



## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCIPLESHIP MOTIF

### JOHANNINE DISCIPLESHIP IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

Biblical scholars have devoted little attention to the study of the discipleship motif throughout the whole of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> The stark portrayal of the disciples' failure in the Gospel of Mark, however, captured the attention of Markan scholars in the 1970s and 1980s, and since then the role and the function of the disciples in the Markan narrative have become a subject of lively debate.<sup>2</sup> R. Alan Culpepper aptly observed in 1983 that

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<sup>1</sup>In the last century, the important studies on discipleship in general include J. Wach, *Meister und Jünger* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1924); E. Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec Allenson, 1960); A. Schulz, *Nachfolgen und Nachahmen: Studien über das Verhältnis der neutestamentlichen Jüngerschaft zur urchristlichen Vorbildethik* (München: Kösel, 1962); H. D. Betz, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1967); K. H. Rengstorf, "μαθητής," *TDNT* 4.415–61; M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (trans. J. Grieg; New York: Crossroad, 1981); F. F. Segovia, ed., *Discipleship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); R. N. Longenecker, ed., *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich./Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>Significant treatments are those of T. J. Weeden Jr., *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); J. Donaldson, "'Called to Follow,' A Twofold Experience of Discipleship in Mark," *BTB* 5 (1975): 67–77; W. Kelber, "The Hour of the Son of Man and the Temptation of the Disciples (Mark 14:32–42)," in *The Passion in Mark* (ed. W. Kelber; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 41–60; E. Best, "Discipleship in Mark: Mark 8.22–10.52," *SJT* 23 (1970): 323–37; Best, "The Role of the Disciples in Mark," *NTS* 23 (1976–1977): 377–401; Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNTSup 4; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1981); R. C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," in *The Interpretation of Mark* (ed. W. Telford; IRT 7; Philadelphia:

“the role of the disciples in John has escaped the intense interest that has recently been turned on their role in Mark.”<sup>3</sup> Two years later, Fernando Segovia also commented that in Johannine scholarship “the question of discipleship per se has been largely by-passed.”<sup>4</sup> This oversight or inattention is more intriguing when one realizes that the term *μαθητής* occurs more often (seventy-eight times) in John than in any synoptic Gospel.<sup>5</sup> Even though Raymond E. Brown acknowledged that “discipleship is the primary category in John,” he did not investigate the theme further in his commentary and other writings on John.<sup>6</sup> This is not to ignore the fact that there have been a significant number of studies on the Johannine community and the Beloved Disciple,<sup>7</sup> Johannine ecclesiology,<sup>8</sup> and Johannine mission<sup>9</sup> that deal with the discipleship theme occasionally and indirectly.

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Fortress/London: SPCK, 1985), 134–57; D. M. Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Mark* (GNS 22; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987); E. S. Malbon, “Texts and Contexts: Interpreting the Disciples in Mark,” in *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 100–130.

<sup>3</sup>R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 115.

<sup>4</sup>F. F. Segovia, “‘Peace I Leave with You; My Peace I Give to You’: Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. F. F. Segovia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 77.

<sup>5</sup>The term *μαθητής* appears seventy-three times in Matthew, forty-six times in Mark, and thirty-seven times in Luke.

<sup>6</sup>Among these writings, see the most important work on the Johannine community, R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist, 1979). The above quotation is from p. 84. Brown, however, demonstrates how the Beloved Disciple functions in the formation of the Johannine community (ibid., 31).

<sup>7</sup>See, for example, P. de Arenillas, “El discípulo amado, modelo perfecto del discípulo de Jesús según el IV Evangelio,” *CienT* 83 (1962): 3–68, cited by R. Moreno, “El discípulo de Jesucristo, según el evangelio de S. Juan,” *EstBib* 30 (1971): 269; Brown, *Community*; K. Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis* (JSNTSup 32; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989); J. H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1995); R. A. Culpepper, *John, Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup>For studies on Johannine ecclesiology, see E. Schweizer, “Der Kirchenbegriff im Evangelium und den Briefen des Johannes,” *SE* 1 (ed. K. Aland et al.; TU 73; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1959), 363–81; R. Schnackenburg, *The Church in the New Testament* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), 103–17; K. Grayston, “Jesus and the Church in St. John’s Gospel,” *LQHR* 36 (1967): 106–15; H. van den Bussche, “L’Église dans le quatrième Évangile,” in *Aux Origines de l’Église* (ed. Jean

As the survey below will show, an interest in the discipleship motif of the Fourth Gospel began among scholars in the 1970s. Therefore, to start there for a survey of the state of research on Johannine discipleship seems appropriate. The following survey presents chronologically the major contributions to the Johannine discipleship motif over the past three decades. Each presentation is followed by a brief critique.

### THE PERIOD FROM 1970 TO 1979

The most significant studies during this period are those of Ramón Moreno (1971), Rudolf Schnackenburg (1975), and Marinus de Jonge (1977).

#### *Ramón Moreno*<sup>10</sup>

Ramón Moreno focuses on the meaning of the term μαθητής and “the theological-trinitarian presentation of the concept of disciple” in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>11</sup> In the first part of his study, Moreno, examining the occurrences of the term μαθητής, affirms that a universal meaning that transcends the

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Giblet, Paulus Andriessen, et al.; RechBib 7; Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1964), 65–85, or the English translation, *The Birth of the Church* (trans. Charles Underhill Quinn; New York: Alba House, 1968), 83–109; S. Pancaro, “‘People of God’ in St. John’s Gospel,” *NTS* 16 (1969–1970): 114–29; K. Haacker, “Jesus und die Kirche nach Johannes,” *TZ* 29 (1973): 179–201; J. F. O’Grady, “Individualism and Johannine Ecclesiology,” *BTB* 5 (1975): 227–61; and J. P. Miranda, *Der Vater der mich gesandt hat. Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den johanneischen Sendungsformeln: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur johanneischen Christologie und Ekklesiologie* (2d rev. ed.; EHS 23/7; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1976).

<sup>9</sup>Among the more significant monographs on mission in general or the mission of the disciples in the Fourth Gospel in the past decades are J. P. Miranda, *Die Sendung Jesu im vierten Evangelium: Religions- und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Sendungsformeln* (SBS 87; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977); A. C. Winn, *A Sense of Mission: Guidance from the Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981); R. Prescott-Ezickson, *The Sending Motif in the Gospel of John: Implications for Theology of Mission* (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986); T. Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1–42* (WUNT 2/31; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988); and a recent treatment of this theme, A. J. Köstenberger, *The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel’s Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich./Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>10</sup>Moreno, “El discípulo de Jesucristo,” 269–311.

<sup>11</sup>“Proyección teológico-trinitaria del concepto de discípulo” (ibid., 270).

characters of the story is implied when the Johannine Jesus speaks about disciples.<sup>12</sup> The author then proceeds with an investigation of 8:31, 13:35, and 15:1–12 as the key texts for the evangelist’s understanding of discipleship. The essential characteristics of discipleship are faith and love: belief in the divinity of Jesus and his words and reciprocal love for one another. In his conclusion, Moreno underscores the claims of A. Schulz that the Johannine discipleship has a salvific orientation characterized by the communion of life founded on faith in the messiahship and the divine sonship of Jesus.<sup>13</sup> One receives this call to discipleship as “a saving grace” which consists in a life of faith expressed in mutual love.<sup>14</sup>

In the second part of his essay, Moreno investigates, on a more theological level, the relationship between the disciples of Jesus and the three Persons of the Trinity. The Father is both the fountain and the origin of the revelation of Jesus as well as the cause and origin of the faith of the disciples. He is also the ultimate end of the disciples’ relationship with Jesus.<sup>15</sup> The relationship between the Son and the disciples is stressed in the metaphor of the Good Shepherd and sheep, and other titles (e.g., ἴδιοι [13:1], τεκνία [13:33], φίλοι [15:15], ἀδελφοί [20:17], etc.) used by the Johannine Jesus to address his disciples.<sup>16</sup> The Spirit is both the defending advocate and counselor of the disciples, who teaches them the meaning of the words and works of Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Moreno concludes his study by contending that the very act of the revelation of Jesus “proceeds from the Father, realizes itself in the Son, and completes itself in the Spirit forming the disciples for the glory of the Son and the Father.”<sup>18</sup>

Moreno’s overriding concern for bringing out the theological meaning of the term μαθητής forces him to present an ideal view of the disciples. The second part of his essay is conditioned by his Trinitarian spirituality

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<sup>12</sup>“Cuando Jesús pronuncia en sus palabra ‘discípulo’ lo hace en el Evangelio de Juan con un sentido universal, que parece trascender a los presentes” (ibid., 276).

<sup>13</sup>“Der ‘Schüler’ des geschichtlichen Jesus für den Autor des vierten Evangeliums nicht mehr eine Berufsvorstellung, sondern bereits eine Heilsbestimmung ist. Sein wesentliches Merkmal ist die im Glauben an Jesu Messianität und Gottessohnschaft begründete Lebensgemeinschaft” (A. Schulz, *Nachfolgen und Nachahmen*, 143). See also Moreno, “El discípulo de Jesucristo,” 279.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 279, 288.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 289–93.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 293–304.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 305–10.

<sup>18</sup>“En el mismo acto de la revelación, la actuación conjunta de las tres Personas de la Trinidad: procede del Padre, se realiza por el Hijo, se completa en el Espíritu, formando los discípulos para gloria del Hijo y del Padre” (ibid., 311).

since he seems preoccupied with a concern to show how Johannine discipleship echoes and reveals the activity of the Trinity.<sup>19</sup> This is unsatisfactory in a strictly “biblical” study of Johannine discipleship. He seems to have applied a later Trinitarian dogma of the church into an interpretation of the Johannine texts.

*Rudolf Schnackenburg*<sup>20</sup>

In his commentary on John’s Gospel, Rudolf Schnackenburg includes an excursus entitled “Disciples, Community and Church in the Gospel of John.”<sup>21</sup> In his attempt to examine the evangelist’s understanding of the church, Schnackenburg investigates “the circle of the disciples and the concept of discipleship in the Gospel of John.”<sup>22</sup> After a brief survey of the presence of the disciples in the Johannine story, he claims that the Johannine portrayal of the disciples evinces its theological significance in Jesus’ work and activities in the world. In the Gospel of John, the disciples represent (a) “those who are made believers by Jesus through his word and signs,” (b) “the later community in contrast to the unbelieving Jews,” and (c) “the later believers.”<sup>23</sup> Schnackenburg stresses the “ecclesial significance” given to the disciples in the Johannine narrative. His brief study, while focusing largely on the disciples and whom they represent, fails to deal extensively with the discipleship theme throughout the gospel.

*Marinus de Jonge*<sup>24</sup>

In his valuable study of John’s Gospel, Marinus de Jonge describes the gospel as “the Book of the Disciples.”<sup>25</sup> He claims that “the Fourth Gospel is primarily if not exclusively a book of the (Johannine) church” based on

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<sup>19</sup>See also the comments in J. S. Siker-Gieseler, “Disciples and Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel: A Canonical Approach,” *StudBibT* 10 (1980): 206.

<sup>20</sup>R. Schnackenburg, “Exkurs 17: Jünger, Gemeinde, Kirche im Johannes-evangelium,” in *Das Johannesevangelium* (3 vols.; HTKNT 4; Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1967–1975), 3.231–45. I will be referring to the translation in *The Gospel According to St. John* (trans. C. Hastings; 3 vols.; London: Burns & Oates/New York: Herder & Herder, 1968–1982), 3.203–17.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 203–17.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 205–9.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 206–7.

<sup>24</sup>M. de Jonge, *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God: Jesus Christ and the Christians in Johannine Perspective* (ed. and trans. J. E. Steely; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 1–27.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

the comment of the narrator in 20:30–31.<sup>26</sup> He then examines the role of the disciples in the narratives of chapter 20 followed by an investigation of the discipleship materials in the gospel. He focuses on the narrator's interpretative comments on the disciples' understanding of the words and deeds of Jesus in 2:22, 12:16, 13:26, and 20:9. These texts suggest that the disciples had differing understandings of the events before and after Jesus' departure to the Father.<sup>27</sup> This hermeneutical perspective of the evangelist leads de Jonge to explore the role of the Spirit in the mission of the disciples as narrated in chapters 13–17 and other related passages. He concludes that "the Fourth Gospel presents itself as the result of the teaching and the recalling activity of the Spirit within the community of disciples leading to a deeper and fuller insight into all that Jesus as the Son revealed during his stay on earth."<sup>28</sup> The discussion is then followed by two further issues: the true nature of discipleship and the divine initiative in the process of the discipleship journey.<sup>29</sup> True disciples of Jesus, asserts de Jonge, are those who "listen, see, believe, overcome offense, remain with Jesus and follow him."<sup>30</sup> This positive response of the disciples is an aftermath of the divine initiative.

De Jonge's study focuses primarily on how the disciples in the story function as models for the Johannine community and for the future disciples of Jesus.<sup>31</sup> His presentation does not explore the teaching of Jesus on discipleship in chapters 13–17 and the possible OT background for the Johannine presentation of discipleship.

## THE PERIOD FROM 1980 TO 1989

The important studies during this period are those of Matthew Vellanickal (1980), Jeffrey S. Siker-Gieseler (1980), R. Alan Culpepper (1983), and Fernando F. Segovia (1985).

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 3–7. C. H. Talbert also divides the discipleship theme in the Fourth Gospel into two: discipleship before Easter (John 1:19–2:11) and discipleship after Easter (John 12; 13–17; 20–21). See his commentary, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1992), 86–87.

<sup>28</sup>De Jonge, *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven*, 12.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 13–20.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>31</sup>See also the comments in Siker-Gieseler, "Disciples and Discipleship," 206.

*Matthew Vellanickal*<sup>32</sup>

Through an analysis of 1:35–42, Matthew Vellanickal investigates the “essential notes of the call to discipleship” and brings to light important aspects in the process of becoming disciples: election and call, human testimony, hearing, following, seeking, finding, coming and seeing, remaining with Jesus, and missionary sharing.<sup>33</sup> The Fourth Evangelist uses the call narrative “to summarize discipleship in its process of development.”<sup>34</sup> The conditions of discipleship are the following: “remaining in the word” (8:31–32), “hating one’s life” (12:25), and “serving Jesus” (12:26).<sup>35</sup> He also observes that the mutual love shared among the disciples in the community is “the keynote of discipleship.”<sup>36</sup> The disciples of Jesus thus form a new world within the world, whose mission is “no longer a ‘fishing of men,’ but a testimony to the unique experience of Jesus.”<sup>37</sup>

Vellanickal limits his study, while taking into consideration some sporadic statements about discipleship throughout the gospel, to the call story in 1:35–42. His claim that the vocation stories in John 1 summarize the whole process of discipleship can hardly be sustained. I will suggest below that the call stories uncover only the initial stage of the discipleship journey of the first disciples.<sup>38</sup>

*Jeffrey S. Siker-Gieseler*<sup>39</sup>

Jeffrey S. Siker-Gieseler takes a canonical approach in his analysis and proposes that the discipleship motif “has received a twofold nuance in the final form of the Gospel.” He makes the distinction between disciples and discipleship. The term “disciples” refers to the “familiar disciples” such as the Twelve (6:70) “who historically accompanied Jesus.” The evangelist develops the discipleship theme by individual characters like the Samaritan Woman (4:1–42), the Capernaum official (4:43–54), etc., who are created

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<sup>32</sup>M. Vellanickal, “Discipleship According to the Gospel of John,” *Jeev* 10 (1980): 131–47.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 134–40.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 141. R. E. Brown is also of the same opinion when he asserts that “John has used the occasion of the call of the disciples to summarize discipleship in its whole development” (*The Gospel According to John* [2 vols.; AB 29, 29A; New York: Doubleday, 1966–1970], 1.78).

<sup>35</sup>Vellanickal, “Discipleship,” 141–45.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 145–46.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>38</sup>See also R. Chennattu, “On Becoming Disciples (John 1:35–51): Insights from the Fourth Gospel,” *Sal* 63 (2001): 467–98.

<sup>39</sup>Siker-Gieseler, “Disciples and Discipleship,” 199–227.

by the evangelist as models of discipleship. These two models of discipleship “blend together in the author’s portrayal of the Beloved Disciple.”<sup>40</sup>

The characterization of the disciples is examined on the basis of both “what the disciples say and do” as well as “what is said and done to the disciples.”<sup>41</sup> Siker-Gieseler first focuses on the sayings of the disciples articulated in their requests for information (e.g., 1:38; 13:25) or clarification (e.g., 13:6; 16:17), their misunderstandings (e.g., 4:33; 6:7–9), and objections (e.g., 13:14; 20:25). Among the deeds of the disciples discussed are the following (1:37), seeing (1:39), believing (2:11), knowing (10:4), remembering (2:17), hearing (1:37), and keeping (17:6).<sup>42</sup> The author then proceeds with “what is said and done to the disciples.” He concentrates on the way Jesus addresses the disciples (e.g., the Twelve [6:67, 70, 71], my brothers [20:17], friends [15:15], little children [13:33], children [21:5]), and the way Jesus teaches the disciples (e.g., exhortations [13:12–17], commands [1:43; 6:10, 12], explanations [9:3], and promises [14:15; 15:26, etc.]).<sup>43</sup> Siker-Gieseler maintains that “the disciples’ relationship to Jesus is similar to Jesus’ relationship to the Father.”<sup>44</sup> The teachings of Jesus addressed to the disciples “are intended to sustain them in their faith and challenge them to a faith which is ever-deepening. Likewise, the disciples are recipients of actions which nurture and support them as they witness to the world that God has sent his Son.”<sup>45</sup>

In the second part of his study, Siker-Gieseler examines individual characters—the Samaritan woman (4:7–30), the Capernaum official (4:46–54), the man born blind (9:1–41), and Martha (11:1–44)—arriving at the conclusion that these individuals, while sharing much in common with the disciples, “portray a more positive model for future generations of believers.”<sup>46</sup> According to Siker-Gieseler, the Beloved Disciple functions in the Johannine narrative “as discipleship among the disciples. He personifies the discipleship seen in chapters 1–12 and manifests it among the disciples in chapters 13–21.”<sup>47</sup>

While Siker-Gieseler’s research contains many significant insights into Johannine discipleship, the distinction and the comparison between the

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 207–15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 208–10.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 210–15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

“disciples,” viz., the pre-resurrection responses given by the named disciples, and “discipleship,” viz., the post-resurrection responses displayed by the unnamed disciples, are more misleading than clarifying.<sup>48</sup> It is important to trace the development of the discipleship theme throughout the gospel narratives as they presently stand.

*R. Alan Culpepper*<sup>49</sup>

In his groundbreaking work that applies the insights of literary criticism to the Gospel of John, R. Alan Culpepper dedicates ten pages to the Johannine characterization of the disciples. The disciples are models or representative figures for the readers, and they are “surrogates for the church” in most of the narrative, especially in the farewell discourse.<sup>50</sup> The individual disciples have different representative roles in the narrative. For example, while the Beloved Disciple is presented as “the paradigm of discipleship” or “the epitome of the ideal disciple,”<sup>51</sup> both Thomas and Mary Magdalene stand in for all those who “embrace the earthly Jesus but have yet to recognize the risen Christ,”<sup>52</sup> and “Judas is the representative defector.”<sup>53</sup> Although disciples in the Fourth Gospel sometimes display a lack of faith, unlike the disciples of Mark’s Gospel, “their lack of understanding

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<sup>48</sup> Among others who make the distinction between the responses of the disciples before and after the resurrection of Jesus, see Talbert, *Reading John*, 86–87; de Jonge, *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven*, 7; Segovia, “‘Peace I Leave with You,’” 82. See also the discussion in Köstenberger, *Mission of Jesus*, 150.

<sup>49</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 115–25.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 121, 123. See also Siker-Gieseler, “Disciples and Discipleship,” 222. R. Bultmann contends that the Beloved Disciple is an ideal representative figure of a Gentile community; see his commentary, *The Gospel of John* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 483–85. In a discussion about the representative roles played by both Peter and the Beloved Disciple, Brown comments that “the Beloved Disciple was no less a real human being than was Simon Peter, but the Fourth Gospel uses each of them in a paradigmatic capacity” (Brown, *Community*, 83). This complex issue is beyond the scope of the present work. For fuller discussions, see above, nn. 7–9.

<sup>52</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 124.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 125. For those who share the same view about the individual characters in the Fourth Gospel as “representative figures,” see R. F. Collins, “Discipleship in John’s Gospel,” *Emm* 91 (1985): 248–55. This article also appeared in his book, *These Things Have Been Written: Studies on the Fourth Gospel* (LTPM 2; Louvain: Peeters, 1990), 1–45. This study will always refer to his book. Parallel studies of Johannine disciples appear in M. F. Whitters, “Discipleship in John: Four Profiles,” *WW* 18 (1998): 422–27; P. Palatty, “Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel: An Acted Out Message of Disciples as Characters,” *BiBh* 25 (1999): 285–306.

does not pose any threat to their discipleship.”<sup>54</sup> The Fourth Evangelist often reminds the readers that the disciples will be able to understand fully the meaning and significance of all that has been revealed to them only after the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. 2:22; 12:16).

Culpepper’s valuable study is very brief and focuses on the characterization of the disciples and its implication for the plot of the gospel narratives. He disregards the historical context and the theological traditions that shaped these characterizations.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, like many other authors surveyed above, Culpepper shows no interest in the OT background to the discipleship motif in John. The present study considers this OT dimension as very significant for an integral and comprehensive understanding of Johannine discipleship.

*Fernando F. Segovia*<sup>56</sup>

In light of the Markan scholarship in the 1970s, Fernando F. Segovia examines the role or characterization of the disciples, the way in which the disciples function in the development of the Johannine narrative according to its “original sequence.”<sup>57</sup> Note that Segovia leaves out some of the chapters in which Jesus is addressing the disciples directly (e.g., 13:1b–3, 12–20, 34–35; 15–17; 21) because he considers these sections later interpolations into the “original sequence” of the gospel.<sup>58</sup> He divides the “original sequence” of the gospel into four sections and shows how the characterization of the disciples takes place progressively in four stages:<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 118.

<sup>55</sup>The focus of his study is “the relationships between author and text and text and reader rather than the origin of the characters or the relationship of historical persons to the author” (ibid., 105).

<sup>56</sup>Segovia, “‘Peace I Leave with You,’” 76–102.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>In his later writings, however, Segovia manifests a fundamental shift in his thinking with regard to the tradition history of the Fourth Gospel. “I set out to define discipleship in John not according to the Gospel as it presently stands but rather, according to my view of an earlier, unrevised version of that Gospel” (“The Tradition History of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* [ed. R. A. Culpepper and C. C. Black; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 188 n. 10). For further indications of Segovia’s change of method, see *The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); “The Journey(s) of the Word: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel” and “The Final Farewell of Jesus: A Reading of John 20:30–21:25,” in *The Fourth Gospel from a Literary Perspective*, ed. R. A. Culpepper and F. F. Segovia, *Semeia* 53 (1991): 23–54 and 167–90, respectively.

<sup>59</sup>Segovia, “‘Peace I Leave with You,’” 79–80.

Stage 1: The gathering of the elect and the initial incomprehension of “the world” (John 1–3)

Stage 2: The elect on “the way” and the growing rejection of “the world” (John 4–12)

Stage 3: The farewell to the elect and the exclusion of “the world” (John 13–14)

Stage 4: The vindication of the elect and the judgment of “the world” (John 18–20)

Segovia begins his analysis with an investigation of the characterization of the disciples as developed in these four stages and then reflects on the possible historical context of the community that necessitated such a portrayal of the disciples. The following three conclusions summarize the outcome of his study: (1) “The narrative presents and develops a thorough and systematic contrast between the disciples as believers and all those who reject Jesus’ claims.”<sup>60</sup> (2) The narrative demonstrates that “belief itself is presented as requiring and undergoing a process of gradual understanding and perception.”<sup>61</sup> This process consists of the disciples’ incomprehension counterbalanced by Jesus’ further teaching or action. The study also underlines the fact that the disciples’ understanding of Jesus remains incomplete until after the death and resurrection of Jesus (2:22; 12:16).<sup>62</sup> (3) The disciples’ characterization in the narrative underscores the commonly accepted *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine community, viz., a Christian community “engaged in a process of self-definition and self-assertion over against a much larger Jewish ‘world.’”<sup>63</sup>

Segovia’s study is exemplary in its balanced handling of both the “world in the text” as well as the “world behind the text.”<sup>64</sup> It appears unduly reductionistic, however, to limit the Johannine discipleship to a few selected chapters that he considers part of the “original sequence” of the gospel and to exclude very important chapters like 15–17 from the analysis.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 92; see also Vellanickal, “Discipleship,” 132.

<sup>62</sup> Segovia, “‘Peace I Leave with You,’” 82. For this view, see also Vellanickal, “Discipleship,” 140; de Jonge, *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven*, 7; Köstenberger, *Mission of Jesus*, 150.

<sup>63</sup> Segovia, “‘Peace I Leave with You,’” 91.

<sup>64</sup> For a detailed study of these three worlds, see S. M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (2d ed.; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 97–179.

## THE PERIOD FROM 1990 TO 2000

Since 1990, six studies deserving special attention are those of Raymond F. Collins (1990), J. A. du Rand (1991), W. Hulitt Gloer (1993), Dirk G. van der Merve (1997), David R. Beck (1997), and Andreas J. Köstenberger (1998).

### *Raymond F. Collins*<sup>65</sup>

In his study of “Discipleship in John’s Gospel,” Raymond F. Collins considers the first call story, the encounter between Jesus and the first two disciples in 1:35–39, the key text to the evangelist’s perspective on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Collins, having looked at the story on two levels, both as a narrative tale and as a symbolic tale, investigates briefly the symbolic significance of the verbs—follow, see, seek, and stay—in the light of their occurrences elsewhere in the gospel. He maintains that the “disciple is one to whom testimony about Jesus has been made, and so he enters into dialogue with Jesus. He addresses Jesus (Rabbi) with a faith that is as yet superficial but which will grow to greater fullness by interacting with Jesus. He finally appreciates where Jesus abides and comes to abide with him.”<sup>66</sup> This way of perceiving discipleship, claims Collins, is the evangelist’s understanding of the nature of discipleship. Collins limits his investigation to just five verses (1:35–39) in the gospel. One needs to investigate further other important discipleship texts to have a comprehensive understanding of the discipleship motif in John.

### *J. A. du Rand*<sup>67</sup>

Du Rand explores μαθητής and related terms in the gospel such as ἀδελφός (20:17), υἱός (12:36), and φίλος (15:13) and concludes that friendship is the distinctive mark of Johannine discipleship. Du Rand underscores that the farewell discourses (chs. 13–17) are “narrative commentary on discipleship against the background of Jesus’ death and resurrection, with an emphasis on the unity motif.”<sup>68</sup> He then investigates the first farewell discourse of Jesus in 13:31–14:31 and identifies believing, knowing, and loving as the distinctive characteristics of Johannine

<sup>65</sup> Collins, *These Things Have Been Written*, 46–55.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>67</sup> J. A. du Rand, “Perspectives on Johannine Discipleship According to the Farewell Discourse,” *Neot* 25 (1991): 311–25.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

discipleship. Du Rand asserts that the evangelist presents Jesus as the model for discipleship.<sup>69</sup> He finally highlights the eschatological dimension of discipleship since the disciples' witness of fraternal love makes present the eschatological salvation. In sum, discipleship is understood as the appropriation of realized eschatological salvation. While his conclusions are valuable, du Rand has not done a detailed analysis of the first farewell discourse; rather, he focuses on just three verbs: believing, knowing, and loving. Moreover, the study is limited to the first discourse. Therefore, an investigation of the discipleship motif in all the discourses in chapters 13–17 needs to be further explored.

*W. Hulitt Gloer*<sup>70</sup>

In his article, W. Hulitt Gloer examines “the principal episodes in which the disciples appear in an effort to understand how the evangelist challenges them to come to a deeper understanding of discipleship.”<sup>71</sup> In exploring the characterization of the disciples as a group, Gloer focuses on the call narratives (1:35–51) and the account of the first sign at Cana (2:1–11). This is followed by an investigation of all the references to the disciples in the gospel (e.g., 2:23; 4:27; 4:31–38; 6:22–24).<sup>72</sup> He then looks at the individual disciples of Jesus identified with names like Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, Thomas, Peter, and the Beloved Disciple. This analysis is followed by other characters who provide models for authentic discipleship like John the Baptist, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the official (βασιλικός), the man born blind, Martha, and Mary of Magdala.<sup>73</sup> According to Gloer, genuine disciples are those who hear and receive the word of Jesus, obey the commands of Jesus, make progress in their understanding of Jesus, and bear witness to Jesus.<sup>74</sup>

Gloer's essay is an excellent survey of the relevant literature with a few added reflections rather than an in-depth study of the discipleship motif that contributes new insights, either thematically or methodologically, to the ongoing discussion of the subject.

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>70</sup> W. Hulitt Gloer, “‘Come and See’: Disciples and Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Perspectives on John: Methods and Interpretation in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. R. B. Sloan and M. C. Parsons; NABPRSSS 11; Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 269–301.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 276–90.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 291–301.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

*Dirk G. van der Merve*<sup>75</sup>

Van der Merve describes Johannine discipleship in terms of a personal relationship between Jesus and his disciples. On the basis of 17:18 and 20:21, he argues that Johannine discipleship is parallel to the Father–Son relationship, and is thus closely associated with the continuation and extension of the mission of Jesus. The mission of Jesus, therefore, constitutes the theological setting and framework for the understanding of Johannine discipleship.<sup>76</sup> The author begins his study with an investigation of the mission of Jesus in the gospel from the perspective of “the *descent-ascent* schema and the *agency* motif.”<sup>77</sup> The descent–ascent schema represents Jesus’ journey between the “world above” and the “world below.” Van der Merve contends that the descent–ascent schema underscores Jesus’ permanent relationship with God. He connects this schema with discipleship by stating that “the divine mission of Jesus started with the descent of the Son, while Jesus’ ascent puts his disciples in a position to continue with this divine mission.”<sup>78</sup> Jesus, the agent of God, appoints his disciples as his agents (17:18). Van der Merve claims that “with the appointment of the disciples as his agents, the pattern of the relationship between Jesus and the Father has been duplicated in/transferred to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples.”<sup>79</sup> Van der Merve makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of Johannine discipleship by defining it in terms of a relationship with Jesus. He does not explore, however, what this relationship between Jesus and his disciples consists of, nor does he investigate its possible background or its implications for understanding the identity of the Johannine community.

*David R. Beck*<sup>80</sup>

David R. Beck contends that anonymity enhances the readers’ potential for identifying with and participating in the discipleship paradigm portrayed by the anonymous characters in a narrative. This is possible be-

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<sup>75</sup>D. G. van der Merve, “Towards a Theological Understanding of Johannine Discipleship,” *Neot* 31 (1997): 339–59.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 340–56.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 355. For the understanding that the Johannine discipleship is an abiding relationship between Jesus and the disciples, see also C. L. Winbery, “Abiding in Christ: The Concept of Discipleship in John,” *TTE* 38 (1988): 104–20.

<sup>80</sup>D. R. Beck, *The Discipleship Paradigm: Readers and Anonymous Characters in the Fourth Gospel* (BibIntS 27; Leiden/New York: Brill, 1997).

cause in the use of an anonymous character, there exists no “nomination barrier that distinguishes the character from other characters and from the reader.”<sup>81</sup> He focuses on the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple who is the paradigm for true discipleship in John’s Gospel, and examines how his anonymity invites readers to identify with and participate in that discipleship paradigm. He claims that “the Fourth Gospel uses anonymous characters to involve readers in its narrative world and to shape their responses.”<sup>82</sup> According to Beck, even though John the Baptist is portrayed positively in the narrative, he is not presented as a model for readers. This claim is substantiated by the negative self-identification of John the Baptist in 1:19–28 and “his failure to recognize Jesus without special revelation” (cf. 1:33–34).<sup>83</sup>

After a detailed narrative reading focused on the characterization of both named and anonymous characters in the gospel, Beck arrives at the conclusion that the positive portrayal of Jesus’ mother (ch. 2), the Samaritan woman (ch. 4), the official (ch. 4), the lame man (ch. 5), the man born blind (ch. 9), and the woman caught in adultery (7:53–8:11), combined with their anonymity and indeterminacies, facilitates the readers’ identification with them.<sup>84</sup> He asserts that “the significant anonymous characters are offered as models because their faith response is appropriate and repeatable. Their positive portrayal encourages empathy and invites reader identification with them.”<sup>85</sup> The discipleship paradigm attains its climax in the characterization of the Beloved Disciple. The identity of the Beloved Disciple has greater indeterminacy since nothing of his familial or social relationships, place of origin, occupation, etc., are revealed in the Johannine story. This greater anonymity enhances “readers’ ability to fill the identity gaps in his characterization with their own identity, entering and accepting the paradigm of discipleship presented by him.”<sup>86</sup>

Beck’s study is not an investigation of the discipleship theme per se, even though the title of the book is *The Discipleship Paradigm*. The study is an investigation of the anonymous characters in the Fourth Gospel and

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 1. See also his article, “The Narrative Function of Anonymity in Fourth Gospel Characterization,” *Semeia* 63 (1993): 143–58.

<sup>82</sup>Beck, *Discipleship Paradigm*, 12.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 40–43. For John the Baptist as a true model for discipleship or as an example of authentic belief like the mother of Jesus, see the discussion in F. J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1–4* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 121–29.

<sup>84</sup>Beck, *Discipleship Paradigm*, 51–107.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 134.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 136.

how their anonymity entices readers to participate in, and facilitates their identifying with, the discipleship paradigm portrayed by these anonymous characters. The important contribution of his work is the effect on readers of names and namelessness of the characters in a narrative. But the overriding interest in the anonymity and its effects on readers persuades Beck, on the one hand, to belittle the significant role played by some of the named characters like John the Baptist or Mary of Magdala as discipleship models for readers, and on the other hand, to overemphasize the anonymous character like the woman in a textually doubtful story (7:53–8:11) as a paradigm for discipleship.<sup>87</sup>

*Andreas J. Köstenberger*<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps the most extensive study so far, although it is not explicitly and entirely on discipleship, is that of Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*.<sup>89</sup> The primary concern of Köstenberger is to investigate the mission of Jesus and then infer the mission of the disciples from that. The disciples are called only for “extending the mission of Jesus” in terms of “harvesting,” “fruit-bearing,” and “witnessing.”<sup>90</sup>

Köstenberger argues that John’s Gospel is a theological interpretation of the life and mission of Jesus, and the evangelist tries to keep the balance between history and theology. He examines the evangelist’s characterization of the disciples, the Twelve, Peter and the Beloved Disciple, and the corporate images like “sheep/flock” (chs. 10 and 21) and “branches” (ch. 15), and arrives at the conclusion that the evangelist is concerned “with both the disciples’ historical role and their representative function for later believers.”<sup>91</sup> The gap between the “original followers” and the later believers is bridged by the work of the Spirit. He agrees with the suggestion of W. John Pryor that “the fourth evangelist conceived of the disciples as the representatives of the messianic community in relation to the Old Testament Israel.”<sup>92</sup> One realizes, however, it is not the disciples but

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<sup>87</sup> On John 7:53–8:11, see C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 589–92.

<sup>88</sup> Köstenberger, *Mission of Jesus*, 141–98.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 141–98.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 168. See also the whole section in pp. 142–69.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 168. See J. W. Pryor, *John, Evangelist of the Covenant People: The Narrative and Themes of the Fourth Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

Jesus who acts as a substitute for the people of Israel (cf. 15:1). According to Johannine eschatology, the disciples are called to participate in and be part of the messianic community inaugurated by Jesus (cf. 4:38). Köstenberger thus considers that “the priority of salvation history over literary strategy” portrayed in the evangelist’s characterization of the disciples is the most significant result of his analysis.<sup>93</sup>

The next issue addressed is “the task of the disciples.” Köstenberger focuses mainly on the motifs of “signs” and “works.”<sup>94</sup> It is followed by a systematic investigation of “the charge of the disciples” in which he explores the “modes of movement in the disciples’ mission” like “coming,” “following,” and “being sent.”<sup>95</sup> He contends that coming to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel may or may not lead the character to believe in and follow Jesus.<sup>96</sup> After exploring all the occurrences of the term “follow” in the gospel, Köstenberger affirms that “not only is there a movement from literal to figurative following from 1:37–43 to 8:12, there is also a widening of the term from Jesus’ historical disciples to the following of every believer.”<sup>97</sup> Following Jesus entails “‘death’ to one’s self-interest” (12:26; cf. also 21:15–23) and “following him [Jesus] in his death, i.e., *after* Jesus’ glorification.”<sup>98</sup> Discipleship implies “a lifestyle of self-sacrifice, albeit not of atoning value, and service (cf. 13:1–15; 15:13).”<sup>99</sup> Köstenberger emphasizes that “Jesus is both the *perfect* revelation and the *ultimate* sacrifice—the disciples are to witness to Jesus’ person and work through their words, works, and lives (cf. 14:12; 15:26–27; 16:8–11; 17:18).”<sup>100</sup> Lastly, Köstenberger elaborates on the “being sent” aspect of the disciples’ mission. The disciples are sent to “harvest” (4:38), and they are commissioned “to go and bear fruit” (15:16). They are sent into the world as Jesus was sent into the world (17:18).

Köstenberger’s study is primarily interested in the mission of Jesus and, derivatively, that of the disciples. His overemphasis on “salvation history over against the literary strategy” in the gospel leads him to take an approach that is more theological (i.e., soteriological and eschatological) than exegetical.

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<sup>93</sup>Köstenberger, *Mission of Jesus*, 168.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 169–76. For a detailed study of the view that the mission of Jesus as the “agent” of the Father is to do the “works” of God, and the disciples are appointed by Jesus as his “agents,” see van der Merve, “Johannine Discipleship,” 339–59.

<sup>95</sup>Köstenberger, *Mission of Jesus*, 176–97.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 178–79.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 196.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

These contributions furnish us with a wealth of insights. They have asked the following important questions: (1) What is the true nature of, or what are the essential characteristics of, Johannine discipleship? (Moreno, de Jonge, Vellanickal, Collins, du Rand, Gloer, van der Merve, Köstenberger); (2) How are the disciples presented? (Siker-Gieseler, Culpepper, Segovia, Beck); (3) Whom do they represent? (Schnackenburg, Siker-Gieseler, Culpepper, Collins, Beck); (4) What is their function in the Johannine narrative? (de Jonge, Culpepper, Segovia, Köstenberger).

These studies underscore a number of essential aspects of Johannine discipleship such as the central role of faith in Jesus, reciprocal love, and the evolving or dynamic character of the process of becoming disciples. There is also a consensus among them with regard to the different roles or functions, both as historic persons and as representative figures, ascribed to the disciples in the Johannine narrative. The Johannine disciples, in general, represent the disciples of the historical Jesus, the believing Johannine community, and later believers including contemporary readers. The Johannine characterization of the disciples is intended to sustain and promote the faith of all believers (cf. 20:30–31). Many theological motifs permeate the narratives on discipleship. Therefore, the disciples in the Johannine narrative cannot be understood as historical persons whom the reader can recapture from the text.<sup>101</sup> The literary and theological function of the disciples in

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<sup>101</sup>How twenty-first century readers can be in touch with the disciples of the historical Jesus from John's Gospel is a disputed issue. Scholars propose different criteria for reaching a decision about what material comes from the historical context of Jesus. The function of these criteria is to pass from the merely possible to the really probable. J. P. Meier spells out five primary criteria and four secondary criteria. The primary criteria, according to Meier, are those of embarrassment, discontinuity, multiple attestations, coherence, and the criterion of rejection and execution. The secondary criteria are traces of Aramaic influence, Palestinian environment, vividness of narration, and the criterion of the tendencies of the developing synoptic tradition. No single criterion, taken by itself, establishes the historicity of a particular word or event. But the convergence of a number of criteria can suggest whether the story is basically historical or not. See *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. 1: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 167–95. For a recent assessment of the contemporary discussion, see M. A. Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1998). On the historicity of Johannine miracle stories in chapters 5, 9, 21, 2 and 6, see J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. 2: Mentor, Message and Miracles*

the narratives looks back to the Johannine community for whom the gospel was originally written.<sup>102</sup> Johannine Christians, the “intended readers,” preserved and handed down the gospel to the “real readers,” the contemporary believers.<sup>103</sup> Two thousand years of Christian reading of John’s Gospel only unveils its capacity to speak to the faith experience of its contemporary believers.

Most of the works cited above are not extensive studies of the subject. The focus upon discipleship tends to be somewhat piecemeal. Among the limitations of the studies surveyed is the selection of the texts made for the investigation. Most importantly, in their unraveling of the evangelist’s understanding of discipleship, not one of these studies has undertaken a detailed analysis of chapters 13–17 and 20–21, where the Johannine Jesus’ teaching is directed at discipleship and addressed to the disciples. Moreover, although Köstenberger has made some sporadic statements about the disciples and the Johannine community as an eschatological covenant people, a thorough investigation of possible OT motifs behind the Johannine presentation of discipleship is lacking.

As W. D. Davies has aptly observed, the Fourth Evangelist “did not encounter Jesus and his movement with a *tabula rasa* but with a mind enriched by the wealth of the Jewish tradition.”<sup>104</sup> Old Testament traditions seem to be the principal background for Johannine thought, although the Fourth Evangelist uses OT citations less frequently than the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>105</sup> The gospel makes explicit references to Abraham (8:31–59) and allusions

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(ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 680–81, 694–98, 896–904, 934–50, and 950–56, respectively. On Jesus in relation to his disciples, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. 3: Companions and Competitors* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 40–124. For a general discussion of the topic, see also F. J. Moloney, “The Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of History,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 42–58.

<sup>102</sup>The question of how the Johannine presentation of the discipleship motif reflects the *Sitz im Leben* of Johannine community will be investigated in chapter 5 of this book.

<sup>103</sup>For a brief introduction to “intended” and “real” readers, see Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 9–21.

<sup>104</sup>W. D. Davies, “Reflections on Aspects of the Jewish Background of the Gospel of John,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, 46.

<sup>105</sup>For the Jewishness of the Gospel of John, see Brown, *John*, 1.lxx–lxi; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel of John and Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1975); O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle: Its Place in Judaism, among the Disciples of Jesus and in Early Christianity: A Study in the Origin of the Gospel of John* (London: SCM Press, 1976); M. de Jonge, “Jewish Expectations about the ‘Messiah’ according to the Fourth Gospel,” *NTS* 19 (1973): 246–70. On the use of the OT in John, see E. D. Freed, *Old Testament Quotations in the Gospel of John* (NovTSup 11; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965);

to the traditions relating to Jacob's ladder (1:51) and to Jacob's well (4:5–6).<sup>106</sup> The Exodus tradition of the OT is a very dominant motif in John.<sup>107</sup> There are many references to the events of the Exodus in the Gospel—the tabernacle in 1:14, the bronze serpent in 3:14, manna in 6:31–58, and water from the rock in 7:38. Moses typology in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 1:17; 5:46; 6:32, etc.) has been pointed out by many authors.<sup>108</sup> The farewell discourses in John are compared to the farewell speeches of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy.<sup>109</sup> It has been recognized that the OT theology implicit in the presentation of the Deuteronomic Moses has influenced the Johannine presentation of Jesus as the new lawgiver in his farewell discourses. The prophets Isaiah and Zechariah offer background for certain features in Johannine theology. For example, “the last part of Zechariah seems to lie behind John's reflections on the feast of Tabernacles and the

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G. Reim, *Studien zum alttestamentlichen Hintergrund des Johannesevangeliums* (SNTSMS 22; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Reim, “Jesus as God in the Fourth Gospel: The Old Testament Background,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 158–60; J. W. Pryor, “Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel—John 1:11,” *NovT* 32 (1990): 201–18; B. G. Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture: The Interrelationship of Form and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John* (SBLDS 133; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); M. J. J. Menken, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form* (CBET 15; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996); A. Obermann, *Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium: Eine Untersuchung zur johanneischen Hermeneutik anhand der Schriftzitate* (WUNT 2/83; Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr, 1996). For the points of contact between John's Gospel and the Palestinian Targum traditions, see M. McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament* (GNS 4; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), 234–41.

<sup>106</sup>See J. H. Neyrey, “The Jacob Allusions in John 1:51,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 586–89.

<sup>107</sup>For example, H. Mowvley, “John 1:14–18 in the Light of Exodus 33:7–34:35,” *ExpTim* 95 (1984): 135–37. J. J. Enz (“The Book of Exodus as a Literary Type for the Gospel of John,” *JBL* 76 [1957]: 208–15) argues for a parallelism of both content and order between Exodus and John. For a critique of the efforts to discover an Exodus literary pattern in John, see R. H. Smith, “Exodus Typology in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 329–42. Smith, however, attempts to find typology for John in Exod 2:23–12:51.

<sup>108</sup>For a detailed study of the Moses traditions in John's Gospel, see T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (SBT 40; London: SCM, 1963); W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967); M.-É. Boismard, *Moïse ou Jésus: Essai de christologie Johannique* (BETL 84; Leuven: University Press, 1988). This is now available in English: *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology* (trans. B. T. Viviano; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

<sup>109</sup>A. Lacomara, “Deuteronomy and the Farewell Discourse (John 13:31–16:33),” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 65–84.

sayings on the living water (vii 37–38).<sup>110</sup> Both Wisdom literature and Psalms are also important for an integral interpretation of John's Gospel. In chapter 2, after Jesus' cleansing of the Jerusalem Temple, the disciples' reference to the OT in verse 17 reminds the readers of Ps 69:9a.<sup>111</sup> It was even suggested that a messianic interpretation of Psalm 45 is behind the Johannine presentation of Jesus as God (cf. 1:1, 18; 20:28).<sup>112</sup> This brief glimpse is enough to show the importance of OT traditions and motifs for a comprehensive understanding of Johannine thought.

A fundamental shift began in biblical criticism from historical criticism to literary criticism in the late 1970s.<sup>113</sup> Literary criticism has now been further enhanced by the emergence of cultural studies.<sup>114</sup> The methodology followed here tries to draw from, and thus integrate, various methods used in contemporary biblical exegesis. This study presupposes that (1) OT traditions and motifs have played a significant role in the formation of Johannine thought and theology. (2) The evangelist's presentation of the discipleship motif reflects the historical-theological context of the Johannine community. (3) As Köstenberger aptly observes, "what is *primarily* true for Jesus' original followers, extends *derivatively* also to later believers."<sup>115</sup> (4) John's Gospel as a literary work has the power and "semantic autonomy" to communicate meaning independent of its author and the community.<sup>116</sup> (5) A contemporary reading of the

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<sup>110</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.lx.

<sup>111</sup>See the discussion in Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture*, 17–32.

<sup>112</sup>See the discussion in Reim, "Jesus as God," 158–60.

<sup>113</sup>For an overview of this paradigm shift and the nature of these new paradigms, see F. F. Segovia, "'And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues': Competing Paradigms in Contemporary Biblical Criticism," in *Reading from This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (ed. F. F. Segovia and M. A. Tolbert; 2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1.1–31. See also the discussion of the fundamental transition in the study of John's Gospel in U. Schnelle, "Recent Views of John's Gospel," *WW* 21 (2001): 352–59. Schnelle maintains that "the meaning of a Johannine passage is not determined by a possible prehistory or subsequent reworking; rather, the key to understanding particular texts lies in the intratextual world of the entire Fourth Gospel" (*ibid.*, 353).

<sup>114</sup>F. F. Segovia, "Cultural Studies and Contemporary Biblical Criticism: Ideological Criticism as Mode of Discourse," in *Reading from This Place*, 2.1–17. For an application of this methodology, see R. Chennattu, "The Good Shepherd (Jn 10): A Political Perspective," *JPJRS* 1 (1998): 93–105.

<sup>115</sup>Köstenberger, *Mission of Jesus*, 152.

<sup>116</sup>P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 29–32.

Johannine texts is shaped by our sociopolitical realities and cultural-ideological contexts.<sup>117</sup>

The study pursues a threefold objective:

1. A detailed exegetical analysis of the discipleship narratives and discourses (chs. 1, 13–17, and 20–21)
2. An investigation of the OT motifs behind the presentation of discipleship
3. An examination of the function and relevance of the discipleship paradigm for the Johannine community

### DISCIPLESHIP MOTIF IN THE CALL STORIES OF JOHN 1:35–51

Jesus is the protagonist and most other characters are either intermediate characters or *ficelles* in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>118</sup> Jesus, the divine λόγος, is the reliable and authoritative character in the story and reveals the perspective of the implied author.<sup>119</sup> The other authoritative voice in the text is that of the “narrator” or the evangelist. The views of the evangelist can be identified with those of the “implied author” or the narrator in John’s Gospel.<sup>120</sup> The evangelist’s understanding of discipleship merges with that of

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<sup>117</sup>For a presentation of the various cultural interpretative methods, see The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), 34–84. For an Asian biblical hermeneutics, see R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); H. C. P. Kim, “Interpretative Modes of Yin-Yang Dynamics as an Asian Hermeneutics,” *BibInt* 9 (2001): 287–308. For an Indian perspective, see George Soares-Prabhu, “Interpreting the Bible in India Today,” *WaySup* 72 (1991): 70–80; R. Chennattu, “The *Svadharma* of Jesus: An Indian Reading of John 5:1–18,” in *Seeking New Horizons: Festschrift in Honour of M. Amaladoss, S.J.* (ed. L. Fernando; Delhi: VEWS & ISPCK, 2002), 317–35.

<sup>118</sup>See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 103–4. *Ficelles* are “characters whose main reason for existence is to give the reader in dramatic form the kind of help he needs if he is to grasp the story” (W. C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* [2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983], 102). See also the discussion in R. Scholes and R. Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York/London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 204.

<sup>119</sup>Jesus, who is presented as the divine λόγος, has a significant role to play in the pre-historical past, the historical past, the narrative present, the historical future, and the eschatological future. For the characterization of the Johannine Jesus, see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 106–15.

<sup>120</sup>See Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 7–9. M. Sternberg maintains that the above-mentioned perspective is true for all biblical narrative (*The Poetics of Biblical*

Jesus.<sup>121</sup> There are only three occasions in the entire gospel when narratives or discourses are entirely dedicated to the discipleship motif: the call stories in 1:35–51, Jesus' farewell narrative and discourses in chapters 13–17, and the appearances of the risen Jesus in chapters 20–21. In 1:35–51, the evangelist narrates the first encounter between Jesus and his disciples. In chapters 13–17, with the exception of some important questions and comments from the disciples, *only* the voice of Jesus is heard. In chapters 20–21, the evangelist narrates the final encounter between Jesus and the disciples. Therefore, even though this study will present an overview of the discipleship motif throughout the gospel, it will limit its exegetical focus to these three sections of the gospel.

The study begins by exploring the beginnings of the disciples' journey with Jesus, the vocation stories, "the Evangelist's interlude on the nature of discipleship."<sup>122</sup> Narrative criticism devotes special attention to the beginnings and the temporal flow of narratives.<sup>123</sup> Beginnings of gospel narratives are not "cryptic summaries," but in general, they furnish a great deal of information for readers by introducing issues, presenting problems, and/or raising questions that will be dealt with, and resolved, as the narrative unfolds.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, a narrative beginning, through its "primacy effect," constitutes a hermeneutical frame that will influence and shape the interpretation of the rest of the story.<sup>125</sup> As the opening of a story has a unique

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*Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* [ILBS; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985], 58–83). For a detailed discussion on the relationship between the author, implied author, and narrator in the Gospel of John, see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 15–49. See also Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 67–77; S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 146–51.

<sup>121</sup>See the discussion about the Markan Jesus in Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark," 138.

<sup>122</sup>Collins, *These Things Have Been Written*, 54.

<sup>123</sup>For a detailed discussion, see G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 33–85; M. C. Parsons, "Reading a Beginning/Beginning a Reading: Tracing Literary Theory on Narrative Openings," *Semeia* 52 (1990): 11–31. See also the comments of F. J. Moloney, *Beginning the Good News: A Narrative Approach* (Homebush: St. Paul Publications, 1992), 15 and 161–66.

<sup>124</sup>See R. C. Tannehill, "Beginning to Study 'How Gospels Begin,'" *Semeia* 52 (1990): 187–88; Moloney, *Beginning the Good News*, 42–159.

<sup>125</sup>M. Perry defines "primacy effect" as the tendency of what comes first in the story to control readers' understanding of what follows and "recency effect" as the tendency of the most recently read to influence readers' understanding ("Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meaning," *PT* 1 [1979]: 35–64,

role to play, the vocation stories are of great importance in understanding the discipleship motif. As we shall see, the narratives of the first disciples' vocation signal two beginnings: the Johannine Jesus' active ministry and the disciples' journey with Jesus. An exegetical analysis of the vocation stories in 1:35–51 will suggest that the Johannine text itself calls for a new paradigm in understanding Johannine discipleship.

## AN EXEGESIS OF JOHN 1:35–51

### *The Literary Context and Function of John 1:35–51*

John 1:35–51 is preceded by the witness of John the Baptist. The link between verses 19–34, the witness of John the Baptist, and verses 35–51, the disciples' following Jesus, is made by the indication of the “day” in verses 29 and 35, by the presence of John the Baptist in verse 35, and by the repetition of the testimony of John the Baptist to “the Lamb of God” in verse 29 and verse 36.<sup>126</sup> Here the disciples of John the Baptist become the followers of Jesus. The disciples of John the Baptist followed Jesus as a result of John's testimony. “John, who has been center stage on Days One and Two, now passes offstage and is replaced by Jesus, who attracts disciples to himself (cf. 1:6–8).”<sup>127</sup> In fact, the ministry of John the Baptist in verses 19–51 fulfills what was said about him in the Prologue (1:7). In verse 7, the narrator makes two statements about the role and mission of John the Baptist: (1) the purpose of his coming, to bear witness to the  $\phi\omega\varsigma$  (v. 7a); (2) the purpose or goal of his testimony, that all might believe in Jesus through his witness (v. 7b). These two statements come true successively in the narrative section, verses 19–51. The narrator deliberately indicates four days behind this unit (cf. verses 29, 35, 43).<sup>128</sup> The first two days present the witness of John the Baptist (1:19–34), and the third and fourth days tell of the first disciples who followed Jesus as a result of the testimony of John the Baptist (1:35–51).

The call stories in 1:35–51 are followed by the miracle story at Cana in 2:1–11. The deliberate indication “on the third day” in 2:1 and the revelation of the  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$  in 2:11 remind the reader of the traditions concerning the

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311–61). See also Parsons, “Reading a Beginning,” 18–21; Tannehill, “Beginning to Study,” 185–88.

<sup>126</sup>See the discussion in Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.308.

<sup>127</sup>Talbert, *Reading John*, 82.

<sup>128</sup>Some scholars see five days behind the narratives in vv. 19–51. They adopt the textual variant in v. 41 as  $\pi\rho\omega\tilde{\iota}$  (“early in the morning”) which is found in the Old Latin and Old Syriac manuscripts (e.g., Talbert, *Reading John*, 80–86).

Jewish feast of Pentecost, commemorating the gift of the Torah, which takes place “on the third day” and manifests the revelation of “God’s glory” on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:9–17).<sup>129</sup> The revelation of δόξα and the subsequent faith of the disciples indicate the partial fulfillment of Jesus’ promise that the disciples will have a still greater revelation (v. 51). The literary structure of 1:35–51 can be seen in the following scheme.

1:19–34	1:35–51	2:1–11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Witness of <i>John the Baptist</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>John the Baptist</i>, disciples and Jesus</li> <li>• The <i>disciples</i> begin a journey with Jesus</li> <li>• The <i>promise</i> of Jesus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revelation of the <i>glory</i> (δόξα)</li> <li>• Faith of the <i>disciples</i></li> <li>• Partial fulfillment of the <i>promise</i> of Jesus</li> </ul>

In the light of the foregoing, it appears that the unit on discipleship, 1:35–51, functions as a bridge-building scene in at least two ways: (1) This pericope concludes the ministry of John the Baptist and sets in motion the life and mission of Jesus. John the Baptist takes the initiative to bring people to Jesus. As a result of his testimony, two of his disciples follow Jesus. By the coming of Nathanael, the “true Israelite,”<sup>130</sup> to faith in Jesus, the purpose for which John the Baptist had come is fulfilled (cf. 1:7, 31). (2) Readers are prepared for the revelation of δόξα in chapter 2 by the use of “days” (1:35, 43), the promise made in verse 51, and the indication of “on the third day” in 2:1. The fulfillment of the promise in 1:51 occurs as Jesus reveals his δόξα in 2:11, which is further elaborated in and through the life, words, and actions of Jesus in chapters 2–21.

#### *A Narrative Reading of John 1:35–51*

The narrative significance of the call of the disciples for the unfolding story is suggested by its “location,” “narrative time,” and “narration

<sup>129</sup>For the symbolism of days as a preparation for the revelation of glory at Cana, see Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 53–76. For those who see seven days of a new creation in the narrative 1:19–2:11, see T. Barosse, “The Seven Days of the New Creation in St. John’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 23 (1959): 507–16.

<sup>130</sup>As we shall see, Nathanael, in spite of his initial resistance, is willing “to come and see” Jesus. Because of his willingness to come to the light, Jesus hails him as one truly representative of Israel, unlike “the Jews” in chs. 5–10.

time.”<sup>131</sup> It is placed at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus. In fact, the first active appearance of the Johannine Jesus occurs in this pericope. The “narrative time,” the story time behind the call stories, and the “narration time,” the amount of time allotted to narrate the call stories, are almost equal to those of the ministry of John the Baptist. The narrator allots two days each (narrative time) for John’s ministry and for the call stories. John’s ministry, the preparation for the appearance of Jesus, is narrated in two hundred and ninety-seven words (narration time) (vv. 19–36), and for the call stories, the author devotes three hundred and six words (vv. 35–51). The importance of the stories of the Johannine disciples is also implied by the fact that they are introduced on the third day, when we take the indications of the days at their face value (see vv. 29, 35, 43).<sup>132</sup> It is again “on the third day” (τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ [2:1]) that we have another significant moment of the Johannine story, the first sign (σημεῖον) of Jesus and the revelation of his δόξα in 2:1–11. From the narrative point of view, this pericope of the call of the disciples has a significant role to play. The call stories of the disciples who followed Jesus, initiated by John the Baptist, take place on the third day (vv. 35–42) while the call stories initiated by Jesus himself occur on the fourth day (vv. 43–51).<sup>133</sup>

There are indeed two stories on the third day: the call story of Andrew and his companion in verses 35–39 and that of Simon Peter in verses 40–42. Similarly, there are two stories on the fourth day: the call of Philip in verses 43–46 and that of Nathanael in verses 45–50. The capping of the narrative is found in verse 51, where Jesus makes a promise to all the disciples.

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<sup>131</sup>For the distinction between the “narrative time” (“erzählte Zeit”) and the “narration time” (“Erzählzeit”), see J. L. Ska, “*Our Fathers Have Told Us*”: *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990), 7–8; and for a detailed explanation of “narrative time” with a specific reference to the Gospel of John, see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 53–75. See also the basic study of Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 33–85.

<sup>132</sup>The first day is dedicated to revealing the identity of John the Baptist (vv. 19–28). Then the testimony of John the Baptist follows with an indication of another day in v. 29. Thus, it is narrated on the second day (vv. 29–34). The expression “the next day” in v. 35 indicates the beginning of a new day, i.e., the third day. This implies that the first call story is narrated on the third day. The narrator, however, does not explicitly indicate “on the third day” for the first call story as he does in John 2:1.

<sup>133</sup>For a discussion on the source behind this narrative section, see Barrett, *John*, 179–87. For its historical tradition, see C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 302–12.

The Third Day: verses 35–42

The first two verses, 35–36, furnish the setting for the encounter between the disciples of John the Baptist and Jesus. The narrator relates how two disciples of the Baptist “follow” Jesus and become his disciples. At this moment, the readers are informed neither of the names nor of the occupations of these disciples. Verse 40 indicates that one of the two disciples who followed Jesus is Andrew. Who is the other unnamed disciple? Scholars differ in their identification of the unnamed disciple. Some exegetes consider Philip this unnamed disciple.<sup>134</sup> As Raymond E. Brown has aptly pointed out, it is difficult to accept this suggestion because the narrator seems to introduce Philip for the first time in verse 43.<sup>135</sup> Some think that the unnamed disciple is the Beloved Disciple, the disciple whom Jesus loved.<sup>136</sup> This seems reasonable, but we do not have enough evidence from the text to establish the point. Moreover, knowing the identity of the unnamed disciple is not significant for the present discussion.<sup>137</sup>

The information, however, that the first disciples of the Johannine Jesus came from the school of John the Baptist is intriguing. Why did the author give us this detail? John the Baptist is the *first* and the *only* human person other than Jesus mentioned in the Prologue (1:1–18). He is presented as the

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<sup>134</sup>M.-É. Boismard, after a lengthy discussion, concludes that the unnamed disciple in the call stories can be Philip. He says, “plutôt que Jean l’apôtre, ce pourrait être Philippe, le même qui interviendra à partir du v. 43” (*Du baptême à Cana (Jean 1:19–2:11)* [LD 18; Paris: Cerf, 1956], 72). J. Colson is also of the same opinion, viz., “le compagnon d’André, dans cette page de la vocation des premiers disciples, pourrait donc bien être l’apôtre Philippe” (*L’Énigme du disciple que Jésus aimait* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1969], 14); see also Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.310.

<sup>135</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.74.

<sup>136</sup>For a discussion on the identity of the unnamed disciple as the Beloved Disciple, see Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 326–30; see also Brown, *John*, 1.73–74. According to Charlesworth, the Beloved Disciple is Thomas; while for Brown, he is John, not necessarily one of the twelve disciples. Some oppose this view of identifying the unnamed disciple of ch. 1 with the Beloved Disciple. For example, Schnackenburg is of the opinion that the identification of the unnamed disciple with the Beloved Disciple is “fragwürdig” (“Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte,” *EKKNT* 2.97–117, esp. 100). F. Neiryck also argues that John 1 does not make any reference to the Beloved Disciple; see his discussion in “The Anonymous Disciple in John 1,” *ETL* 66 (1990): 5–37, esp. 27, 36. This article appears also in *Evangelica: Collected Essays by Frans Neiryck* (ed. F. van Segbroeck; Leuven: University Press, 1991), 617–50.

<sup>137</sup>T. Lorenzen writes: “Der andere, anonym gebliebene Jünger bleibt sachlich und theologisch uninteressant” (*Der Lieblingsjünger im Johannesevangelium: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie* [SBS 55; Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1971], 45).

one who is sent from God (ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ). His mission is to bear witness to Jesus, the Son of God. It would seem natural, then, that the disciples of John the Baptist be the first recipients of this message. The disciples of John the Baptist respond to the call of John, the messenger of God (1:6–8), and thus receive the revelation of God through John’s testimony (1:31). But they receive their call to discipleship (call to follow Jesus) as a gift from heaven, directly from God (3:27; 6:44–45; 15:16). They form the beginning of the community of the disciples of Jesus (1:35–36).

John the Baptist, the only character who has the ability to identify Jesus (1:6–8), introduces Jesus to his disciples, when he makes his first appearance in the story. The Baptist repeats the revelatory formula: Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, “Behold, the Lamb of God” (v. 36).<sup>138</sup> What is the function of this proclamation in verse 36? Many scholars are of the opinion that it does not have a revelatory function here as it does in verse 29. Raymond E. Brown says, “Its purpose is to initiate a chain reaction which will bring John the Baptist’s disciples to Jesus and make them Jesus’ own disciples.”<sup>139</sup> Charles K. Barrett is of the same opinion, that it “is repeated in order to furnish a motif for the action of the two disciples.”<sup>140</sup> However, this formula may well have a revelatory function.<sup>141</sup> The purpose of the testimony of John the Baptist was to reveal the identity of Jesus to the people in general (v. 7), or to Israel in particular (v. 31), so that all might believe in Jesus through his testimony (v. 7). But when we look at the narrative in verses 29–34, it is a monologue, and there is no indication of the presence of the disciples to receive the revelation. Thus, the testimony in verses 29–34 would fulfill only partially what has been said about John the Baptist in the Prologue. From the narrative point of view, it is indeed necessary that John repeat his testimony in the presence of the disciples in order to fulfill his mission.

The revelatory nature of this testimony is further confirmed by the prompt response of his disciples (v. 37). It is reported that by “hearing” (ἤκουσαν) this testimony, the disciples “followed” (ἠκολούθησαν) Jesus. The Fourth Gospel makes a close link between “hearing” and “believing.” Craig Koester has shown that genuine faith is engendered through “hearing.”<sup>142</sup> Against this background, let us now look at the meaning of the

<sup>138</sup>On revelatory formulae in the Gospel of John, see M. de Goedt, “Un schème de révélation dans le Quatrième Évangile,” *NTS* 8 (1961–1962): 142–50.

<sup>139</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.76.

<sup>140</sup>Barrett, *John*, 180.

<sup>141</sup>For those who argue for the revelatory nature of this formula in v. 36, see de Goedt, “Un schème de révélation,” 143–44.

<sup>142</sup>C. R. Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John,” *Bib* 70 (1989): 327–48, esp. 347.

verb ἀκολουθέω in this verse. In John, ἀκολουθέω is used both literally (meaning “to walk behind someone” or “walk in the same direction”) and metaphorically (as an expression of one’s commitment to Jesus).<sup>143</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg claims that even though ἀκολουθέω is often used metaphorically in John “for the dedication of faith,” it is understood literally in verse 37. He, however, recognizes the “following” of the disciples here as “the first step to faith.”<sup>144</sup> It seems that both meanings are implied. The faith response as a consequence of “hearing” needs to be understood as a genuine expression of faith. In other words, the disciples of John, after “hearing” the testimony of John, have decided to begin a journey with Jesus. They are now open to enter into the process of becoming disciples of Jesus. This response on the part of the disciples signals the completion of John the Baptist’s mission (1:7).

The response of Jesus to the disciples who followed him is described in detail. Jesus stopped his journey, turned (στραφείς) and gazed upon (θεασάμενος) the disciples, and asked (λέγει) them τί ζητεῖτε, “What do you seek?” Jesus thus opens a conversation with the disciples. The first words of Jesus, τί ζητεῖτε, can have two meanings: (1) the surface meaning: What do you want? (2) the deeper meaning: What are you searching/longing for? It is necessary to listen to the Fourth Evangelist with both ears: one for the literal and the other for the symbolic sense. Raymond E. Brown takes the question on the theological level as he states: “This question touches on the basic need of man that causes him to turn to God.”<sup>145</sup> Both the literary context of the call stories and the responses of the disciples in the narrative point to the deeper meaning of Jesus’ query. The variant reading τίνα ζητεῖτε confirms this claim, as it suggests that this text was understood in antiquity in terms of a theology of discipleship.<sup>146</sup>

Even though John the Baptist referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God (v. 36), the disciples address him as ῥαββί, which literally means “my great one.” The narrator, however, translates it as “teacher.” Raymond Brown points out that “John’s translation as ‘teacher’ is not literal but is true to usage.”<sup>147</sup> But this deliberate translation is not meant merely for

<sup>143</sup>For the literal use of the verb in John, see 11:31; and for the metaphorical use, see 1:44; 8:12; 10:4, 27; 12:26; 21:19, 20, 22.

<sup>144</sup>Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.308.

<sup>145</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.78.

<sup>146</sup>The variant reading τίνα ζητεῖτε, “For whom are you looking?” seems to be an attempt by the scribes to harmonize this text with John 20:15, the encounter between Jesus and Mary of Magdala. In the words of Brown, it “reflects an understanding of the scene as giving a theology of discipleship.” See *John*, 1.74.

<sup>147</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.74.

the non-Jewish reader in the Diaspora,<sup>148</sup> it also “makes clear to the implied reader that these disciples are approaching Jesus as a teacher, and no more.”<sup>149</sup> This is further underscored by the query of the disciples: *ποῦ μένεις*, “Where do you stay” or “abide?” Since rabbis are not wanderers, Francis J. Moloney is of the opinion that “it is the logical question that follows on the recognition of a newly found teacher.”<sup>150</sup> The query “probably indicates a desire to hear Jesus expounding the Scriptures.”<sup>151</sup> But the verb *μένω* is used not only in the literal sense of “staying” (2:12) but also in the theological sense of “abiding” or “indwelling” (15:5).<sup>152</sup> The word *μένω* is an important theological term for discipleship in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>153</sup> John the Baptist, in his vision, saw the Spirit “abiding” (*μένον*) upon Jesus (1:32–33). Dorothy Lee observes that the abiding place of Jesus “is linked both to the Spirit who ‘stays’ (abides) on him and to the disciples with whom he will abide for ever through the Spirit-Paraclete (see 14:17).”<sup>154</sup> Klaus Scholtissek paraphrases the disciples’ query *ποῦ μένεις* (v. 38b) in the following ways: “In which area of influence [‘field of force’] do you live? Who or what determines your being [nature] most deeply? Who or what enables your abiding presence?”<sup>155</sup> He interprets the query in theological terms. Those who wish to *abide in*

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<sup>148</sup>It is suggested that this translation is meant for the Jews in the Diaspora or for the Gentiles who did not know Aramaic (B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* [London: Oliphants, 1972], 113).

<sup>149</sup>Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 68. However, one notices that the customary address of Jesus by the disciples in the Fourth Gospel is “Rabbi” or “Teacher” until ch. 11. For a study which claims that the Fourth Gospel shows that Jesus was perceived by his contemporaries primarily as a Jewish religious teacher, see A. J. Köstenberger, “Jesus as Rabbi in the Fourth Gospel,” *BBR* 8 (1998): 97–128. Köstenberger, however, agrees that the Fourth Evangelist portrays the exalted Jesus in the farewell discourses as transcending the identity of rabbi (*ibid.*, 108).

<sup>150</sup>Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 68.

<sup>151</sup>Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.308.

<sup>152</sup>On these two meanings, see J. Heise, *Bleiben: Menein in den Johanneischen Schriften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1967), 47–103.

<sup>153</sup>See D. A. Lee, “Abiding in the Fourth Gospel: A Case-study in Feminist Biblical Theology,” *Pacifica* 10 (1997): 123–36. She considers discipleship in John “primarily in terms of witnessing and abiding” (*ibid.*, 127). For a recent study on the theological meaning and the significance of *μένω* in John, see K. Scholtissek, *In Ihm Sein und Bleiben: Die Sprache der Immanenz in den johanneischen Schriften* (HBS 21; Freiburg: Herder, 1999).

<sup>154</sup>Lee, “Abiding,” 127.

<sup>155</sup>“In welchem Kraftfeld lebst du? Wer oder was bestimmt dein Wesen zutiefst? Wer oder was ermöglicht dein Bleiben?” (Scholtissek, *In Ihm Sein*, 240). For the metaphorical meaning, see also Bultmann, *John*, 100.

God are constantly seeking to transcend temporality or death, striving to find something that is everlasting.<sup>156</sup> The literary and theological context of the story suggests that the query of the disciples ποῦ μένεις epitomizes the human drive for God or being in communion with God.

The response of Jesus in verse 39 contains both an invitation: “Come” (ἔρχεσθε) and a promise: “You shall see” (ὄψεσθε).<sup>157</sup> The aspect of promise in the response of Jesus is neglected by most of the exegetes.<sup>158</sup> Jesus’ promise (ὄψεσθε) in verse 39 is analogous in nature to the promise made by Jesus to Nathanael (ὄψη) in verse 50 and then to all the disciples (ὄψεσθε) in verse 51. This is further established by the fact that the evangelist always takes care to distinguish the invitations of Jesus from those of the disciples. The invitations to the disciples are always in the imperative form: ἴδετε (see the invitation to Philip in 1:46 [ἴδε] and the Samaritan woman in 4:29 [ἴδετε]). The response of Jesus in 1:39, both the invitation and the promise in the future form, is a challenge to the disciples. The theme of “coming” to Jesus (3:21; 5:40; 6:35, 37, 45, etc.) and “seeing” Jesus (6:40) are used in the Gospel to describe faith. Jesus promises eternal life to those who come to Jesus (5:40) and to those who believe in him (6:40, 47; 20:31). Therefore, the invitation “to come” to Jesus is an invitation “to believe” in Jesus. As with the verb “to come” (ἔρχομαι), so also with the verb “to see” (ὁράω) the evangelist is putting both meanings in play. At a deeper level, “seeing Jesus” provides an insight into the identity of Jesus (1:41), and eternal life is promised to those who “see” Jesus (6:40). Hence the response of Jesus to the disciples in verse 39 is an invitation to enter into a *personal relationship with Jesus* and to be open to the ongoing revelation of God in Jesus.

The narrator informs the reader that the disciples not only went and saw the place where Jesus was staying but also stayed/abided (ἔμειναν) with him.<sup>159</sup> Abiding as an aspect of discipleship is developed much later in the

<sup>156</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.79.

<sup>157</sup>Most commentators translate the response of Jesus as if reading ἔρχεσθε καὶ ἴδετε (“come and see”), even though both *UBSGNT*<sup>4</sup> and *NA*<sup>27</sup> have preferred the reading ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε. I opt for the future tense ὄψεσθε, attested by  $\Psi$ <sup>5vid.</sup> 66. 75 B C\* L W<sup>s</sup>  $\Psi^c$  083 *f*<sup>1</sup> 33 pc. The variant reading ἴδετε is also attested by the early manuscripts ( $\aleph$  A C<sup>3</sup> Q 063 *f*<sup>13</sup>  $\mathfrak{M}$  *latt*). The Latin *venite et videte* seems to have influenced many commentators. However, the reading ἴδετε seems to be an attempt by the scribes to harmonize this text with v. 46 where we have ἴδε.

<sup>158</sup>Schnackenburg translates it in the future tense. Even though he admits, “it sounds almost like a promise,” he does not pursue the “promise” aspect of the response of Jesus (*John*, 1.309).

<sup>159</sup>The indication of the time in v. 39, ὥρα ἦν ὡς δεκάτη, is to be taken at its face value: “the tenth hour” means four in the afternoon. The customary usage in

gospel. Discipleship in terms of an abiding relationship is explicitly expressed in 15:1–17. The use of μένω, however, at the very beginning of the journey to discipleship suggests that something *more* is implied than just seeing the place where Jesus was staying. It implies that the disciples are on their way to seeing the ongoing revelation in Jesus, which later enables them to abide (μένω) in Jesus. As yet, this is only a hint. It will develop as the narrative unfolds.

What did the disciples “see”? The object of their “seeing” is not the place of Jesus’ home, but it is the revelation of Jesus. This is evinced from the immediate response of Andrew, one of the disciples who stayed/abided (ἔμειναν) with Jesus.<sup>160</sup> In fact, the first thing (πρῶτον)<sup>161</sup> that Andrew does

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the gospels is to reckon the hours from daylight at six in the morning. For those who hold this way of reckoning hours in John, see Barrett, *John*, 181; Brown, *John*, 1.75; Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 68; Lindars, *John*, 114. Some others, however, hold that the event took place at ten a.m., reckoning the hours from midnight; see N. Walker, “The Reckoning of Hours in the Fourth Gospel,” *NovT* 4 (1960): 69–73. Schnackenburg (*John*, 1.309) comments that it suggests a long conversation between Jesus and the disciples, and it serves also to explain why the disciples *remained* with Jesus as Jesus had not asked them to “come and remain/abide” with him. But I think the indication of the time refers to the hour of “fulfillment,” as the beginning of the disciples’ faith journey with Jesus could symbolize the beginning of the “Christian era.” For a study of the significance of the number ten in Judaism, see F. Hauck, “δέκα,” *TDNT* 2.36–37.

<sup>160</sup> Andrew is introduced as Simon Peter’s brother. It is taken for granted that the reader knows who Peter is.

<sup>161</sup> There are four variant readings: (1) πρῶτον: P<sup>66.75</sup> N<sup>2</sup> A B Θ Ψ 083 233<sup>vid</sup> f<sup>1.13</sup> 892 1243 1253 1672 1673 11016 11074 11627 it<sup>a.aur.c.ff2.1.q</sup> vg syr<sup>p.h.</sup> cop<sup>sa.bo</sup> arm geo Epiph. In this best attested reading we have an adverbial accusative modifying the verb, i.e., “the first thing Andrew did.” This reading would imply that Andrew found his brother before he did anything else. (2) πρῶτος: N\* L W<sup>s</sup> Δ 0141 28 157 180 565 579 597 700 1006 1010 1071 1241 1292 1342 1505 Byz Lect syr<sup>pal</sup> Cyril. In this reading, we have a masculine nominative adjective modifying Andrew. This would imply that Andrew was the first to find his brother, Simon Peter. (3) πρωῖ: it<sup>b.e.</sup> r<sup>1</sup>vid<sup>2</sup> sys. This is an easy reading. It may be a scribal attempt to clarify the obscure πρῶτον. Another day is introduced in this reading: “early the next morning.” (4) The word is omitted altogether: 1424 vg<sup>ms</sup> syr<sup>c</sup> Augustine. This study adopts πρῶτον, the best-attested reading. The adverbial use of πρῶτον is common in John (see 2:10; 7:51; 10:40; 12:16; 15:18; 18:13; 19:39). The reading πρῶτον is the *lectio difficilior*, “because nothing is said of any further action on the part of Andrew” (see Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.311). According to Metzger and the UBSGNT<sup>4</sup>, “the reading πρωῖ (‘in the morning’), implied by the word *mane* in two or three Old Latin manuscripts, avoids the ambiguities of πρῶτος/πρῶτον and carries on the narrative from ver. 39” (B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [2d ed.; Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck, 1994], 172).

after this experience with Jesus is to find Simon Peter and bear witness to Jesus: “We have found the Messiah” (v. 41). What this testimony entails is not described in the text. It presupposes knowledge of Jesus. As a result of the testimony of Andrew, Simon comes to Jesus. The response of Jesus to Simon is twofold: (1) an affirmation, σὺ εἶ Σίμων ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννου, “You are Simon the son of John,”<sup>162</sup> and (2) a promise, σὺ κληθήσῃ Κηφᾶς, “You shall be called Kephas.” Promises are always forward looking. The use of the future tense here in verse 42 is significant as it brings out the forward-moving nature of the journey that Simon Peter undertakes. He is told of the new name, Κηφᾶς (Rock), which he will have in the future.<sup>163</sup> Note that this new name is given to Simon as a gift. We are not yet told of Simon’s reactions. What matters at this moment of the narrative is the promise of Jesus. Jesus’ promise to Simon is different from those he makes in verses 39, 50, and 51. While the promise to Simon refers to his future mission, the other promises refer to the ongoing revelation of God in Jesus, which the disciples will gradually see as they journey with Jesus. The disciples’ journey of faith begins with their encounter and dialogue with Jesus, and it continues when they go and stay/abide (μένω) with him. Andrew’s confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 41) displays the partial fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in verse 39.

#### The Fourth Day: verses 43–51

John the Baptist, having completed his mission (v. 36), disappears from the scene. A new beginning within the call stories is indicated by the introduction of a new day (τῆ ἐπαύριον) in the narrative (v. 43). Verses 43–44 furnish the setting for the story that moves now to the following of

<sup>162</sup>There are three variant readings: (1) υἱὸς Ἰωάννου, (2) υἱὸς Ἰωνᾶ, (3) υἱὸς Ἰωάννα. Some consider Ἰωνᾶ as a variant spelling of Ἰωάννου (see Barrett, *John*, 182). Metzger and a majority of his committee “regarded Ἰωνᾶ (read by A B<sup>3</sup> Δ f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>13</sup> and most of the later Greek witnesses) as a scribal assimilation to Bar-Jona of Matt 16.17. The reading Ἰωάν(ν)α reflects further scribal confusion with the name of a woman mentioned only by Luke (cf. Luke 8.3; 24.10)” (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 172).

<sup>163</sup>The change of Simon’s name to Peter in the Gospel of John takes place in the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. The Johannine version of the story seems to be the earliest form of the tradition. John’s use of the Aramaic form of the name supports the antiquity of the Johannine version of the tradition. In the Gospel of Matthew, this event takes place more than halfway through the ministry of Jesus in 16:16–18. “On this point Matthew’s account is more polished than John’s, for Matthew explains the relation of the new name (‘rock’) to Peter’s role as the foundation stone of the Church. John stresses only that the name came from Jesus’ insight into Simon (‘Jesus looked at him’)” (Brown, *John*, 1.80).

Philip<sup>164</sup> and then of Nathanael,<sup>165</sup> the third and the fourth disciples to be called respectively in the Fourth Gospel. In the Greek text of verse 43, there is some ambiguity with regard to the subject of the verbs: ἠθέλησεν ἐξελεῖν and εὕρισκει. Who decides to go to Galilee, and who finds Philip? Since Simon Peter was the last mentioned in the narrative in verse 42, grammatically he would be the best choice for the subject of the verbs in verse 43.<sup>166</sup> Why the author tells us that Peter wanted to go to Galilee remains obscure. But the information that Jesus wanted to go to Galilee fits in well with the following narrative, 2:1–11, where Jesus is at Cana in Galilee. Hence, “in the present sequence *Jesus* is probably meant to be the subject.”<sup>167</sup> If so, then it is Jesus who takes the initiative in summoning Philip to discipleship. Whether the call of Philip takes place before the journey (in the Jordan valley) or after the journey (near the Sea of Galilee) is another disputed question. This issue does not seem to be important for the present discussion. “The indication in ii 1, however, is that the journey took place after the call of Philip and Nathanael.”<sup>168</sup>

John’s Gospel locates the hometown of Peter and Andrew at Bethsaida. This information does not agree with the Markan tradition. According to the Gospel of Mark, the city of Andrew and Peter is Capernaum (Mark 1:21, 29). How does one explain this discrepancy? Why did the author bring the name of the place, Bethsaida, into the narrative? The Hebrew name Βηθσαιδά literally means “place of provisioning.” M.-E. Boismard suggests that Bethsaida has been introduced into John’s narrative to make a symbolic reference to the theme of Matt 4:19 (“Follow me and I will make

<sup>164</sup>Even though Philip is one of the twelve, he does not play any role in the synoptic narrative. In John’s Gospel he appears again in 6:5–7; 12:21–22; and 14:8–9.

<sup>165</sup>Nathanael does not appear in any list of the twelve and is not found in the synoptic Gospels. The name Ναθαναήλ is Hebrew, and it literally means “gift of God.” Many scholars identify the Nathanael of John as the Bartholomew of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But there is no reliable evidence for this conjecture. It has sometimes been suggested that the Nathanael of John is a symbolic name rather than the name of a historical person. There is no evidence, however, to substantiate the position that Nathanael was purely a symbolic figure. According to John 21:2 Nathanael came from Cana in Galilee. For the reasons given by those who consider him as a symbolic figure, see Barrett, *John*, 183–84. Brown suggests that “it is better to accept the early patristic traditions that he [Nathanael] was not one of the Twelve” (*John*, 1.82).

<sup>166</sup>For those who read πρώτος instead of πρώτον in v. 41, Andrew may have been the subject.

<sup>167</sup>The emphasis is mine. See Brown, *John*, 1.81.

<sup>168</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

you fishers of men”).<sup>169</sup> One cannot be sure whether or not the author is making a deliberate reference to Matt 4:19, yet the etymology of the word Bethsaida, “the place of provisioning,” in the context of the call to discipleship is intriguing. Does it reveal the occupation of Philip as a fisherman? Or does it refer to the “fishing” mission of the disciples (cf. Mark 1:16–20)? Such assertions, though reasonable, remain highly hypothetical. They go beyond the evidence of the text. All we can affirm is that the reader is informed that the first disciples of Jesus—Andrew, Peter, and Philip—came from the same town, Bethsaida.<sup>170</sup>

The invitation of Jesus, ἀκολούθει μοι, “follow me,” in verse 43, makes Jesus’ meeting with Philip in John’s Gospel very similar to that in the call stories of the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 2:14; Matt 9:9; and Luke 5:27). The Johannine usage in its present context, however, is different.<sup>171</sup> Like the story of Peter (vv. 40–42), the call of Philip is not narrated in detail (vv. 43–44). All that is said about Philip is that Jesus both found him and asked him to follow. One has to infer the meaning of the command of Jesus from the response of Philip in verse 45: “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth.” The response of Philip is analogous both in its nature and function to that of Andrew in verse 41. It seems reasonable therefore to understand that the invitation of Jesus in verse 43 is analogous in function to his invitation to the first disciples in verse 39, “Come and you shall see.”

Philip, like Andrew, gives testimony to Jesus: “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote” (v. 45). “The expression ‘we have found him’ echoes Andrew’s statement (v. 41), indicating that Philip too was speaking of the Messiah.”<sup>172</sup> The phrase “Moses in the law

<sup>169</sup>Boismard, *Du baptême*, 90. Brown, on the basis of a distinction between the prepositions ἐκ and ἀπό, suggests that Philip was from Bethsaida in the sense that he had been born there, while his actual home was at Capernaum (*John*, 1.82). Barrett thinks that “there is here no difference in meaning between the prepositions” (*John*, 183).

<sup>170</sup>Some consider vv. 43–44 as a later interpolation in order to harmonize John with the Synoptic Gospels. Whatever may be the history of the traditions behind it, we interpret the text as it stands today. For a recent study that demonstrates the conceptual unity of this pericope (vv. 43–51) as it stands today, see S. Schreiber, “Die Jüngerberufungsszene Joh 1:43–51 als literarische Einheit,” *SNTSU* 23 (1998): 5–28.

<sup>171</sup>See Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.313.

<sup>172</sup>C. R. Koester, “Messianic Exegesis and the Call of Nathanael (John 1:45–51),” *JSNT* 39 (1990): 26; see also N. A. Dahl, *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), 112. For a different interpretation, see Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 70.

and the prophets” embraces the whole Scripture of the OT.<sup>173</sup> After comparing the expression, *ὃν ἔγραψεν Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ*, “of whom Moses wrote in the Law,” in 1:45 with 5:39, 46, Severino Pancaro claims that “in view of the strict correspondence between these three texts, it is evident that the presentation of Jesus by Philip as the one about whom Moses wrote means that they have found (*εὐρήκαμεν*) the one announced by the Scriptures, the Messiah (cf. 1:41).”<sup>174</sup> Jesus is also presented as the son of Joseph (*υἱὸς τοῦ Ἰωσήφ*),<sup>175</sup> from Nazareth (*ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ*).<sup>176</sup> This is the first time in the narrative that the Johannine Jesus is identified in terms of his human origins.

The prompt response of Nathanael is not very appreciative (v. 46). It was suggested that the saying, *ἐκ Ναζαρέτ δύναται τι ἀγαθὸν εἶναι*, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” indicates an existing rivalry between two neighboring towns since Nathanael comes from Cana (21:2).<sup>177</sup> Some others are of the opinion that it may be a “local proverb reflecting jealousy between Cana and Nazareth.”<sup>178</sup> None of these claims can be proved from the evidence of the text. It is striking that Nathanael does not focus on the issue of Jesus’ parentage (son of Joseph) here.<sup>179</sup> In the light of the confession of Philip (v. 45), his objection probably arose from the fact that the Scriptures said nothing about the Messiah’s coming from Nazareth.<sup>180</sup> The response of Nathanael in verse 46, whatever may be its origin

<sup>173</sup>Luke 16:29, 31; 24:27; Acts 26:22; 28:23, etc.

<sup>174</sup>S. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to John* (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 289.

<sup>175</sup>Note that the same title is attributed to Jesus in 6:42 by the disbelieving Jews in order to discredit the claim of Jesus that he has come down from heaven.

<sup>176</sup>Though various strands of NT tradition speak of Nazareth as the hometown of Jesus, Nazareth is not recorded as the birthplace of the expected Messiah in the OT or in the Talmud; see the discussion in G. Dalman, *Sacred Sites and Ways: Studies in the Topography of the Gospel* (trans. P. P. Levertoff; London: SPCK, 1935), 57–78.

<sup>177</sup>Barrett, *John*, 184.

<sup>178</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.83. See also K. Dewey, “*Paroimiai* in the Gospel of John,” *Semeia* 17 (1980): 90–91; P. D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 54–55.

<sup>179</sup>M. M. Thompson connects 1:46 with the reference to Jesus’ parents in John 6:42 and asserts that the response of Nathanael, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” “manifests misgivings about the inauspicious origins of the putative Messiah” (*The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 16). See also Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.315.

<sup>180</sup>Similar objections are made by the “Jews” in 7:41–42, 52. For those who connect 1:46 with 7:41–42, 52, see Barrett, *John*, 154; and Pancaro, *Law*, 289.

and background, expresses some initial hesitance. Philip, however, invites Nathanael to “come and see” (ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε) Jesus; and Nathanael, in spite of his initial resistance, goes and sees Jesus. Nathanael, like the first disciples, begins to make a journey of faith.

The dialogue between Jesus and Nathanael seems to be symbolic. Jesus takes the initiative and greets Nathanael as ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλίτης ἐν ᾧ δόλος οὐκ ἔστιν, “a true Israelite in whom there is no guile.” The adverb ἀληθῶς here serves as the equivalent of the adjective ἀληθής or ἀληθινός.<sup>181</sup> Nathanael, therefore, represents someone “worthy of the name of Israel”<sup>182</sup> or a “worthy representative of the people of God.”<sup>183</sup> “Here is a man worthy to recognize all that has been promised in the Scriptures (see v. 45).”<sup>184</sup> Nathanael is also qualified as someone ἐν ᾧ δόλος οὐκ ἔστιν, “in whom there is no guile.” Many commentators have seen in this phrase an allusion to Jacob, the patriarch of Israel (Gen 27:35). This interpretation does not seem to respect the Johannine presentation of Jacob elsewhere in the Gospel.<sup>185</sup> Some others see here an allusion to the Suffering Servant theme, “in whose mouth was found no guile” (Isa 53:9). In this understanding, “guile” would mean “religious infidelity to Yahweh.”<sup>186</sup> The Johannine Jesus, whether or not verse 47 alludes to the “Suffering Servant” theme, affirms Nathanael as a God-fearing man, someone faithful to God. This seems to fit in well with the story of Nathanael, as he is open to receive the revelation of God from Jesus, the one about whom Moses and the prophets wrote.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>181</sup> For the adverbial use of ἀληθῶς in the sense of ἀληθής or ἀληθινός in the Gospel of John, see 4:42; 6:14; 7:40. For the use of adverbs as adjectives, see BDF §434.

<sup>182</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 73 n. 6. Boismard comments that Nathanael “est resté fidèle à Yahvé. C’est en ce sens qu’il mérite le nom d’Israël” (*Du baptême*, 97). See also, for those who consider Nathanael’s role as a representative figure of Israel, Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 123; de Goedt, “Un schème de révélation,” 142–50; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 82; R. T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 44.

<sup>183</sup> Brown, *John*, 1.83.

<sup>184</sup> Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 71.

<sup>185</sup> The biblical tradition in general does not consider Jacob a “deceiver” but a great patriarch of Israel. The same view, Jacob as a great patriarch, is found elsewhere in the Gospel when the Samaritan woman challenges Jesus by asking, “Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob?” (4:12; see also 4:5). Schnackenburg (*John*, 1.316) also maintains that the evangelist is not placing Nathanael in contrast to Jacob, the “deceiver” (Gen 27:35).

<sup>186</sup> See the discussion in Boismard, *Du baptême*, 96–97.

<sup>187</sup> Some see Nathanael as “a member of God’s Chosen People by spiritual birth rather than by heredity (cf. Rom 9:6–8)” (W. R. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the*

Nathanael seems to be agreeing with Jesus that he is indeed a “true Israelite” and asks Jesus, *πόθεν με γινώσκεις*; “Whence/how did you get to know me?” (v. 48a). The response of Jesus, *πρὸ τοῦ σε Φίλιππον φωνῆσαι ὄντα ὑπὸ τὴν συκῆν εἶδόν σε*, “before Philip called you I saw you under the fig tree,” has been interpreted in many different ways.<sup>188</sup> Some claim that Jesus’ seeing Nathanael “under the fig tree” (*ὑπὸ τὴν συκῆν*) has no particular theological significance in the story. If we accept this view, then Nathanael’s leap from unbelief to faith is inexplicable. One needs to ask the question: What did Jesus reveal when he claimed that he had seen Nathanael under the fig tree?<sup>189</sup> The expression *ὑπὸ τὴν συκῆν* is often interpreted symbolically. One of the most common views has been “the suggestion that ‘under the fig tree’ was a traditional site for the study of the Torah.”<sup>190</sup> It might reveal that Nathanael belonged to a group of people who were well acquainted with Scripture and who awaited the coming of the Messiah.<sup>191</sup> This assumption fits in well with the confession made by Philip to Nathanael, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote” (v. 45). The query of Nathanael, “How did you get to know me?” suggests that the response of Jesus is to be interpreted in terms of Jesus’ knowledge. The evangelist stresses Jesus’ ability to know things beyond the normal human range. Jesus’ response thus reveals his supernatural knowledge, and it evokes Nathanael’s response,<sup>192</sup> the confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 49).<sup>193</sup> The manifestation of Jesus’ supernatural

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*Withered Tree* [JSNTSup 1; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980], 219); see also the discussion in E. Hirsch, *Das vierte Evangelium* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1936), 116–17.

<sup>188</sup>For its messianic background, see Koester, “Messianic Exegesis,” 23–34; for its eschatological significance, see J. D. M. Derrett, “Figtrees in the New Testament,” *HeyJ* 14 (1973): 249–65.

<sup>189</sup>See the discussion in Telford, *Barren Temple*, 218–24.

<sup>190</sup>*Ibid.*, 221. See also Str-B, 2.371. Against this view, Derrett claims that “one can hardly say that to be under the fig-tree is to be a Torah-student, for at that rate sleepy Arab camel-drivers would be Torah-students” (“Figtrees in the New Testament,” 262). This throwaway remark does not take the passage seriously enough. One needs to interpret the text within its literary context. To be under the fig tree is also understood as a sign of peace and prosperity (1 Kgs 5:5; Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10). See the discussions in Barrett, *John*, 154 and Brown, *John*, 1.83.

<sup>191</sup>Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.315.

<sup>192</sup>For a discussion on this view, see C. F. D. Moule, “A Note on ‘under the Fig Tree’ in John 1.48, 50,” *JTS* 5 (1954): 210–11. U. C. von Wahlde holds that this supernatural knowledge functions here as a “sign,” just as it does in the story of the Samaritans in John 4 (*The Earliest Version of John’s Gospel: Recovering the Gospel of Signs* [Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989], 71 n. 17).

<sup>193</sup>The titles—Son of God and King of Israel—essentially acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah; see the discussion in Bultmann, *John*, 104 n. 7.

knowledge evokes a similar response elsewhere in the Gospel. Jesus' supernatural knowledge about the Samaritan woman's personal life enables her to recognize Jesus as the messianic prophet (4:16–20).<sup>194</sup> In sum, the short dialogue between Jesus and Nathanael reveals both the identity of Jesus as the Messiah and reaffirms the identity of Nathanael as a “true Israelite” who is open to the revelation in Jesus.

Like Andrew in verse 41, Nathanael makes his confession of faith in verse 49. Even though he gives more theologically significant titles to Jesus, viz., Son of God (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) and king of Israel (βασιλεὺς . . . τοῦ Ἰσραήλ), he continues to address Jesus as Rabbi.<sup>195</sup> The title Son of God is a widely used Jewish expression to talk about the Messiah.<sup>196</sup> In the OT, the anointed king was said to be God's son (see Pss 2:7; 89:20–27; 2 Sam 7:13–14). Both titles, Son of God and king of Israel, imply the identity of Jesus as the Messiah according to the Jewish expectation.<sup>197</sup> In the Gospel of John, the title Son of God expresses Jesus' unique intimacy with God (see 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18).<sup>198</sup> This intimate relationship between the Father and the Son is expressed in terms of love and mission.<sup>199</sup> But what is the significance of this title in 1:49? Does this title have the full Johannine christological meaning? Scholars differ in their views on this question. Some claim that it has the full christological meaning.<sup>200</sup> From the narrative point of view, Nathanael meets Jesus for the first time; hence, it seems natural to understand Nathanael's confession of faith within his Jewish religious background

<sup>194</sup>For other examples, see 6:70; 9:3; 11:4, 11; 13:10–11, 38.

<sup>195</sup>According to Brown (*John*, 1.83), “this is an element of historical reminiscence within the theological theme of increased insight.”

<sup>196</sup>See the discussion in B. Byrne, ‘Sons of God’—‘Seed of Abraham’: *A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul Against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 9–78; and J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York, etc.: Doubleday, 1995), 154–72. For a different view, see J. A. Fitzmyer, “4Q246: The ‘Son of God’ Document from Qumran,” *Bib* 74 (1993): 153–74. Fitzmyer asserts that “per se, the titles [‘Son of God’ and ‘Son of the Most High’] do not connote ‘messiah’ in the Old Testament” (*ibid.*, 171). For the divine sonship of Christians in the Johannine writings, see M. Vellanickal, *The Divine Sonship of Christians in the Johannine Writings* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977).

<sup>197</sup>Barrett, *John*, 155. For these titles together, see Ps 2:6–7.

<sup>198</sup>For a detailed study of this title in the Gospel of John, see D. M. Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (NTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 127–31.

<sup>199</sup>The Father loves the Son (e.g., 3:35 and 5:20); and the Son continues the “works” (ἔργα) of the Father (e.g., 4:34; 5:17; 17:4).

<sup>200</sup>See Barrett, *John*, 154–55; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.317–19; and Pancaro, *Law*, 288–304.

and conditioned by his religious beliefs and traditions. “Nathanael has confessed his faith *only* in terms of Jewish messianic expectation.”<sup>201</sup>

The faith generated by the miraculous power (here the supernatural knowledge) of Jesus is not enough according to the Johannine Jesus (see 2:23–24). The confession made by Nathanael, evoked by the wonder of his having been seen under the fig tree, is not sufficient. “Nathanael is chided for the limitations of his faith, expressed through the confession of Jesus as rabbi, Son of God and king of Israel (v. 49).”<sup>202</sup> The response of Jesus in verse 50a, ὅτι εἶπόν σοι ὅτι εἶδόν σε ὑποκάτω τῆς συκῆς, πιστεύεις, “because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, you believe,” whether the expression is a question or an affirmation, is not to be taken as skeptical.<sup>203</sup> The promise of Jesus, μείζω τούτων ὄψη, “You will see greater things” (v. 50), confirms that Jesus recognizes and appreciates his initial faith. The use of the singular σοι in verse 50 and the use of the plural ὑμῖν in verse 51 are very significant. Jesus makes a promise to Nathanael in particular in verse 50 and to the disciples in general in verse 51.<sup>204</sup> By using ὑμῖν in v. 51, “the narrator has Jesus reach out of the immediate situation of the ‘you’ of Nathanael to the various disciples who came to him with their limited expressions of faith, and to the reader.”<sup>205</sup> Hence, the promise made by Jesus in verse 51 is not only to the characters (disciples) in the story but also to the readers.<sup>206</sup> What did Jesus promise? “You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (v. 51). What does this mean?

The opening of heaven symbolizes God’s communication with humanity.<sup>207</sup> It is commonly agreed that John 1:51 alludes to the story of Jacob in

<sup>201</sup>Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 72.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>203</sup>For such “rebukes” in the Gospel, see 4:48. See also the discussion in Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.319 and Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 72–73.

<sup>204</sup>Verse 51 is often identified as an independent logion; see F. J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (2d ed.; Rome: LAS, 1978), 24–25; Brown, *John*, 1.88–89; R. T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 179–89; Neyrey, “Jacob Allusions,” 586–89. However, it is fully integrated into its present context. See the detailed discussion in P. Palatty, “The Meaning and Setting of the Son of Man Logion in John 1:51,” *ITS* 36 (1999): 21–36.

<sup>205</sup>Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 74.

<sup>206</sup>According to Moloney, “the narrator has used the present tense of the verb (καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ) to report direct speech of Jesus that reaches outside story time into the plotted time of a promised future sight of the Son of Man” (*Belief in the Word*, 76).

<sup>207</sup>Cf. Ps 78:23; Acts 10:11; Rev 4:1–3.

Gen 28:12.<sup>208</sup> In the Johannine scene, the focus is on a vision of a heavenly figure, as the angels ascend and descend not upon the ladder, but upon the Son of Man.<sup>209</sup> The title of the Son of Man (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) in John is different from the Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic use of the figure of Son of Man. It designates the earthly life of Jesus, in which he shares continual communication with the Father in heaven.<sup>210</sup> Based on the traditions about Genesis 28:12 (the targums and midrashim), it has been suggested that Jesus manifests himself in 1:51 as the *shekinah* (dwelling) of God, the *merkabah* (chariot; cf. Ezek 1:4–25), the rock,<sup>211</sup> Bethel,<sup>212</sup> “the gate of heaven,”<sup>213</sup> or the glory of God.<sup>214</sup> Jesus is depicted as the mediator who brings communion between heaven and earth. In other words, Jesus is presented as the “locus of divine glory, the point of contact between heaven and earth.”<sup>215</sup> The Johannine Jesus promises to his disciples that they will see God made manifest in Jesus, and they witness an ongoing revelation of God’s presence in the life and mission of Jesus (chs. 2–21).

## OLD TESTAMENT COVENANT MOTIFS IN JOHN 1:35–51

The central characteristics of Johannine discipleship traced in the narrative of John 1:35–51 reflect essential elements of the OT covenant relationship.

<sup>208</sup>For a detailed analysis on the Jacob allusions in John 1:51, see Neyrey, “Jacob Allusions,” 586–605; see also C. F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 115–16; H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel Interpreted in Its Relation to Contemporaneous Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World* (Uppsala: Almqvist, 1929), 33–36; and Barrett, *John*, 155–56.

<sup>209</sup>D. Burkett claims that there is no unified pre-Christian Son of Man title and its titular use is multivalent in the NT and thus “the distinctive associations of the different categories of sayings must come from the context, not from the title itself” (*The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 122).

<sup>210</sup>For this understanding, see Bultmann, *John*, 107; Moloney, *Son of Man*, 23–41; and C. C. Rowland, “John 1:51: Jewish Apocalyptic and Targumic Tradition,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 498–507. For an interpretation of the “Son of Man” in John 1:51 as explaining the origin of Jesus, see C. Ham, “The Title ‘Son of Man’ in the Gospel of John,” *SCJ* 1 (1998): 67–84.

<sup>211</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.90–91.

<sup>212</sup>See Schnackenburg, *John*, 1.320; O. Cullmann, “Die Berufung des Nathanael,” *Angelos* 3 (1928): 2–5.

<sup>213</sup>Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 74–75.

<sup>214</sup>Bultmann, *John*, 106.

<sup>215</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.91. There has been extensive discussion about the meaning and significance of 1:51. For a survey, see Moloney, *Son of Man*, 23–41; Neyrey, “Jacob Allusions,” 589–605; and Palatty, “Meaning and Setting,” 21–36.

Yahweh's choice and Israel's decision constituted the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. This relationship is not a static "status" but a vocation that calls for ongoing choices and decisions on the part of Israel for Yahweh.<sup>216</sup> Similarly, the call stories in John 1 highlight discipleship as a journey made with Jesus that demands decisions on the part of the disciples in favor of the ongoing revelation of God in Jesus. The evangelist presents discipleship as a process of becoming, a process of growth.<sup>217</sup> This gradual evolving of the disciples' faith appears elsewhere in the gospel (6:66–71; 14:9). Discipleship implies knowledge of God, and it calls for a commitment. Like the election of Israel, discipleship is received as a gift from God. The similarities between Israel's vocation and that of the Johannine disciples are so striking that they deserve further investigation. In the table below, the OT covenant motifs found in the call stories are given in bold print.

**The Old Testament Covenant Motifs in the Call Stories  
of John 1:35–51**

	<b>Third day: Story 1</b> (vv. 35–39)	<b>Third day: Story 2</b> (vv. 40–42)	<b>Fourth day: Story 3</b> (vv. 43–46)	<b>Fourth day: Story 4</b> (vv. 45–50)
<b>Characters</b>	JB, disciples and Jesus (vv. 35–36)	Andrew and Simon Peter (vv. 40–41)	Philip from Bethsaida (v. 44)	Nathanael (v. 45)
<b>Encounter</b>	Two disciples follow Jesus (v. 37)	Jesus looks at Simon (v. 42)	Jesus finds Philip (v. 43)	Nathanael comes to Jesus (v. 47)
<b>Dialogue</b>	Dialogue (vv. 38–39) <b>ποῦ μένεις;</b>	_____	_____	Dialogue (vv. 47–50)
<b>Invitation</b>	<b>Ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε</b> [Jesus] (v. 39)	_____	Ἄκολουθει μοι [Jesus] (v. 43)	Ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε [Philip] (v. 46)

<sup>216</sup>E. W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 147–48.

<sup>217</sup>The presentation of discipleship as a journey, a dynamic process, is not something peculiar to John. For the same notion in the Gospel of Mark, see Best, *Following Jesus*. See also Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus*, 13–35, and Donaldson, “‘Called to Follow,’” 67–77, esp. 69. But John has a different understanding of this dynamism. It is apparent in the unique way he narrates the “vocation stories” (compare Mark 1:16–20 with John 1:35–51). See also Chennattu, “On Becoming Disciples,” 465–96.

<b>Response</b>	The disciples went and <b>abided</b> (μένω) with Jesus (v. 39)	_____	_____	_____
<b>Confession of faith in word</b>	<b>Ἐόρηκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν</b> (v. 41)	_____	<b>Ὅν ἔγραψεν Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ οἱ προφῆται εἰρήκαμεν</b> (v. 45)	<b>σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, σὺ βασιλεὺς εἶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ</b> (v. 49)
<b>Confession of faith in action</b>	Andrew brings Peter to Jesus (v. 42)	_____	Philip brings Nathanael (v. 46)	_____
<b>Identity of the disciple</b>	_____	<b>Renaming:</b> Simon—Kephas (v. 42)	_____	<b>Reaffirming:</b> Nathanael—A true Israelite (v. 47)
<b>Jesus' promise to the individuals</b>	<b>ὄψεσθε</b> (v. 39)	<b>σὺ κληθήσῃ Κηφᾶς</b> (v. 42)	_____	<b>μεῖζο τούτων ὄψῃ</b> (v. 50)
<b>The promise of Jesus to all the disciples</b>	<b>ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεφῳτά καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, “You shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (v. 51): the divine presence in Jesus.</b>			

### *The Abiding Motif (μένω)*

Johannine discipleship begins with an encounter with Jesus. As we have seen, the invitation to “come” and the promise “you shall see” are essential aspects in the process of becoming disciples. The disciples are also called to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus. It is their abiding (μένω) with Jesus that, according to Johannine theology, gives them a deeper insight into the identity of Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>218</sup> The verb μένω is very significant in the covenantal language of the OT (LXX). Edward Malatesta, after a detailed study of the use of the verb μένω in the LXX, contends that “the combination of μένειν and its cognates with the Covenant, the commandments, and with Yahweh Himself connotes a *relationship of fidelity to and communion with Yahweh*, and that such expressions prepare for the Johannine use of the verb.”<sup>219</sup> The covenant relationship

<sup>218</sup>Brown, *John*, 1.79.

<sup>219</sup>E. Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant: A Study of εἶναι ἐν and μένειν ἐν in the First Letter of Saint John* (AnBib 69; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), 60. The italics are mine.

between Yahweh and Israel demands that the latter abide in obedience to the Law (LXX Deut 27:26) or abide in Yahweh (LXX Isa 30:18). The Johannine story relates that the first two disciples ask Jesus where he abides (v. 38); the disciples then abide with Jesus. The confession of faith in verse 41 (“we have found the Messiah”) suggests the symbolic meaning of their query in verse 38 (“where do you abide?”), since the object of their seeing is not Jesus’ home or village but the revelation of Jesus’ identity as the Messiah. What is the theological significance of this enquiry? Jesus is not a stranger, as he has been introduced to the disciples as the Lamb of God.<sup>220</sup> The disciples of John the Baptist, after hearing the testimony of their master, decide to begin a journey with Jesus, but they are not blind followers of Jesus. They want to know where Jesus abides.<sup>221</sup> Those who abide in (οἱ ἐμμένοντες ἐν) Yahweh and in the Torah are considered to be the blessed (μακάριοι, LXX Isa 30:18). To abide in Yahweh entails a relationship of deep communion and constant communication with Yahweh. The witness of John the Baptist suggests that Jesus abides in God and in communion with God; and throughout the gospel, Jesus reveals his intimate relationship with the Father to the disciples. At the outset of the call stories, by inviting the disciples to abide in Jesus and in his words (cf. 4:40; 6:27; 6:56; 8:31–32) and making it an integral part of the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus (1:35–51; 4:4–42), the Fourth Evangelist presents discipleship in terms of an everlasting and abiding covenant relationship with God.

### *Knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah*

The disciples display a progressing understanding of Jesus as they attribute different messianic titles to him.

#### Rabbi (vv. 38, 49)

The disciples address Jesus as rabbi, a significant teacher. The title occurs in verse 38 and in verse 49. Does it imply that there is no difference in their perception of the identity of Jesus from verse 38 to verse 49? The evangelist has the disciples address Jesus as rabbi (ῥαββί) in the Book of Signs<sup>222</sup> and as

<sup>220</sup> According to the synoptic call stories, there is nobody to introduce Jesus to the disciples (e.g., Mark 1:16–20).

<sup>221</sup> X. Léon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Évangile selon Jean* (4 vols.; Paris: Seuil, 1988–1996), 1.189.

<sup>222</sup> See 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8. No one addresses Jesus as rabbi after ch. 11, except on one occasion when Mary calls the risen Jesus as ῥαββουνι (20:16).

Lord (κύριε) in the Book of Glory.<sup>223</sup> The author is not just recounting what happened in the history; this choice is deliberate on the evangelist's part to bring out the progressive nature of discipleship.<sup>224</sup> Addressing Jesus as rabbi in verses 38 and 49 indicates that the call stories are only the beginning of disciples' journey with Jesus.

Messiah (vv. 41, 45, 49)

There is a gradual progression in the way Andrew recognizes Jesus the rabbi (v. 38) as the messiah (v. 41). His understanding of messiahship is not clear at the present moment of the narrative. Similarly, Philip's presentation of Jesus as the one "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote" (v. 45) probably indicates that Jesus is recognized as the fulfillment of the whole OT.<sup>225</sup> John 5:39 says that the Scriptures testify on behalf of Jesus, in 5:46 that Moses wrote about him, and in 6:45 that Jesus is the fulfillment of what is written in the prophets. The one described in the Mosaic law could well refer to the Prophet like Moses of Deut 18:15–18. Thus, Jesus is identified as the Prophet like Moses.<sup>226</sup> In fact, the one described by the prophets is difficult to identify. It could be Elijah (cf. Mal 4:5). If we take these three titles—Messiah, Prophet like Moses, Elijah—attributed to Jesus by the first disciples, we see that the disciples of John the Baptist are identifying Jesus under the same three titles that the Baptist had rejected for himself in verses 19–28.<sup>227</sup> As already mentioned, the titles Son of God and King of Israel (v. 49) identify Jesus as the Messiah according to Jewish expectations. The disciples do not go beyond the Jewish understanding of the Messiah. Their faith has not yet grasped the reality of the Johannine Jesus.<sup>228</sup> However, the disciples progress in their understanding of Jesus.

The knowledge of God, a recurring theme in the prophets (Jer 1:5; Hos 2:20; 4:1, 6; 5:4), is always implied in Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh (cf. Exod 29:45–46; Jer 9:24; Isa 11:2). It implies a profound comprehension of the right relationship with Yahweh as their God. Lack of this knowledge is understood as a failure to live up to the covenant relationship. The prophet Isaiah, in his oracles against the people of Judah, points out

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<sup>223</sup> Only on two occasions is Jesus addressed by the disciples as Lord before ch. 11 (6:68; 9:38). Out of a total of thirty-nine, thirty-five occurrences of κύριος are in chs. 11–14 and 20–21.

<sup>224</sup> Brown, *John*, 1.75.

<sup>225</sup> For the synoptic comparison, see Brown, *John*, 1.86.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> This observation is made by Brown, who thinks, "perhaps this is too neat"; see *John*, 1.86. See also Mark 6:14–16; 8:27–30.

<sup>228</sup> For this argument, see Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 53–76.

their lack of knowledge as a moral failure (Isa 1:3). Other examples include Jer 4:22; 5:4; 22:15–16; Hos 4:6. The Fourth Evangelist makes the clear distinction between the “unbelieving world,” which does not know the λόγος (1:10), the Father (8:55), and the Spirit (14:17), on the one hand, and the disciples, who know Jesus—the Messiah (1:42) and the Holy One of God (6:69), the Father (14:7), and the Spirit (14:17) on the other. As the OT covenant relationship presupposes a mutual knowledge between Yahweh and the people of Israel (Exod 29:45–46; Jer 9:24; Isa 11:2), the Johannine Jesus also makes similar claims about his disciples: “I know my own and my own know me” (10:14). In the call stories, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael show a progression in their perception of Jesus’ identity. This progressive theological understanding of Jesus is indicated by the different christological titles in John 1. The first disciples give witness to their knowledge of Jesus and proclaim their faith in him, but the full implications of their proclamation are realized only later as they continue their journey with Jesus.

#### *Disciples Are Called to Witness*

The effect of staying (μένω) with Jesus results in action, viz., witnessing (*words*) and bringing other people to Jesus (*actions*). Andrew confesses his faith in Jesus, “We have found the Messiah,” and brings Simon to Jesus. Similarly, Philip brings Nathanael to Jesus after giving testimony to Jesus, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth.” The same pattern is found in the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4.<sup>229</sup> Once she accepts the revelation of Jesus, the Samaritan takes the initiative in the mission of proclaiming and bringing others to Jesus. She, like Philip, fulfills the Johannine characteristics of a disciple by giving testimony to the people in the city and inviting them to “come and see” Jesus. She becomes a model of discipleship in sharp contrast to Nicodemus, who is startled by Jesus’ revelation and disappears into the shadows.<sup>230</sup> For the Johannine Jesus, it is extremely

<sup>229</sup>John 4 has a structure almost identical to John 1:35–51. The Samaritan woman also makes a faith journey like the first disciples in John 1. Her call story, which takes place outside Judaism, is of importance for the Johannine community as they consisted of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. It is beyond the scope of this book to pursue this suggestion further. It has been discussed at length in the studies of Cullmann, *Johannine Circle*; Brown, *Community*.

<sup>230</sup>M. Pazdan considers the Samaritan woman a model of “mature discipleship” while Nicodemus represents “initial discipleship” (“Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman: Contrasting Models of Discipleship,” *BTB* 17 [1987]: 145–48).

important that the disciples act like “apostles” and give testimony to him.<sup>231</sup> Similarly, “giving testimony” in terms of handing down traditions for future generations is another important element in the covenant relationship with Yahweh. Moses entrusts the Law to the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant and commands them to read it publicly to the whole people of Israel on the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 31:9–13, 24–27). The Israelites were supposed to pass on what they had seen, heard, and experienced, viz., God’s intervention in their history, to future generations (Deut 6:20–25; 11:1–9).<sup>232</sup> By underscoring the importance of testimony, the evangelist highlights yet another element of a covenant-type relationship between Jesus and his first disciples. This aspect of the covenant relationship is developed more forcefully in the farewell discourses (15:27; 17:20–21), where Jesus insists that the disciples should bear witness to him.

#### *Name-giving/Renaming Aspect of the Stories*

Two of the call stories have an element of either renaming (1:42), in the case of Simon, or affirming (1:47), in the case of Nathanael. Jesus looks at Simon and calls him Κηφᾶς and Jesus affirms Nathanael as a “true Israelite, in whom there is no guile.” Receiving new names is very common in the biblical traditions. The new names of the individuals express their new personality, status, and role. Examples include Abram’s becoming Abraham (Gen 17:5), Jacob’s becoming Israel (Gen 32:28), and Simon’s becoming Peter (John 1:42; Matt 16:18). In each of these cases, the reception of the new name underlines the “election motif” in the OT and has a direct relation to the role the person so designated will play in salvation history.

Name-giving in the OT is also linked to the covenant motif. Abram’s name, for example, is changed to Abraham, and Sarai becomes Sarah, after the institution of the covenant with God (Gen 17:1–22). The theme of election is closely associated with an element of possession in the covenant

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See also R. C. White, “The Nicodemites and the Cost of Discipleship,” *RTR* 56 (1997): 14–27; D. A. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 65–66. On the Samaritan woman as a model and challenge for the twenty-first century disciples, see R. Chennattu, “Women in the Mission of the Church: An Interpretation of John 4,” *VJTR* 65 (2001): 760–73. For a detailed study of John 4, see Okure, *Johannine Approach to Mission*.

<sup>231</sup> Even though the noun ἀπόστολος does not appear in John’s Gospel (except in 13:16, where ἀπόστολος does not refer to the disciples), the disciples are sent out by Jesus (17:18) and they act like apostles (1:42, 46; 4:29, etc.).

<sup>232</sup> See the discussion in Lacomara, “Deuteronomy and the Farewell Discourse,” 81–82.

relationship. The theme of Yahweh's closeness and mutual possession is expressed well in Deut 7:6: "For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you, to be God's treasured possession (תְּשׁוּבָה), out of all peoples that are upon the face of the earth." The expression "Yahweh your God" as indicating mutual possession is a recurring theme in the Book of Deuteronomy.<sup>233</sup> The Johannine Jesus makes similar claims about his disciples (10:14), and Jesus refers to the disciples as "his own" (τοὺς ἰδίους) which implies their mutual belonging (13:1).

### *Discipleship is Based on Promises*

The Johannine call stories contain many promises. The first story begins with an invitation and a promise from Jesus, "Come and you shall see" (1:39). The second story concludes with another promise, this time from Jesus to Simon, "You shall be called Kephas" (1:42). Jesus then makes a promise to Nathanael, "You shall see greater things than these" (1:50). The capping of the narrative is accomplished by the final promise of Jesus to all the disciples, "You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (1:51). Jesus promises that the disciples shall see (ὄψεσθε) the manifestation of God in and through the mission of Jesus. The verb ὁράω has a rich theological meaning in John, and can refer to an insight stemming from an experience of Jesus. This promise of Jesus (v. 51) seems to imply a deepening experience as the disciples receive an ever-greater revelation of God in Jesus. Both the act of promising and the content of Jesus' promise in 1:51 remind the readers of OT covenant promises. Yahweh had made many promises to Israel. Yahweh promises to dwell among the people of Israel and asks them to make a tabernacle for him (Exod 25:8). God will be in their midst and dwells among them (Exod 29:45–46; cf. also Num 14:14; Deut 12:11). The indwelling presence of Yahweh with the people of Israel symbolized by the tabernacle is a sign of their covenant status, and the tabernacle reminds the people constantly of their covenant with Yahweh.<sup>234</sup> It is against this background that we interpret the promise of Jesus in 1:51, that he will make the divine presence of Yahweh visible. The use of the future tense, "You shall see" (ὄψεσθε), brings a dimension of "not yet" into the faith experience of the disciples. This faith is not merely

<sup>233</sup>The expression "Yahweh your God" appears more than three hundred times in Deuteronomy; see S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* (3d ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), lxxix.

<sup>234</sup>See Pryor, *John*, 158. For a detailed study, see R. E. Clements, *God and Temple: The Idea of the Divine Presence in Ancient Israel* (Oxford/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965).

the outcome of something that the disciples have found (vv. 41, 45), but it is a gift (3:27; 6:44–45; 15:16). Like the election of the people of Israel, the call to discipleship is a gift from God.

## CONCLUSION

The first episode of the public ministry of Jesus (1:35–51) is dedicated to an account of the call of disciples. This “beginning” suggests that the evangelist sets an agenda for the presentation of discipleship in the gospel as a whole. The discipleship motif is developed gradually and progressively as the Johannine story unfolds. The call stories uncover the initial stage of the journey of the first disciples, and in doing so, the evangelist employs elements of the OT covenant relationship.<sup>235</sup> On the basis of this study of 1:35–51, we can reasonably conclude that, from the beginning of the Johannine story, the presentation of discipleship is associated with the covenant relationship as it is presented in the OT. Our initial investigation suggests that the evangelist uses the occasion of the call stories to present a paradigm of discipleship as a covenant relationship. If such is the case, this paradigm should appear elsewhere in the gospel, especially in the farewell discourses, the only place where Jesus’ teaching is directed entirely to the disciples before his death (chs. 13–17), and in the final encounter between Jesus and the disciples after his resurrection (chs. 20–21).

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<sup>235</sup>See Chennattu, “On Becoming Disciples,” 489–96.