo and an authentic prophet.

Whereas it is true that the title prophet or true prophet is not mentioned in this passage (1 John 4:1–7), we argue that here the title is replaced by the term spirit, shifting the emphasis to the Spirit that inspires the prophets. Thus in 1 John 4:1 the Johannine believers are to test the spirits (τα πνεύματα) to see whether they are from God. Assuming that such testing did take place historically, we may infer that the results of the testing were both positive and negative. As a result, those prophets who in their prophecy did not deny that Jesus is the incarnate Christ were true prophets, while those who denied this identification were false prophets. Obviously, the community was in a situation in which some of the spirit-inspired prophets purporting to utter the words of the risen Christ have become a distinct problem in the church. Such a problem could have risen only in a community in which spirit-inspired prophets were active.

Another argument favoring the existence of prophets in the Johannine community is the "I am" and "Amen, Amen" sayings. These sayings probably originated in the prophetic utterance of either the Evangelist or some members of the community. Analyzing the "I am" sayings, Ashton notes that all of them meet the first of the five criteria given by Aune for detecting

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53 Missing text

54 Moody Smith, *Johannine Christianity*, 16.
whether a text contains a prophetic utterance or not. According to Aune, a saying is to be taken as an oracle of Christian prophets if: (1) it is attributed to a supernatural being (God, Jesus, the Spirit, etc); (2) it consists of a prediction of the future, or involves special knowledge; (3) it is introduced or concluded by a formula which in other contexts appear to be used to introduce prophetic speech; (4) in the context of that particular saying reference is made to the inspiration of the speaker; and (5) it does not rest comfortably in its present literary setting.

While the nature of this study does not allow us to analyze each “I am” saying in particular, we may say that some of these sayings and the discourses following them originated in the prophetic speech of the Evangelist or of other Johanne prophets. Aune rightly points out that if the “I am” sayings are regarded as a thoroughly Christian product, then their origin can only be adequately accounted for by considering them the product of Christian prophecy, whereby the risen Lord speaks in the first person singular through inspired Christian prophets within a cultic setting.

In order to prove our assertion that there are traces of prophetic utterance in the narrative Fourth Gospel, we will use as a case study a passage in which the work of the Spirit is displayed. John 3:11–21 is one of the “Amen, Amen” passages that in our opinion betrays a prophetic origin. My contention is that the entire discourse (3:11–21) was probably built around a prophetic utterance. Analyzing this passage in light of Aune’s criteria we may note the following: (1) the saying is attributed to Jesus; (2) it does involve special knowledge, as it makes reference to the fact that Jesus and the disciples know the “heavenly things”; (3) it is introduced by the “Amen, Amen” formula, one that appears to be used to introduce prophetic speech in other contexts; (4) the speaker claims (divine)

55 See Ashton, Understanding, 181–85.
56 Aune, Prophecy, 317.
57 Ashton, Understanding, 184.
58 Aune, Cultic Setting, 72.
60 Aune rejects this formula as an introduction to prophetic speech, arguing that its use is not so widespread. See Aune, Prophecy, 241. See, however, K. Berger, Die Amen-Worte Jesu (Berlin, 1970), 95–117, and V. Hasler, Amen: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Einführungsformel der Herrenworte “Wahrlich ich sage euch” (Zürich, 1969), 146–56. I do not imply here that all of the “Amen, Amen” sayings are prophetic in their origin; my point is that some of them are.
inspiration, as he belongs to the realm “above”; (5) at least part of the saying (“no one has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven,” v. 13) does not rest comfortably in its present literary setting. To be sure, commentators have difficulties in establishing why Jesus is referring in this context to his ascent and descent, and why his ascension is already a past event. If a Christian prophet spoke the saying, these puzzles would be solved.

In addition to these five points that basically meet Aune’s criteria for detecting a prophetic origin of a speech, we may note that in this passage the voice of the “apostolic-prophetic” community often replaces that of Jesus. The switch from first-person singular to first-person plural in v. 11, and then back to first-person singular in v. 12, reveals a post-resurrection perspective, a perspective that is clearly seen in vv. 16–21, where the lifting up of the Son is seen as a past event. Hence we may ask with Ashton, what kind of man would consciously utter these words, claiming they are Jesus’ words? Obviously the best candidate would be a Christian prophet, perhaps the Evangelist himself.

From this standpoint, the Evangelist displays similarities with the Seer who wrote the Revelation. While the problem of the connection between the Fourth Gospel and Revelation is still unsolved, there are hints that in at least some aspects they resemble each other. One area in which these two books have points of contact is pneumatology. Recently, Stephen S. Smalley has showed that the Spirit in Revelation performs activities similar to those of the Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel. Specifically, the Spirit in both the Revelation and the Fourth Gospel convicts, teaches, prophesies, and bears witness.

There are clues that visionary experiences played an important role in the Johannine community. For example, in the first chapter of the Gospel John (the Baptist) is described as seeing (θεάομαι) the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus (John 1:32). Undoubtedly, this “seeing” denotes a vision, or spiritual perception into divine mystery. Also, in John 1:51 the Evangelist

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61 For an attempt to solve this riddle see Rudderbos, *John*, 135
62 Ashton, *Understanding*, 182
65 Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 18
states Jesus' promise to Nathanael and believers that they will see (ἀνοίξουσιν—note the use the plural form of the verb) the heaven opened and the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. According to Aune, this saying reflects a situation in the post-resurrection Johannine church, a church that experienced visio Christi in a cultic setting.66 Such visionary experiences resemble the ones depicted by the writer of Revelation, in which the Seer is able to see the heavenly Christ. These parallels show that, like the writer of Revelation, the Evangelist himself may have been a prophet speaking in the Spirit and his Gospel a product of the Spirit's inspiration.67

The simple fact that in the Johannine literature there are no examples of people who were inspired while being in a state of ecstasy cannot be an argument against the existence of prophets in the community.68 In fact, if the example of Caiaphas, who in John 11:51 is portrayed as prophesying, can be taken as an evidence of how John considered a prophecy to be uttered, we may conclude that the act of prophesying was not accompanied by any external manifestation.69 It seems that in the Johannine community prophecy was a common activity and the act of prophesying was not necessarily accompanied by external manifestations or ecstasy.

As we already pointed out, a careful analysis of the passages in which the Evangelist refers to the Spirit would reveal that in John we do not have any differentiation among believers; there are neither οἱ πνευματικοὶ nor οἱ σαρκικοί as in the Pauline epistles. On the contrary, according to John 7:38–39 the gift of the Spirit is available to all who believe. The Paraclete is given to the entire community, he is among and in the believers (John 14:17); there is no distinction among believers.70 All of them

66 See Aune, Cultic Setting, 98–99.
68 Both Josephus and Philo, while accentuating the role of ecstasy in prophecy, acknowledge that ecstasy is not a sine qua non for inspiration. See Philo, De Vita Mosis 2:188–91; and Josephus, Antiquities 10:239. As Levison argues, both Philo and Josephus considered Moses and Daniel respectively as having inspiration even without being in ecstasy. See Levison, The Spirit in First Century Judaism, 168–82.
69 I would like to acknowledge here that there might be a difference between the way John thinks the high priest is uttering his prophecy and the way Christian prophets prophesy. However, I do believe there were more similarities than differences between the ways these were uttered.
70 The passage that relates the commissioning of the disciples (John 20:23) cannot be taken as a proof that only the ten disciples had authority to “forgive and retain” sins. While it is true that the Spirit is given directly to them, one has to acknowledge that, based on
are born of the Spirit (cf. John 3:5–8), and all of them have the same anointing (1 John 2:27). Hence theologically all Johannine believers could have had the same Spirit experience.

While this last affirmation is certainly true with regard to the soteriological work of the Spirit, it is quite difficult, as there is not enough textual support, to say the same with regard to the prophetic work of the Spirit. The Evangelist does leave room for such a possibility, however, because he never mentions (as does Paul) different offices in the church (apostles prophets, evangelists, pastors-teachers; Eph. 4:11). After all, John’s Gospel was written in a period when at least one Jewish writer could say that prophecy was available to “every worthy man.”71 It is therefore more accurate to say that in the Johannine community all believers were regarded as potential prophets.72 From this standpoint the Johannine writings reflect the same understanding found in other early Christian writings. This idea is clearly spelled out in Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians, where he encourages believers to seek the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1). Similarly, David Hill in a study of prophecy in the book of Revelation concludes “that all members of the churches are, in principle or potentially prophets.”73 Given the possible points of contact between this book and the Johannine writings, Hill’s conclusion is all the more important for our study.

The Johannine community was a community in which the prophetic gift of the Spirit was available to each believer. In John’s view “prophecy is too important to be left to the prophets.”74 In fact, there are proofs that this view continued in the Christian communities through the second century A.D. The eleventh Mandate of the Shepherd of Hermas reveals that in the congregation all believers were potentially prophets. The ninth paragraph reads as follows:

Whenever the man who has the divine Spirit comes into an assembly of righteous men who have faith in the divine Spirit, and a prayer is made to God by the assembly of those men, then the angel of the prophetic Spirit...
which is assigned to him, fills the man, and that man, having been filled by the Holy Spirit, speaks to the group as the Lord wills.\textsuperscript{75}

Jannes Reiling, in his study on this paragraph, argues that the person filled with the Spirit does not belong to a certain group of prophets, but represents any member of the assembly.\textsuperscript{76} Hence one should not be surprised that in a first-century Christian community such as John’s, every Christian could have been expected to prophesy.

Having analyzed the relationship between the Paraclete, prophecy, and prophets, we may return to the saying in John 16:12–15 and attempt to draw a conclusion. Because of the disciples’ limited understanding, Jesus, during his earthly ministry, did not tell them all they needed to know for the period after his departure. Therefore Jesus continued to communicate with the disciples and with the coming generations of believers. This communication is mediated by the Spirit-Paraclete, who will reveal new things to the community. As Painter puts it, in the fifth Paraclete saying,

\textit{the role of the Spirit is set out in terms of the significance of Jesus for future generations. His task is to glorify Jesus. That does not change. But the teaching does, as it is made relevant to the ever-changing situations. In the new and bewildering situations the Spirit would guide the way, \textit{bound to Jesus but not bound to the past}. Thus the truth of eternity is to be unveiled as the situations arise for which it is relevant. The new is bound to Jesus because, he asserts, “All that the Father has is mine.” In this, however, there is no harking back to a fossilized tradition, rather there is the ministry of a living voice which speaks anew to each generation and situation.\textsuperscript{77}}

Although Jesus will go to the Father, his voice will remain audible through the Paraclete and through the prophets. Thus he will continue to teach each subsequent generation of believers. Also, as Jesus prophesied during his earthly ministry, he will continue to do so through the Paraclete. The Paraclete may reveal the future prophetically, but the prophecy itself comes from the exalted Christ. However, since the Paraclete is the Spirit from Christ (\textit{Christus praesens}), no matter what he announces, he must

\textsuperscript{75} Graydon F. Snyder, \textit{The Shepherd of Hermas, The Apostolic Fathers; A New Translation and Commentary}, vol. 6 (London, 1968), 87.

\textsuperscript{76} For a very good discussion of this text see Jannes Reiling, “Prophecy, the Spirit and the Church,” in \textit{Prophetic Vocation in the New Testament and Today}, ed. J. Panagopoulos (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 66–76. See also Carolyn Osiek, \textit{Shepherd of Hermas} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 144–45. Although she asserts that only some people in the congregation have the gift of prophecy, she acknowledges that it may not be limited to such persons.

\textsuperscript{77} John Painter, \textit{The Quest for the Messiah} (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 432 [italics mine].
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exhibit fidelity to the historical Jesus. The exalted Christ would not say anything that would contradict the earthly Christ. The Paraclete cannot say something that is not from the exalted Christ, for by doing so, he will fail to glorify Christ. As a result, the prophets who claim to be inspired by the Paraclete will never prophesy anything that would contradict the revelation given by the earthly Jesus.

Along with the fact that John depicts the Spirit as enabling the Christians to prophesy, he points out that the same Spirit is guiding them to detect those who are false prophets. The same Spirit that facilitated the prophetic activity is the one that exposes the abuse of this activity. The same Spirit that teaches the truth applying it to new situations is the one who exposes false doctrine. As a result, John is not afraid that the new revelation brought by the Paraclete will lead the community astray. Rather, this new revelation will lead it ahead in the future, and at the same time will point to those who, though in the community, were never part of it (1 John 2:19).

The “leading into all the truth” does not refer exclusively to the doctrinal aspect. As Schnackenburg rightly notes, the “truth” here contains a reference to action as well (as reflected in John 3:21, and 1 John 1:6, where the verb περιπατέω is used in connection with ἀληθείας; the community is reminded of its moral behavior). Thus, the Spirit of Truth reveals to the community what is coming, so that its members will act accordingly. In other words, the Spirit of Truth is the one who helps the believers not only to understand and apply the teachings of the earthly Christ, but also to hear and apply the new teachings given by the heavenly Christ.

This last Paraclete saying completes and clarifies all that has been said in the previous sayings. The Paraclete, which is the Spirit of Truth, is not given only to replace and represent Jesus in the community, but also to mediate his presence, making his words comprehensible to those who are born from above. These words are meant to instruct the believers in every aspect of their lives. The Paraclete will not only enable believers to witness about Jesus to the world through preaching but will also bestow the gift of prophecy on them. As far as John is concerned, every believer is a potential prophet through whom the Spirit-Paraclete may prophesy, teach, and preach. Yet, the presence of the Spirit-Paraclete does not mean that the Johannine believers do not live in the present reality. The “born from above” believers live on earth, where by the help of the Paraclete they preach (witness), teach, prophesy, walk in the truth, obey Jesus’

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79 Schnackenburg, John, 3:136.
commandments, and love one another. For them the Spirit-Paraclete has become the key to understanding both the earthly Jesus and the exalted Christ. The Spirit was their assurance that the Incarnate Logos who once spoke on earth did not cease to speak. In his exalted state the One whose words are Spirit and life continues to speak through the Spirit-Paraclete, imparting eternal life to those who receive his words.