The historical and theological significance of John the Baptist as he is portrayed in John 1

D G van der Merwe

ABSTRACT

The historical role and theological function of John the Baptist in the first chapter of the Fourth Gospel is analysed. The historical role of the Baptist was to bear witness concerning the identity of Jesus, which culminates in Jesus being joined by two of his disciples. The Baptist's theological function was to influence the reader to also make a decision to follow Jesus. In his testimony about Jesus and his performance as a whole, the Baptist influenced his listeners and the readers of the Fourth Gospel to act in a threefold manner: firstly to start to follow Jesus; secondly to make known the identity of Jesus, and thirdly to lead others to Jesus in order that they may follow Him. In order to achieve these objectives the Fourth Evangelist has chosen, arranged and communicated his material in such a way that the text builds up to a climax in vv 35–37 of chapter 1, where Jesus' identity is grasped and people start to follow Him.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the Fourth Gospel (Jn 1:19ff), as in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 3:1ff; Mk 1:2ff; Lk 3:1ff), an account by John the Baptist introduces the ministry of Jesus in this world. John had been sent by God (1:6,33) to testify about Jesus. The Baptist's ministry is important to the Fourth Evangelist as it prepares (reveal 1:31) the way for the ministry of Jesus (1:23) from which 'the following of Jesus' succeeds.

Therefore the Fourth Evangelist discusses John's ministry, which he wants to link with the inauguration of Jesus' ministry prior to Jesus' ministry. By doing so, the Fourth Evangelist also has his readers in mind. In describing the historical position and role of John the Baptist (subsequently referred to as 'the Baptist') the Fourth Evangelist selects and arranges historical material in a way that was aimed at influencing his readers and evoking a reaction from them. This relates to, and is in line with his original goal in writing his gospel (20:31). It will become clear that the Fourth Evangelist does not discuss the theological function of the Baptist separately, but includes it in his description of the Baptist's historical role. Therefore we will examine both objectives simultaneously by looking at the following sub-themes:

1 See Van Tilborg (1996), for more information on research done with regard to the first readers.

2 'Role' indicates the part the Baptist has to play in the historical situation, and 'function'
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- The Baptist in the Prologue
- The Baptist in the rest of chapter 1

2 JOHN THE BAPTIST IN THE PROLOGUE (1:6–8, 15)

The Fourth Evangelist prepares his readers by giving a brief overview in the Prologue (1:1–18) of what can be expected in the rest of the Fourth Gospel. After this he commences with the ministry of the Baptist in 1:19. The few verses, concerning the Baptist in the Prologue (1:6–8, 15), are both of historical and theological importance. They contextualise the appearance of the Baptist in chapter 1 and prepare the readers for what they can expect from the ministry of the Baptist. Here he explains to them how it came about that people started following Jesus (1:35–51).3

The historical and stylistic structures of the Prologue clearly indicate that these verses about the Baptist may be regarded as interpolations.4 The chiastic structure of the Prologue shows that the Fourth Evangelist incorporates these verses deliberately and not by accident, as Brown suggests. The insertion of these verses shows how highly the Fourth Evangelist regards the Baptist's witness (Bultmann 1941:29). It would be fairer to conclude that these verses are 'planned parenthetical' remarks (Carson 1991:130). The Fourth Evangelist wants to prepare the people of his time for the coming of the Word and the Light (Brown 1975:27).5

refers to how he was theologically used by the Fourth Evangelist in order to convey a certain aspect of his message to his readers.

3 1:19–51 presents a unity which starts with the deprecatory testimony about the Baptist himself, continues with the Baptist's positive testimony to Jesus and the coming of the first disciples and rises to a climax with the confession of Nathanael to Jesus' word of revelation in v 51.

4 There are a large number of different proposals by various scholars about the occurrence of these verses in the Prologue. There is no agreement among them about which verses belong to this hymn and how they were joined to the Gospel. For more information concerning the different opinions and suggestions confer Brown (1975:22; also Ashton 1991:286ff). It seems as if there are two groups. The one group maintains that there were secondary additions to the original hymn (Bultmann 1941:1; Schnackenburg 1965:198). Some who support this criterion are of the opinion that perhaps the original opening verses of the Fourth Gospel (1:6–8) were displaced when the prologue was prefaced to the Gospel by a final redactor (Brown 1975:21). A second group of scholars believe that the Prologue forms a unity from the beginning (cf; Morris 1975:71f,87f; Barrett 1978:158; Carson 1991:112f). Staley (1986:241ff) agrees with Culpepper on the chiastic structure of the Prologue even though his proposal is slightly different. To motivate their statements Carson and Morris maintain that the Prologue is not poetry, and that prose sections such as 1:6–8,15 (where reference is made to the Baptist) have been added to the Prologue. Carson speaks of 'rhythmmical prose', while Morris calls it 'elevated prose'. Barrett (1978:158) correctly states that, in the light of the important place occupied by the Baptist in the Gospel, he should be introduced into the Prologue, but his point of view that there is no need to suspect interpolation here is debatable. Also see Hooker (1969/70:354ff), who investigates the insertion of the Baptist texts in the Prologue.

5 Part of this preparation is that the Fourth Gospel builds in progression of development in
Like the Synoptics, the Fourth Evangelist starts his account of the public ministry of Jesus with the witness of the Baptist (1:19ff). That is why it is appropriate for him to introduce the Baptist here (Carson 1991:120). These verses (1:6–8,15) prepare the way for the detailed account of the Baptist's witness which immediately succeeds the Prologue. These verses can be structured in the following cola: 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Greek Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ἕγενετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>δύο μα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός,</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>οὐκ ἦν ἕκεινος τὸ φῶς,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>αὐτὸς ἦν δὲν εἶπον-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.1.1</td>
<td>ὁ διίσω μου ἐρχόμενος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.1.2</td>
<td>ἐμπροσθὲν μου γέγονεν,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.1.2</td>
<td>δι' πρώτος μου ἦν.</td>
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Although no specific stylistic structure can be detected in these verses, the following theological structure of C11–15 can be deduced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>θεοῦ → ἀπεσταλμένος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Ἰωάννης → μαρτυρήσῃ → περὶ τοῦ φωτός</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>πάντες → πιστεύσασιν</td>
</tr>
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the Prologue's line of thought. In 1:1–5, the Fourth Evangelist traces the account of Jesus further back than the creation. After proving the absolute starting-point, he turns to the starting-point of Christianity: the ministry of John the Baptist (1:6–8). In the following section (1:9–13) he stresses the coming of Christ as the light and describes how people respond to him. Although the world did not recognize (1:10) him and his own did not receive him (1:11), some people did receive him (1:12). They received the right to become children of God. The incarnation of the Word realized this (1:14). Then, from 1:19 onward he describes in greater detail the process of becoming children of God, what it involves, and the implications connected to it (Carson 1991:113).

6 The structure analysis used in this article, is the one which was developed by members of the NT society of South Africa based on the pioneering work of J P Louw since the late sixties.
C11–15 relate to the mission of the Baptist (ἅπεσταλμένος), while C27, 28 relate to the content of his testimony (verb μαρτυρεῖ), namely the identity of Jesus (C28.1.1 and C28.1.2). The purpose of this mission was that people should believe (πιστεύωςωσιν—C13.2).

2.1 God has sent (θεοῦ → ἅπεσταλμένος)

This forerunner's significance is grounded in C11. Colon 11 spells out the mission of the Baptist while C13–15 characterises this mission as revelatory-salvific (C13.1 and 13.2). The main purpose of the Baptist is to reveal the Christ. The fact that he ἅπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ showed that he was assigned this specific task (Carson 1991:120). This messenger of God 'came' with only one mission (εἰς, final—C13): to give testimony (Schnackenburg 1965:227).

The fact that he was commissioned (sent) by God places him in the same category as Moses (Ex 3:10–15) and the prophets (Barrett 1978:159). In this respect the Baptist is like Jesus himself and the Paraclete, who was also sent by the Father (14:16;17:8,18). This theme occurs throughout the Fourth Gospel. The work of the Baptist thus derives significance only from the fact that he was sent (Barrett 1978:159). His commission by God makes his testimony authoritative.

2.2 The Baptist witnesses (Ἰωάννης → μαρτυρήσῃ)

In these verses all interest is focused on the μαρτυρία of the Baptist. Nowhere in the Fourth Gospel (not even here) are we informed about the content of his preaching.

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8 Μαρτυρεῖν occurs 33 times in the Fourth Gospel, 6 times In the first Letter of John and 4 times in the third Letter of John. It occurs only 32 times in the rest of the New Testament. Μαρτυρία occurs 14 times in the Fourth Gospel, 6 times in the First Letter of John and once in the Third Letter of John. It occurs 9 times in a special sense in Revelation and only 7 times in the rest of the New Testament. Μαρτυρεῖν περὶ is characteristic in the Fourth Gospel (Schnackenburg 1965:227; Bernard 1969:8). Normally μαρτυρεῖν (μαρτυρία) has the (legal) meaning of testifying in a statement about the reality of a state of affairs that has been questioned. Such a testimony is based on knowledge, particularly on the account of an eye-witness (cf 1:32, 34, 40, 41; 3:11, 32; 15:27). Such a μαρτυρία is made before a judgement seat. Judgment must then be given on the matter, and this judgement must be based on the statement of the witness. On the other hand the witness is 'duty bound' to testify, and in doing so commits himself to what he says. Here the personal commitment of the witness is stressed. Any one of the elements in the μαρτυρία may either recede in the background, or may become equally dominant. In the Fourth Gospel μαρτυρεῖν and μαρτυρία have the original forensic meaning and the sense of bearing witness for something is often stressed. In the case of the Baptist μαρτυρία takes on the meaning of 'confessing' (see Bultmann 1941:30; cf also Charles...
(except very briefly in 1:29–34); he is not the 'forerunner' (as depicted in the Synoptics), but merely a witness (1:6–8,15; 1:19ff, 3:22ff). The phrase ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ confirms his authorisation as a witness.10

The work of the Baptist thus derives significance only from the fact that he is sent (Barrett 1978:159). The reason why John the Baptist was sent by God (C11) was because οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν11 ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περί τοῦ γενότος, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ. οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς,12 ἀλλ’ ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περί τοῦ φωτός (C13–C15), for the true light was coming into the world. Knowing this he was obedient to his commission. The Baptist's task was merely to witness regarding the nature and significance of the Person of Jesus.

The courtroom language used in C13 and C1513 is again used in C27 and 1:19–20, where specific contents have been given to it. In contrast with the Synoptics (Mk 1:2; Mt 11:10ff), the Baptist functions not as 'precursor' and 'preparer of the way', in fulfilment of the prophecy of Mt 3:1 (Schnackenburg 1965:227). In the Fourth Gospel he is the great 'witness' who gives weighty testimony, (i) before official Judaism (1:19–28), (ii) before all Israel (1:29–34), and (iii) before his own disciples (1:35–37).

A second purpose of the Baptist's witnessing was that all should believe in the Messiah. πιστεύειν14 corresponds closely to μαρτυρεῖν (Carson 1991:159). Nowhere

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9 John 1:15 is a time indication and not a functional indication.
10 ἀποστέλλω (but not in the case of πέμπει) indicates primarily the task and authorisation of the emissary (Rengstorf 1933:397ff). Rengstorf points out that even in the LXX and Judaism it is frequently used in connection with a divine task and a divine authorization.
11 A fuller description of the witness of the Baptist appears in 1:19–36; 3:27–30; 5:35 and a climactic summary in 10:40–42. There were also other witnesses to the truth of God's self-disclosure in the Word: the Samaritan woman (4:39), the works of Jesus (5:36; 10:25), the Father (5:32,37; 8:18), the OT (5:39,40), the blind born man (9:33), the crowd (12:17), the Holy Spirit and the disciples (15:26,27). They all bear witness to Jesus, who himself bears witness to the truth (18:37).
12 Scholars (Bultmann 1941:31; Schnackenburg 1965:228; Carson 1991:121) are unanimous in their conviction that C14 is purposefully incorporated by the Fourth Evangelist. They are of the opinion that in the second century there were still Baptist circles competing with Christianity, and they considered the Baptist himself as the Messiah.13 ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ (C13,15); cf also ὡμολογήσει (C35,37), οὗτός (C49.2), ἰδεῖν (C49.3), ἐμαρτύρησεν (C50), τεθέαμαι (C50.1), ο ἐπίσκεπτος με (C50.4), ἔφανεν (C50.5) (cf Charles 1989:72). According to Trites (quoted by Carson 1991:120) courtroom phrases such as 'witness' and 'testimony' are common in the New Testament.
are the two concepts μαρτυρεῖν and μαρτυρία emphasised as strongly as in the Fourth Gospel. The nature of this faith is evident in C13:1 and C15, where the object attested is called τοῦ φωτός. This φωτός refers to the Logos who is also life, and the light of men (1:4) (Schnackenburg 1965:227). The Fourth Evangelist sees all faith as a response to testimony. If the phrase refers to the Baptist, for men do not believe through Jesus but in him (Barrett 1978:160), it means that he is the catalyst to the faith in Jesus.

In his testimony the Baptist announces (C28.1.1 and C28.1.2) in general terms the advent of the long-awaited Coming One: οὗτος ἐν ἐννοίᾳ ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἐμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτος μου ἦν. This expression confirms not only the temporal priority of the pre-existence of Jesus emphasised at the beginning of the Prologue, but also the absolute primacy of Jesus (Carson 1991:131).

2.3 People come to faith (πάντες → πιστεύωσαν)

The second ἵνα clause (in C13.1.2) is dependent on the first clause in C13.1.1. The purpose of the Baptist’s witnessing is that all (πάντες) should believe in Jesus. πιστεύωσαν relates to μαρτυρεῖν; this implies ‘to accept the testimony as valid, and the fact thereby attested as fact’ (Barrett 1978:159). The fulfilment of these words is seen in 1:37 (the two disciples who heard the Baptist’s witness and believed). Bultmann (1941:31) points out that C13.2 refers to the witnessing of the Baptist as it was constantly represented through tradition and in such a way that it retains its actuality.

In conclusion the function of the Baptist in these two texts (vv 6–8 and 15) in the Prologue is only to refer to his mission: to serve as a witness to Jesus. This interpretation of his mission is reflected in 1:31, where the Baptist states that the purpose of his baptism is to reveal Jesus to Israel. Within the Prologue the references to the Baptist serve to link the subsequent historical statements with the metaphysical truths outlined therein: it is made clear that it is Jesus who is the true light, the revelation of God who brings the ‘heavenly qualities’ to this earth (cf Hooker 1969:358). He could bring this message with authority because he had been appointed and sent by God himself. The purpose of this mission and witnessing is

15 Schnackenburg (1965:227) is correct when he says that ‘Der Übergang zum geschichtlichen Bericht (V 6) läßt keinen Zweifel zu, da der Evangelist hier unter dem “Licht” den inkarnierten Logos meint, also das “Licht”, sofern es zu geschichtlicher Stunde in die Welt kam (vgl. V 9).’ To identify Jesus with light is part of the Fourth Evangelist’s revelation of Jesus. Light reveals, exposes. He wants to stress that Jesus, who is the Light, is the one who has to be approached and followed.

16 ἰδί should mean ‘through’ or ‘by means of’ the testimony of the Baptist (Bernard 1969:9). The Fourth Gospel never uses the expression πιστεύων διὰ Ἰησοῦ. The Fourth Evangelist views Jesus as the end and object of faith, rather than the medium through which it is achieved (see 1:12).
that people should come to believe in (follow) Jesus. The Fourth Evangelist uses these four verses to prepare the reader for what he can expect to read in the next pericope concerning the Baptist.

When considered in connection with other indications such as Jn 3:22–30; 4:1–2 and 5:31–35, the point becomes clear: ‘the Baptist is singular important, but it is not an end in itself’ (Quast 1991:14).

3 THE BAPTIST IN THE REST OF CHAPTER 1

In the previous section we have seen that the Prologue prepares us for what we can expect from the Baptist in this section (1:19–37).

3.1 A structure analysis of John 1:19–37

The following is a structure analysis of vv 19–37 (see the next two pages).

The account concerning the Baptist (C34–C54) is one of several passages in the Fourth Gospel where it remains difficult to disentangle the various elements (although it is quite clear that it contains more than one layer). Nevertheless the Fourth Gospel shows the Baptist first rejecting any role for himself except that of the forerunner and witness (C34–47), and afterwards designating Jesus as his superior who comes by divine sanction (C50.6.1). Here the Fourth Evangelist clearly provides a scheme of salvation history: the Baptist prepares his audience for the coming of the Saviour.

Influenced by Dodd, Schnackenburg (1965:273) went further than Dodd's threefold schema of 1:6–8 (see footnote 18) to state that the Baptist's testimony is given by the Fourth Evangelist according to a clear plan18: on the first day

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17 John 1:19–51 is concerned with the profit of the first disciples of Jesus. Scholars such as Bultmann (1941), Schnackenburg (1965), Brown (1975), Barrett (1978) and others agree that this part can be subdivided into 1:19–34 (the witness of the Baptist) and 1:35–51 (the calling of the first disciples). Verses 35–37 combine these two sections (1:19–37 and 1:35–51). Although the first pericope ends with verse 1:34 and a new one begins in 1:35, the indication of the testimony of the Baptist ending at 1:36 occurs because his witness overflows to the next pericope in verses 1:35–36. Bultmann (1941:58) says that the dominant thought of the Baptist is μάρτυς. Because of the Baptist's function as μάρτυς up to verse 1:37, verses 1:35–36 are included here.

18 In 1:19–37 we find a threefold testimony of the Baptist which he delivered on three consecutive days (1:19,29,35) (cf Bernard 1969:34). The first is the announcement of 'the Coming One' (1:19–28), the second the designation of Jesus as 'He who was to come' (1:29–34), and the third having as its consequences the 'following of Jesus' by two of the Baptist's disciples (1:35–37ft). As Dodd (1976:248) has correctly pointed out, this threefold progression is simply a spelling out of the pattern defined in advance in 1:6–8: Firstly, the Baptist was not the light; secondly, he had to testify to the light which was Jesus; thirdly, through him all men might believe. O'Connor (1990:362) states that the time Jesus spent with the Baptist should not be
34. "Kai aútē èstìν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου, óte ápesteiλαν [pròs aútòn] oi 'Ioúdaioi ex 'Ierouσolúmōn iereí̂s kai Lεuítas ìna èρωτήσασιν aútòn· ō tìs eî;"  

35. "Kai ἤμωλόγησεν  
36. kai oûk ἤρνήσατο,  
37. kai ἤμωλόγησεν ὅτι  
37.1. ìγὼ oûk eîmi ὁ χριστός.  
38. "Kai ἤρώτησαν aútòn·  
38.1 tì oûn;  
38.2 sù Ἡλίας eî;"  
39. kai λέγει·  
39.1 oûk eîmi.  
40. ὁ προφήτης eî sù;  
41. kai áπεκρίθη· oû.  
42. eîpān sùn aútō·  
42.1 tìs eî; ìna áπόκρισαι δῶμεν τοῖς πέμψασιν ἡμᾶς·  
42.2 tì lêgei̇s peri aseautō;"  
43. "Εφη·  
43.1 ìγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ën tì ἐρήμω·  
43.1.1 eûthýn̄ate tìn ÿðón kuri̇ou, kathése eîpēn Ἡσαίας ὁ προφήτης.  
44. "Kai áπεσταλμένοι ἦσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων.  
45. kai ἤρώτησαν aútòn kai eîpān aútō·  
45.1 tì oûn bαπτίζεις eî sù oûk eî ὁ χριστός oûdē Ἡλίας  
45.2 oûdē ὁ προφήτης;"  
46. "Απεκρίθη aûtoî̇s ὁ Ἰωάννης λέγων·  
46.1 ìγὼ bαπτίζω en ùdâtî;  
46.2 μέσος ùmôwn èsthekēn òn ùmēi̇s oûk oûdâte,  
46.3 27̃ ὁ ópìsow μou èρχόμενος,  
46.4 sù oûk eîmi [ìγὼ] áξios ìna ùsw aûtō tòν ìmânta toû ùpodoû̇martos.  
47. "Țaûta en Vθαναία ègè̄nēto  
47.1 pèrâν tòν 'Iorðânu,  
47.2 òpòu ìn ὁ Ἰωάννης bαπτίζων."

underestimated. According to him 'at least sufficient time has to be allowed for some of the Baptist's disciples to transfer their allegiance to Jesus'. This statement by O'Connor implies that the point of view held by some scholars (Koester 1987:73; Charles 1989:79), namely that Jesus could have been a disciple of the Baptist, is not so extreme.
48 Ἐπαύριον βλέπει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν
49 καὶ λέγει:

49.1 ἰδε ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰρὼν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου.
49.2 οὗτός ἐστιν ὑπὲρ ὦ ἐγὼ εἶπον.
49.2.1 ὁπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἀνήρ ὃς ἐξηράνθη μου γέγονεν, ὃτι πρώτος μου ἦν.
49.3 καὶ λέγει ὁ οὐκ ἔδειν αὐτὸν,
49.4 ἀλλ` ἵνα φανέρωθη τῷ Ἰσραήλ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὑδατί καταπίζων.

50 Καὶ ἐμαρτύρησεν Ἰωάννης λέγων ὅτι

50.1 τεθέαμαι τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαίνον ὡς περιστεράν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ
50.2 καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ` αὐτὸν.
50.3 καὶ λέγει ὁ οὐκ ἔδειν αὐτὸν,
50.4 ἀλλ` ὁ πέμψας με βαπτίζειν ἐν ὑδάτι ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν·
50.4.1 ἐφ` ὅν ἄν ἱδος τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαίνον καὶ μένον ἐπ` αὐτὸν, ὁ οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.
50.5 καὶ λέγει εὕρακα
50.6 καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα ὅτι
50.6.1 οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

51 Ἐπαύριον πάλιν εἰσῆκει ὁ Ἰωάννης καὶ ἔκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο
52 καὶ ἐμβλέψας τῷ Ἰησοῦ περιπατοῦντι λέγει·
52.1 ἰδε ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ θεοῦ.
53 καὶ ἦκουσαν οἱ δύο μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος
54 καὶ ἦκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ.
changes as the groups that interrogate the Baptist change. The questions asked by the ἐρημεῖς καὶ Λευίταις concern the identity of the Baptist, while in the case of the Φαρισαῖοι they concern his actions. In both cases the pattern is the same: they ask him a question (Q) to which he responds (A).

3.2.1 The delegation of priests and Levites (C34–C43)

In the Prologue (C11–C15, C28) the Fourth Evangelist introduces the Baptist as the first in a sequence of witnesses to Jesus. Now he develops the Baptist’s testimony καὶ αὕτη ἔτιν ἡ μαρτυρία (C34). He explains the occasion on which this testimony was given and to whom it was addressed. It is entirely a testimony to Christ, who must be revealed so that people can come to him and follow him. It is time for the ministry of Jesus to begin. Because Jesus does not openly display his nature and his dignity, ‘witnesses’ and ‘testimonies’ have to attest it (5:31–47) (Schnackenburg 1965:274).

The Baptist’s revelatory witnessing comes through testimony (C35, 37, 43, 49, C50.6, C52), baptism (C13.1, C16.4), and identification (C49.1; 52.1). In C13–15 the readers are prepared for this function of the Baptist and in C34,35–37,43 (voice) and C50 this function is emphasised by the repetition of these words.21 His role as witness was legitimised by hearing what God told him (C50.4.1) and by what he saw (C50.5).

Because of the importance with which this testimony of the Baptist is viewed by the Fourth Evangelist here, right at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel, he deliberately gives the whole passage an ‘official’ tone. The juridical overtones and supplements of this testimony by the Baptist are only there to confirm the reliability of the testimony offered, to provide a surer ground for faith. To implement this ‘official’ tone, the Fourth Evangelist incorporates a delegation (C34, 44)22 to question the Baptist. They were sent by the Ἰουδαίοι23 of Jerusalem, the central authority of

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21 This revelatory function of the Baptist is further emphasised by the interrogation of the delegation: ἵνα ἐρωτήσωσιν αὐτῶν (C34), ἠρωτήσαν αὐτὸν (C38), τις εἶ, ἵνα ἀπόκρισιν δώμεν τοῖς πέμψαν ἡμᾶς τί λέγεις περὶ σεαυτοῦ; (C42.1 and C42.2), καὶ ἠρωτήσαν αὐτὸν (C45).

22 Carson (1991:141f) infers that the Baptist was so influential (cf Mt 3:5,7) that it would have been irresponsible of the Jews in Jerusalem (1:19) if they had failed to make enquiries about him. Schnackenburg (1965:275) differs from Carson. He seems to be more on track when he sees this interrogation by the officials as a deliberate insertion by the Fourth Evangelist. Its purpose is to give status to the testimony of the Baptist. Carson may be right, but why then did the Synoptic Gospels not mention this interrogation? Only Matthew mentions that the Baptist ‘saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was’ (Mt 3:7). They came to the Baptist, but they never interrogated him.

23 The word ‘Jews’ could easily have been left out by the Fourth Evangelist and still the sentence would make sense. The insertion of the ‘Jews’ here is purposeful. They were included not only to give ‘official’ status to the delegation, but also, as Bultmann (1941) indicated, to appear, as in the rest of the Gospel, as the opponents of Jesus (also Carson 1991:142). Here
the Jews, the Sanhedrin (Schnackenburg 1965:274; Carson 1991:142). This delegation included priests and Levites, who were qualified to conduct the enquiry, for it is a question of baptism which concerns the rite of purification (Bultmann 1941:60).24 According to Brown (1975:43) and Bultmann (1941:60) they were 'specialists in ritual purification'. The whole idea of 'appropriate men' emphasises the level and authority on which the testimonies of the Baptist took place. The Fourth Evangelist uses them to give official status to the Baptist's witnessing. But, unfortunately, they do not begin by inquiring about baptism, but about his person.

The questions directed to the Baptist by the delegation (C37.1, C38, C40) have been interpreted from different perspectives by scholars. These interpretations need not contradict each other, but should rather complement one another. According to Bultmann (1941:60), the intention of the question directed to the Baptist, σὺ τίς εἶ, was to inquire into the authorisation of his action. This is the climax of the questions asked by the priests and the Levites. Barrett (1978:172) interprets the deputation's visit to investigate the intentions and personal claims of the Baptist. He thinks that the Fourth Evangelist simply borrowed a familiar Old Testament phrase (e.g. 2 Chron 23:4) to describe these Jewish functionaries. Bernard (1969:35) is more accurate when he states that the question directed to the Baptist, σὺ τίς εἶ, did not concern his name or parentage. What they meant was to ask him who he claimed to be. He understood their meaning immediately, for he rejected at once any pretence of being the Christ. A study of the context proves, the Baptist's answer. The intention of the Fourth Evangelist shows clearly that the delegation simply wanted to know who the Baptist claimed to be.

The question about his person25 is answered26 in the negative by the Baptist. He
is not the Messiah (C37.1). He also denies being Elijah (C39.1) or the Prophet (C41). The important aspect of this testimony of the Baptist as to his identity is not his preaching of penance, but the voice he raises on behalf of Jesus (C46.2, C46.3) (Schnackenburg 1965:279). The Fourth Evangelist stresses the personal pronoun εἷς at the end of C37.1 (Brown 1975:43; Barrett 1978:172; Carson 1991:143). This forceful presentation constituted part of his positive witnessing to confess the true Christ (Carson 1991:143) to show that there is another person who is the Christ. The three titles which the Baptist rejects denote the eschatological Bringer of salvation.

The Fourth Evangelist uses the delegation instrumentally so that the Baptist can witness about the 'Christ' and that the Fourth Evangelist can indicate that the 'Expected One,' Jesus, was the real Messiah who has now arrived. At this time there was no uniform Jewish expectation of a single eschatological figure. This is clear from the questions asked by the priests and the Levites (C34–C38), enquiring whether the Baptist was 'the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet?' According to Brown (1971:46) a majority of the Jews expected the Messiah.29 The two questions (C38.2, C40: διὸ πορεύθης εἶ οὗ; οὗ Ἡλίας εἶ;) asked by the delegation is necessary to move the reader's thought to the area of the 'One expected'. This is only an introduction, giving the Baptist the opportunity to point out that Jesus is the expected Messiah.

3.2.2 The group of Pharisees

In C44 a new group, καὶ ἀπεστάλμενοι ἦσαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισσῶν (C44), appears to emphasise the statement here. He accomplishes this with the conjunction of positive and negative statements and the use of the form of litotes.

27 Scholars generally agree that this denial owes something to polemic against those who rated the Baptist too highly (Barrett 1978:172). Consult Bernard (1969:36) on the disciples of the Baptist whom Paul found at Ephesus.

28 It is missing in the following answers. εἷς is emphatic (Schnackenburg 1965:281; Bernard 1969:40; Carson 1991:146) and already indicates the presence of Jesus. Bernard (1969:36) points out that the Baptist's use of εἷς is one of the features of the narrative (see C43.1, C46.1, C46.3, C49.2–C49.4, C50.3). εἷς brings his distinctive ministry into clear view.

29 Deist (1987:83ff) gives an interesting and valuable overview of a new orientation which the exile brought. He discusses different trends that developed during this time. Some of these trends are of great importance to understand the different 'Messianic confessions' of the Baptist and the first disciples of Jesus in 1:35–51. He points out that the Messianic expectation became evident in the books of the Maccabees. These people placed their hope in a Messiah who would come to lead the Jewish people to independence as in the time of David. Thus, in these circles, the term 'Messiah' is used for the first time to indicate an expected king. Therefore Deist argues that we cannot talk about an Old Testament Messianic expectation: firstly because the term is never used in this way in the Old Testament, and secondly because the inter-testamental idea of a Messiah is then read back too easily into the Old Testament. But, for our purpose, Deist's contribution confirms the fact of a strong Messianic expectation in the New Testament era.

30 According to Bernard (1969:35) 'the Jews' of verse 1:19 are not to be distinguished from...
interrogate the Baptist. While the first group questioned the Baptist about his person, the Pharisees question him about his performance. They ask the Baptist about his baptism, τί οὖν βαπτίζεις. The Fourth Evangelist incorporates them in order to reveal Jesus. The emphasis is not on the Baptist, but on Christ. This is part of the Fourth Evangelist presentation, which is also clear from the rest of chapter 1. Scholars largely agree that the Pharisees wanted to know on whose authority the Baptist had to perform this exercise (Bernard 1969:39; Carson 1991:145).

The Fourth Evangelist was in a more advantageous time-spacial position than the people of the delegation to interpret this action. He knew that the Baptist's baptism was a Messianic action. The baptism focuses on Jesus and wants to reveal him, because the Messianic age has been realised (C49.4). Hence the Baptist's answer in C46 (cf also C49.3, C49.4) indicates that the purpose of baptism by the Baptist is merely to make known the unknown one who is already present; and everybody understood that this unknown One was the awaited Bringer of salvation. He was already there, although no one knew Him. This statement will be heard periodically throughout the Gospel: the 'Jews' are blind; they look for the One who stands among them, without recognising him as the one they are looking for. But no one can recognise Him before there is a witness to proclaim his arrival. This task was to be performed by the Baptist. God, who had sent him, had to give him a sign by which he would recognise the Christ and he, the Baptist, had to state that he was not the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet (Bultmann 1941:64f; Bernard 1969:40). Carson points out that the ἐγὼ in the emphatic phrase ἐγὼ βαπτίζω ἐν ὠδατι (C46.1) will serve as a contrast for the One who will baptise in another medium, the

'the Pharisees' of verse 1:24. Carson (1991:144) maintains that the Pharisees that questioned Jesus were not a second deputation but more likely a sub-group of the deputation. He provides credible motivation for this statement. The question (1:25) they ask presupposes knowledge of the previous exchange and the NEB translates this section as: 'Some Pharisees who were in the deputation asked him'. According to Carson, the Pharisees were so influential that an official delegation could hardly have been sent without a representation from them.

31 It is interesting that the priests, Levites and Pharisees are only used to ask questions in response to which the Baptist gives important information concerning the Messiahship of Jesus. They are used by the Fourth Evangelist as catalysts (Cf Schnackenburg 1965:281). The purpose of their questioning is, as Bultmann (1941:60ff) puts it, 'den das Verhörs soll dem Leser nur die μάρτυρια des Johannes mitteilen'.

32 Bultmann (1941:61) agrees with Schnackenburg, but Carson (1991:145) differs from them. Because of lack of evidence he does not agree that the question of the interrogators should be interpreted to mean that they have all unambiguously identified the Baptists' baptism as an eschatological rite. According to Carson, they wanted to discover on whose authority the Baptist was baptising. He further maintains that if they could not find adequate authority to sanction this extraordinary practice, they would have doubted his eschatological status. If he was neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, then how could his baptism possibly be justified? Once again these differences need not contradict one another. Carson's understanding of this text is also only an assumption, and indirectly implies what Bultmann and Schnackenburg said.
Holy Spirit (C50.4.1). He used this opportunity to bear witness to the hidden Messiah. The Baptist's answer is calculated to shift attention from his own baptism to the action of him who will come after him. In everything the Baptist says, starting from C35, he decreases his own significance to increase the importance of the Messiah (also cf 3:30). His baptism is merely to prepare the people for the arrival of Jesus (Carson 1991:146).

In comparison with the Synoptics (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16), the Fourth Evangelist has deliberately omitted the second part of the testimony of the Baptist in the Synoptics which contrasts the baptism of the Messiah with that of the Baptist (cf C50.4 with C50.4.1). He did this in order to focus attention on the Baptist to indicate that his baptism faded into insignificance beside his testimony. The symbolic character of his baptism disappears; changes into a rite which is carried out merely as a divine command (C50.4), to provide an opportunity of presenting to Israel the giver of baptism in the Spirit (C49.4) (Schnackenburg 1965:281).

Unlike his interrogators, the Baptist has already recognised Jesus through divine revelation (C50.4.1). Thus the event in the next part (C50–C50.6) of his testimony has already taken place. This is suggested by C46.2 μέσος ύμων ἐστηκεν... The Baptist has recognised Jesus standing there amongst them, but still he does not mention the name of the person who is to be expected. Schnackenburg (1965:282) argues that the words ὁν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε (C46.2) indicate that the divine revelation is not given to them and that they lack readiness to accept it. They have only themselves to blame if the Revealer and Saviour remains unknown to them. We hear nothing more about these messengers.

Colon 47 localises all these events ταῦτα ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐγένετο πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ὅπως ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων. According to the scholars there is no agreement regarding the location of this place.

Schnackenburg (1965:281) points out that 'Die fragenden Pharisäer müssten wissen, dass zur messianischen Zeit der Heilige Geist gehört (vgl Ez 36,25f; 37,5f; 39,29; Joel 3,1ff; Is 32,15; 44,3; 59,21), ein blosser Wasserritus also noch keine messianische Funktion erfüllt.'

It seems as if a paradox occurs here. In the Fourth Gospel the statement is made that the Baptist did not recognise Jesus for what he was before his baptism. The account in Mt 3:14f is different. The Baptist is presented here as unwilling to baptise Jesus because he is aware of his Messiahship (Bernard 1969:48). Bernard's solution, that the narrative of the Fourth Gospel is more primitive than the Matthaean tradition, is too simplistic. It is irrelevant here to try to assimilate the presentation of the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel with that of the Synoptics.

See Schnackenburg (1965:283) and Barrett (1978:175; cf also O'Connor 1990:362ff) for a discussion about the uncertainty of Bethesda. See Nortje (1989:573ff) who traces the meaning of the Fourth Evangelist's use of 'Bethany across the Jordan'. According to her this site has more than geographical significance. Her analysis shows the theological purpose. She maintains that this is the spot where the two Johannine 'worlds' meet: The world above and the world below.
3.2.3 The function of the Baptist seen in his testimony before Israel (C48–C50.6)

Like the previous section, this one can also be divided into two parts: Jesus as the ο αμνός τοῦ θεοῦ and 'the pre-existent one' (C48–C49.4); and Jesus as 'vehicle of the Spirit' and ο υίος τοῦ θεοῦ (C50–C50.6). Each part refers to the Baptist baptising with water, that he had seen Jesus, that he testified about Jesus, and that he had not previously recognised him (Brown 1975:58). In the first cluster (C34–47) the Baptist is the main character, but in the second (C48–50.6.1) Jesus appears to take prominence.

A structural analysis reveals the following pattern concerning references to Jesus:

1. Tῇ ἐπούριον βλέπει τὸν Ἰησούν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει:
   (1) ἰδε ... ο αμνός τοῦ θεοῦ
   (2) ὁπίσω μου ... ἐμπροσθέν μου ... προώτος μου ἦν
   καγὼ οὐκ ἤδειν αὐτόν,
   ἵνα φανερωθῇ τῷ Ἰσραήλ
   ἐγὼ ἐν ὑδατί βαπτίζων
   (3) τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαίνον ὡς περιστεράν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐμείνεν ἐπ' αὐτόν.
   καγὼ οὐκ ἤδειν αὐτόν,
   ὁ πέμψας με ... ἐκεῖνός μοι ἔδει
   βαπτίζειν ἐν ὑδατί
   (4) οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.
   (5) οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

This section is convincingly a monologue. The Baptist μαρτυρᾷ περὶ τοῦ φωτός (C13.1). His testimony is clearly structured as indicated here. This structure leads to a climax. There are five clear expressions regarding Jesus which are structured around two sections, each consisting of a statement that the Baptist did not know Jesus, followed by a pronouncement of a revelation, first to Israel, then to the Baptist himself. Each of these sections contains a reference to the Baptist’s baptism with water.

A new situation arises. The Fourth Evangelist indicates this by referring to a new date (C48). His first testimony was directed at the Priests and Levites (C34–44), the second towards the Pharisees (C45–46.3). From C49.3 it seems that he is addressing a new group of people, big enough to represent 'Israel'. The point of his third testimony is: the Messiah, ο αμνός τοῦ θεοῦ (C49.1,C52.1), ο υίος τοῦ θεοῦ (C50.6.1)

The delegates from Jerusalem must have left because they are not mentioned again (Bultmann 1941:65f). Now Jesus appears on the scene so that the Baptist may point to Him, ἰδε ... ὁ αμνός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἵρων τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου (C49.1). We

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16 The phrase ο αμνός τοῦ θεοῦ (C49.1 and C52.1) has both a soteriological and Christological meaning in chapter 1. The explanatory phrase ο αἵρων τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου (C49.1) attributes to ο αμνός τοῦ θεοῦ, a soteriological meaning while in C52.1 it has a Christological
now encounter, for the first time, a formula of revelation (see also C51). ίδε represents a formula used several times in the Fourth Gospel in this same sense (1:36,47; 19:26,27) (Newman & Nida 1980:36; Morris 1975:143). According to Newman and Nida 'The force of this expression is to focus attention on the person referred to and to follow with some description of that person.' His description indeed followed that Jesus is the ὁ ἁμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, with a qualification ὁ αἵρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου. But these words did not immediately cause people to follow Jesus. Later, following a second pronouncement (C54), the two disciples of the Baptist would follow Jesus.

Scholars agree that both the background and the precise meaning of the phrase ὁ ἁμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in this context are difficult to trace. However, they disagree about the meaning of the content and offer different proposals. Newman and Nida (1980) state that these difficulties arise because of disagreement among scholars as to whether the statement should be viewed as a reflection of the theology of the Baptist or of the Fourth Evangelist. The two most popular explanations used by scholars are that ὁ ἁμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ associate: (i) the suffering servant of the Lord derived from Is 52:13–53:12; and (ii) the paschal lamb (cf 19:36) (Sandy 1981:447–479; Roberts 1971:41ff; Charles 1989:75ff). Although the most commonly held explanation is that an allusion is made to the Paschal lamb since Jesus will be crucified when the Paschal Lamb is slaughtered, it would appear that it refers not only to one particular Old Testament metaphor, but rather to different metaphors in a collective sense (see footnote 37). Alternatively we may consider it not to be coincidental that the Fourth Evangelist develops his chronology of events, especially the crucifixion of Jesus, around the Passover Feast (cf Charles 1989:78).

37 Bultmann (1941:66) is of opinion that the meaning of ὁ ἁμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is clearly determined by the terms καθαρτικός, ἀίμα, ἀμαρτία, so that the lamb is thought of as any sacrificial lamb. Barrett (1978:176) agrees with Bultmann, but is more specific about the sacrificial lamb. He says that the Fourth Evangelist’s primary reference is to the Paschal lamb; but the contents cannot be drawn directly from Judaism, since in Judaism the lamb sacrificed at Passover does not take away sins. The Fourth Evangelist is probably thinking here of the Paschal interpretation of the last supper and the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, the Paschal meal, the death of Christ for the remission of sins is portrayed. Schnackenburg (1965:288) is more specific than Bultmann but accommodates a wider perspective than Barrett. He is of the opinion that we have here a pregnant expression with more than one meaning; Wahrscheinlich darf man das Bildwort vom "Lamm Gottes" nicht einseitig auf den "Knecht Gottes" oder das "Paschalam" zurückführen.' In all probability, the metaphor of the ὁ ἁμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is not to be explained either by the 'servant of the Lord' alone or the 'paschal lamb' alone. Other scholars are also of the opinion that the Fourth Evangelist enriches the statement with a complex collage of symbolism. Haenchen (1984:155) suggests that 'the various forms of the portrait of Jesus are kaleidoscopically reflected in C49.1, in which all the details subconsciously work together to form a new image in its own right' (see also Sandy 1981:447ff; Charles 1989:75). For a brief discussion about different backgrounds and indications of meaning see Brown (1975:58ff); Morris (1975:143ff); Barrett (1978:176f); Newman & Nida (1980:36).
This exclamation of C49.1, with its deep theological content, must be seen together with the utterance of C49.2 (cf C28). The Fourth Evangelist starts with the Baptist's testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus to disclose to his readers the unique character of this Messiahship.

The prophetic words spoken in C49.1 are followed by the affirmation that the person designated by οὐτός is the one whom the Baptist has already announced in C46.3 ὁ ὑπόσω μου ἔχομενος (Schnackenburg 1965:289). Jesus is still unknown, while the Baptist is famous. The time has now come for Jesus to appear and to take the place that his pre-existence calls for. He must now increase and the Baptist must decrease (3:30) (Barrett 1978:177). Whereas previously he explained the higher dignity of his successor in C46.3 by means of the symbolic reference of undoing the shoe-laces, he now sums up the matter with: ὃς ἐμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν (C49.2.1). This paradoxical expression, which does not occur in the Synoptics, can only mean that the expression 'He existed before me' indicates the real pre-existence of Jesus. It was the Baptist's testimony about the superiority of Jesus that, to the mind of the Fourth Evangelist, led to the thought of pre-existence (Schnackenburg 1965:290). According to Schnackenburg, this insight has not been derived from the ordinary Jewish thinking on the Messiah, or the voice from heaven, or the revelation given to him at the baptism (cf C17.4, C17.4.1). Schnackenburg is correct when he says that this insight could only have come from the interpretation of the Fourth Evangelist, who was certainly convinced that the divine declaration of Jesus had led the Baptist to understand the Messiahship of Jesus in a higher sense than was possible for the Jews (Schnackenburg 1965:290).

In the verses prior to C49.3, the Baptist witnesses about Jesus, but now turns to his own person and task. The statement καὶ ὃς ὁ διδάσκων αὐτῶν (C49.3) stresses the difference between them. Bernard (1969:48ff) doubts whether the Baptist and Jesus could have known each other in their early years. Although the Fourth Evangelist wrote this (C49.3), it does not mean that the Baptist did not know Jesus at all. It could have been that the Baptist knew Jesus as a person, even as one of his own disciples (cf Koester 1987:73; Charles 1989:79). The point made by the Fourth Evangelist is that the Baptist had not recognised Jesus as the Messiah until he was enlightened by God (Schnackenburg 1965:284). He did not know that Jesus was ὁ ἔχομενος (Barrett 1978:177). Scholars (Schnackenburg 1965, Bernard 1969, Barrett

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38 Schnackenburg (1965:289) correctly states that the Fourth Evangelist interwove elements of the Christian interpretation into the historical narrative. He was less interested in historicising his narrative, but follows a literary genre in which the narrative was employed in the service of faith.

39 Cf 28.1.1 ὁ ὑπόσω μου ἔχομενος ... ἐμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν,
46.3 ὁ ὑπόσω μου ἔχομενος,
49.2.1 ὁ ὑπόσω μου ἔρχεται ἀνήκο ὃς ἐμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν.
1978) agree that the statement made here is that the Baptist did not recognise Jesus for what he was before his baptism. The Baptist's enlightenment from God came at the baptism (Schnackenburg 1965:283). As an ordinary man, he had no idea of the mystery of Jesus, but received a mission from God (διὰ τούτου ἕλθον) namely to make the Messiah known to 'Israel'. 'Israel' always has a positive connotation in the Fourth Gospel (Barrett 1978:177; cf also 1:50; 3:10; 12:13); they are the chosen people of God over whom the Messiah will be king (cf 1:49; 12:13).

'Making him known' probably presupposes that he was initially an obscure person among the people, until the day on which his identity was revealed. This is actually the mission of the Baptist as baptiser (as the εὐαγγελίζει; Schnackenburg 1965:303). Neither the Baptist nor his baptism has any independent significance; they exist in order to bear witness (C13f) to Christ, who alone takes away sin and also confers the Spirit (Barrett 1978:177). The Baptist knows that his purpose is that the Expected One should be made manifest (Bernard 1969:48). He is also aware of the authority he enjoys. In C50.4 he speaks of 'the One (God) who sent [him] to baptise' (Carson 1991:146).

In C50–C50.2 the testimony of C49.3 and C49.4 is explained. The Baptist saw the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus like a dove and rest upon him (cf Lk 4:18).

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40 The verb ψωλωθεμεν always indicates 'emergence from mysterious obscurity, and a sudden breaking forth into clear light' (Bernard 1969:48; cf also 2:11; 3:21). According to Schnackenburg (1965:303) the duty of 'making him known' probably presupposed a Jewish notion that before the revelation of the Messiah one day, he was to dwell unknown among the people. In colon 46 the Pharisees are given an obscure suggestion about the Baptist's mission, while here in semi-colon 49.4 its positive objective is expressed (Schnackenburg 1965:303).

41 Bernard (1969:51) points out the difference in meaning of the baptism of the Baptist in the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel. In the Synoptics baptism involved 'repentance with a view to the remission of sins'. In the Fourth Gospel there may be an indication in 3:25 of an association of the Baptist's ministry with the idea of purification. The objective of the Baptist's baptism was to reveal Jesus (C49.4; cf colon 13), while the contents of the baptism was the symbolic act of purification. Josephus' (Antiquities 18. 5. 2) reference to the Baptist's ministry of baptism suggests that it was addressed in particular to those who were dedicating themselves to an ascetic life of virtue. That this was a symbolic act of dedication and purification is clear from the fact that Jesus agreed, at the beginning of his ministry, to be baptised by the Baptist.

42 It is clear from all the Gospels that the Baptist's ministry was a baptism ἐν ὁληθρίῳ, while Jesus' ministry was a baptism ἐν πνεύματι ἁπάντω. Three times (C46.1, C49.4, C50.4) the Baptist declared that his baptism was only ἐν ὁληθρίῳ. With the previous texts in mind, where the Baptist depicted this contrast of 'water' and 'spirit' in his ministry of baptism, his intention was to indicate that it was only preparatory to, and symbolical of, a greater ministry that was at hand (Bernard 1969:52). We find several references by the prophets to incidents where water was used as a symbol of the Spirit (cf Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:25; Joel 2:28; Cf also Jn 4:14; 7:38).

43 The baptism of Jesus is only suggested here and not as fully explained as it is in the Synoptics. The Fourth Gospel differs from Mark. The Fourth Gospel portrays the Baptist who saw the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus as a dove, while the Synoptic portrayals are dedicated to Jesus Himself. The event is no longer important to Jesus, but only to the Baptist, for the pur-
According to Schnackenburg (1965:303; cf Sjöberg 1959:382) 'Der volle und ständige Geistbesitz ist das auszeichnende Charakteristikum des Messias (vgl. Is 9,2; 61,1)'. In the Fourth Gospel the Fourth Evangelist declares that the Baptist was assigned the task of giving this information to the people.

From a structural point of view, as previously indicated, C50.6.1 ends the subsection (C34–C50.6.1) which concerns 'the witness of the Baptist.' As C34 begins with Καὶ αὐτὴ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου..., so C50.6 ends with μεμαρτύρησα.... (Brown 1975:67). The conclusion⁴⁴ and contentional climax of his testimony is that he, the Baptist, has realised and testifies that Jesus is the ὁ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ ⁴⁵ (50.6.1). This testimony has revealed the Messianic status of Jesus. In C54 the witness of the Baptist reaches a reactional climax when two of his disciples decide to follow Jesus. Thus the contentional climax is followed by a responsive climax.

Structurally this whole section (C34–54) leads to a theological climax. This becomes clear from the exegesis and can be depicted diagrammatically as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th><strong>Delegation of Jews</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dialogue about the</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>identification of Jesus</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>(Implicitly)</em></td>
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<td>Day 2</td>
<td><strong>Israel</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Monologue by John:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Identification of Jesus</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ends in Son of God</strong></td>
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<td><em>(Explicitly)</em></td>
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<td>Day 3</td>
<td><strong>Two Disciples</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Follow Jesus</strong></td>
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</table>

pose of identification (Bultmann 1941:64). Only here it is affirmed that the Spirit remained upon Jesus (see Lk 4:18). Schnackenburg (1965:303) and Barrett (1978:175) agree that the event described in C50 took place before the Baptist saw Jesus and proclaimed him ὁ ἀρχων τοῦ θεοῦ (C49.1).

⁴⁴ This statement is a conclusion, and the climax of the whole testimony of the Baptist. The reasons are: (1) καὶ ἦν ἐκείνη ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου (C50.5 and 50.6) are both in the perfect tense to indicate that this action continues. (2) Semi-cola 50.5f should have taken place before the events which started in colon 34. Therefore the position of this verse, at the end of the Baptist's testimony, indicates emphasis.

⁴⁵ Scholars do not agree on the reading of this text. Brown (1975:57) pointed out that the
The Baptist's testimony ends in verse C52.1, where his exclamation ἰδε ὁ ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ (C52.1) is still part of his witness. He then disappears from the scene until we read about him again in ch 3. C51–C54 form the junction between the two pericopes (vv 19–34 and 35–51).

3.2.4 The result of the Baptist's mission as seen in the decision of his disciples to follow Jesus (1:35–37)

The reference to a new day (Γῆ ἐπαύξετο—C51), as in the case of C48, is meant to link the following scene closely with the testimony given by the Baptist. The moment when the Baptist sees Jesus passing by, his acclamation contains the saying: ἰδε ὁ ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ. According to Bultmann (1941:69) this is sufficient indication for the disciples to understand that they have to leave their master (1:37) and literally follow (ἦκολούθησαν—C54) Jesus. In these verses 'we see the first disciples moving over from Judaism (v 47) and John the Baptist (v 35) to Jesus and his fulfilment of what Judaism and the Baptist meant' (Barrett 1978:179f). Up to this stage they have not yet attained faith in Jesus. The stage that they have reached at this point is represented by 'Come and see' (vv 38,46), and 'You shall see' (v 51). The goal of this movement towards Jesus is reached at 2:11 when the glory of Jesus is revealed and the disciples believe in him.

Although it is clear from the Fourth Gospel that true discipleship can only be realised after the resurrection of Jesus and the giving of the Spirit, the events in 1:35–51 are only an indication of how people finally decide to follow Jesus. The confessions of these people about the Messiahship of Jesus place this narrative in another situation (a different level), namely that of the Fourth Evangelist. At this level the narrative would relate to discipleship, in order to indicate how people come to follow Jesus, i.e. because they perceive his identity. On the level of the Johannine community ἤκολούθησαν is used metaphorically by the Fourth Evangelist for the dedication of faith (cf 8:12 with 12:36; also 10:4f,27). This ἤκολούθησαν of Jesus is the first step to faith on the part of the two disciples which in the end could lead to

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vast majority of Greek witnesses read ὁ ὑιός τοῦ θεοῦ (C50.6.1). Bultmann (1941) and Bernard (1969) also prefer this reading. But despite the weaker textual evidence for another reading, ἐκλεκτὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (cf C50.6.1), most scholars, Schnackenburg (1965), Morris (1975), Brown (1975), Barrett (1978), and Carson (1991) have chosen this reading.

46 The direct identification of the Baptist is an indirect identification of Jesus. In the questions directed to the Baptist in connection with his identity he neglected to be ὁ Χριστὸς (C37.1). Even the question in connection with the baptism of the Baptist refers to ὁ Χριστὸς (C45.1,C46.23).

47 Brown (1971:78; cf also Vellanickal 1980 and Palatty 1987) refers to this text as a summary of discipleship in its whole development, seen from the perspectives of the Fourth Evangelist and the Johannine community to which this gospel was written.
‘remaining’ with Jesus: to be in permanent fellowship with him (Schnackenburg 1965:305ff).

The text contains no indication that the Baptist expects his followers to become disciples of Jesus. It is clear from Acts 19:1-7 that some people did associate themselves with the baptism of the Baptist, even after his death. But it is reasonable to accept that at least some of the Baptist’s disciples (probably those who understood him the best) discovered that their master was constantly pointing beyond himself to another one, bigger than himself (3:30). When the moment of identification came, it was only to be expected that some of his disciples would follow Jesus. When this happened, it did not mean that these disciples abandoned their master, but rather that they understood his teaching. This the Baptist understood (3:27-30) (cf Carson 1991:154).

The Fourth Gospel does not mention why the Baptist did not follow Jesus as well. The most obvious reason, deduced from the Fourth Gospel, is that the Baptist had to continue with his mission: to keep on witnessing about (revealing) Jesus (γιν μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός C13.1,C15,34). In 3:23 the Fourth Evangelist indicates that the Baptist continued with his mission: ἕν δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων ἐν Αἰλὼν ἠγγέλ τοῦ Σαλείμ, οτι ὅταν πολλά ἦν ἐκεῖ, καὶ παρεῖνοντο καὶ ἔβαπτίζοντο because ἑκείνον (Jesus) δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμε δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι (3:30).

4 CONCLUSION

We have seen that the Fourth Evangelist put together a masterpiece. The material he used and arranged was deliberately and purposefully selected to move towards his main objective (20:31) and to accomplish his secondary objectives (1:6-8). When looking at the main objective of this subsection (1:19-37), we have to ask what the Fourth Evangelist had in mind and how he characterised and used the Baptist to realise his objective. From the content of 1:5–8,15 and 1:19–37 it is clear that he wanted to reveal Jesus to his readers. He used the person and performance of the Baptist, the different characters, the composition of the material, the judicial over­tone of the Baptist’s witnessing and features such as emphasis,48 repetition,49 contrast50 and pregnant expressions51 to reveal Jesus as the Messiah so that in the

48 Words emphasized are: ἐγὼ (C37.1,C46.1), ὠμολογησεν (C35,37), and Θεος (C49.1,C52.1).

49 Words repeated are: μαρτυρία (C34,50,C50.6); ὠμολόγησεν (C35,37); βαπτίζων (45.1,C46.1,C47, C49.4,C50.4,C50.4.1); ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμί (C37.1,C39.1, C46.3;cf C45.1); ὁ θεος τοῦ Θεος (C49.1,C52.1); ὁ ὑπὲρ μου ἔχει μνείαν (C46.3,C49.2.1); βλέπει (C48,52); ὁ θεος (C50.3,C50.4.1); ἑβάπτασα (C50.4); οὐκ ἐθάνατε (C46.2,C49.3,C50.3).

50 Words of contrast are: τι οὖν...οὐκ εἰμί (C38.39); ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι...οὗτος ἐστιν (see previous footnote); ὁπίσω μοι ἐξεκέκται ἄνηγ δε ἐμπροσθῖν μου γέφυραν (C49.2.1; cf C46.3); καγώ (γιού) οὐκ ἔδειν αὐτὸν ... καγὼ ἐκατάκα (C46.3,C49.3,C50.5); ἐγὼ ἐν ἰδίῃ βαπτίζων... οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἄγιῳ (C49.4,C50.4.1).

51 Pregnant expressions are ὁ ἄνω τοῦ Θεος (C49.1,C52.1); πρωτός μοι ἔνα (C49.2.1); l
end the readers would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:31). When people realised who Jesus was, they would come to him and follow him.

We can conclude that John the Baptist played a major role in the demonstration of the first and second phases of discipleship. The entire process of discipleship started with him. He served as a catalyst, which caused two of his disciples to follow Jesus (1:35–51). True discipleship would only be realised after Jesus' resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit.

It is necessary to distinguish between the historical situation of the Baptist and that of the Johannine community:

(i) In the case of the historical situation of the Baptist, the emphasis is explicitly on the identity of Jesus and implicitly on 'the act of following Jesus'. People must perceive who Jesus is in order to follow him.

(ii) In the case of the historical situation of the Johannine community, the emphasis is explicitly on discipleship (to come to Jesus and follow him through the hearing of the Gospel) and implicitly on the identity of Jesus (after perceiving who he is, they will follow him in discipleship).

The different characters and groups of people the Fourth Evangelist uses in 1:19–37 are: (1) the Baptist; (2) the Jewish delegation consisting of two subgroups, namely (a) Priests and Levites and (b) Pharisees; (3) Israel; and (4) the disciples of the Baptist. Of importance is that the Fourth Evangelist uses

* the Baptist to witness about the Light
* the Jewish delegation to give official status to this witness (the delegation serves as catalysts for the Baptist to give his testimonies)
* Israel, who were expecting the Messiah, and to whom he revealed the Messiah for the first time, and
* the two disciples of the Baptist who were the first to react to this testimony by following Jesus.

The Fourth Evangelist arranges them by way of concentric circles on the basis of their relationship with and response to Jesus throughout the Fourth Gospel. The

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(1:20,26): the ἐγώ in C37.1 also implies the 'He' which will in this context refer to Jesus. All these expressions concern indications of Jesus.

52 The term 'demonstration' infers how it will happen that people will come to follow Jesus. This refers to the first phase of discipleship where people come to realize the identity of Jesus, which will encourage them to follow Jesus. The second phase of discipleship is to live a new way of life in Christ which corresponds with the agency of Jesus. This can be summarized as follows: first phase: people come to Jesus; second phase: Jesus lives through them. These two phases are spelled out in the two sections of the Fourth Gospel (chs 1–12 and 13–21). In chs 1–12 the disciples are depicted as people following Jesus and other characters as coming to Jesus (e.g., the Samaritan woman, the man born blind). In Jn 13ff Jesus is involved in teaching his disciples what this new life, in his company, comprises and in chapters 18–21 the Beloved Disciple is used by the Fourth Evangelist to model true discipleship.
Baptist first witnesses to the delegation who, according to the Fourth Gospel, seem to oppose of Jesus (Cf Carson 1991:142). He then witnesses to Israel who seem to represent the unfaithful and held a more neutral position. Lastly, he witnesses to the people who became the close disciples of Jesus. Here we see progression of events building up to a climax—following Jesus. The whole performance of the Baptist revolves around the identity of Jesus—when people perceive who Jesus is, they will follow Him. This phenomenon is also seen in John 4, which relates the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Even the content of the different testimonies supports this statement. The Baptist was vague concerning the content of his testimony towards the Priests and the Levites in the first group: his answers to the questions directed at him are in the negative and do not give any indication of who the Messiah is. He was also vague towards the Pharisees, but gave more information: he referred to Jesus without using any name or specific indication. Towards the second group, Israel, he specifically pointed at Jesus and qualified him as ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰων ἡμῖν ἡ ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου. Where the delegation directed questions to the Baptist to which he responded, this group of people did not ask any questions. The Baptist witnessed spontaneously to them. He was also specific towards the last group, his own disciples, but with more emphasis in his testimony. His testimony rather seems to have been an exclamation. In comparison with his testimony that Jesus was ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in 1:29, this second in 1:35 was shorter (without the predicate) and carries more emphasis. It leads to the reactional climax of the Baptist's witness; his disciples followed Jesus (1:37)! The Fourth Evangelist leads the reader through these stages, building up to a climax so that the reader can decide for himself whether or not to choose and to follow Jesus as the two disciples of the Baptist did. 'Thus in the early part of the Fourth Gospel, we encounter climactic testimony by the witness par excellence, John the Baptist, whose statements will serve as the foundation upon which the rest of the Gospel narrative is built' (Charles 1989:83).

The Fourth Evangelist thus closely interweaves the theological function of the Baptist which he had in mind with his historical portrayal of the Baptist. The Baptist is depicted by the Fourth Evangelist as one with whom the reader can identify. Three important aspects regarding 'the following of Jesus' are depicted in the presentation of the Baptist. The following aspects in the Baptist's life are emphasised: (i) He was sent with a mission—the Μαρτυρίος, (ii) his primary objective was that his message and his baptismal deeds point at Jesus—ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, the Baptiser in the Spirit, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, (his deeds related to his testimony about the identity of Jesus) (iii) his secondary objective was to bring people (the antagonists [enemies: C34–46.3] of Jesus, the Jews [unbelievers: C48–50.6.1] and the disciples [disciples of the Baptist: C51–52.1]) to meet with Jesus and subsequently to follow him.

WORKS CONSULTED


Dr D G van der Merwe, Department of Religious Studies, VISTA University, Private Bag X641, Pretoria, 0001 South Africa.