

Who Baptized: Jesus or His Disciples?

—Reconsidering the Aside in John 4:2 from the Perspectives of
Christology and Discipleship in the Johannine Narrative—

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I. Introduction

Concerning the problem of Jesus' involvement in baptism no consensus has yet been reached by scholars. Did Jesus baptize people, as the Fourth Gospel implies in 3:22, 26 and 4:1? Although the majority think that Jesus was involved in baptismal activity, a few are "less convinced."¹ Central to the

¹ See, G.H. Twelftree, "Jesus the Baptist" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 7 (2009) 104. Twelftree made a list of scholars on both sides. Among scholars who are less convinced that Jesus was involved in baptism he includes: Carl H. Kraeling (*John the Baptist* [London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951] 146), Craig S. Keener (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [vol. 1; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003] 587-88). Meanwhile, among those who think that Jesus baptized people he mentions: Joan Taylor (*The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997] 295), George R. Beasley-Murray (*Baptism in the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973] 68-69), Simon Légasse ("Le Baptême administré par Jésus (Jn 3,22-26; 4,1-3) et l'origine du baptême chrétien," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 78 [1977] 3-30), Markus Bockmuehl (*This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* [London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004], 123). A prominent commentator such as C. K. Barrett (*The Gospel According to St. John—An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* [London: SPCK, 1978] 230) is open to the possibility that Jesus was involved in baptismal activity. He writes, "No other gospel states that Jesus or his disciples baptized during his ministry, but it is not impossible that they did so, especially if the mission of Jesus was (as the synoptics also suggest) closely connected in its origin with that of John." (p. 230). R. E. Brown (*The Gospel According to John* [AB 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966] 151) thinks that Jesus was initially involved in baptismal activity, but at this point the "baptism is probably not to be thought of as Christian Baptism which in NT thought receives its efficacy from the

problem is the *Aside*² in 4:2 which seemingly contradicts what has been said previously (in 3:22, 26 and 4:1) that it was not Jesus but the disciples who actually administered the baptism. The question remains and, as long as the quest for the historical Jesus continues, scholarly debate will most likely continue.

In this article I attempt to show that, whether or not Jesus baptized can be assured historically, the aside in 4:2 serves the Johannine theological purpose. A literary-narrative analysis of the passage will help us to see that the aside in 4:2 can be considered as another example of the Christological character of the Johannine presentation of discipleship.³ Within the Johannine narrative context, the aside shows the author's tendency to present a Christological teaching that is closely intertwined with his teaching on discipleship.

1. Scholarly Approaches to the Aside in 4:2

Prominent scholars and commentators have often considered the aside in 4:2 as a result of the redactional or editorial process that the Fourth Gospel has undergone. R. E. Brown, for example, suggests that the aside in 4:2 "serves as

crucifixion and resurrection." In Brown's view, "Jesus' departure from Judea seems to mean the end of his ministry of baptizing; henceforth his ministry will be one of word and sign." (p. 165). Meanwhile, Twelftree's own historical reconstruction is that after his baptism by John, Jesus became John's colleague and was involved in preaching, baptizing, and healing. Then after his transition from John's model of wilderness-based ministry to his own distinctive public ministry, Jesus baptized no more. For Jesus, in Twelftree's view, the baptismal act is meant to prepare for the coming of the kingdom. Thus, having convinced that the *eschaton* has already come, the act has become irrelevant.

² Concerning the *Aside* in the Fourth Gospel, see Merrill C. Tenney, "The Footnotes of John's Gospel," *BSac* 117 (1960) 350-64; John J. O'Rourke, "Asides in the Gospel of John," *NovT* 21 (1979) 210-219; Tom Thatcher, "A New Look at Asides in the Fourth Gospel," *BSac* 151 (1994) 428-39.

³ I have discussed the intertwined relationship of Christology and discipleship within the Johannine narrative in my published dissertation. See, M. P. Hera, *Christology and Discipleship in John 17* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

almost indisputable evidence of the presence of several hands in the composition of John.”⁴ C. H. Dodd regards 4:2 as “a parenthesis which ruins the sentence, and perhaps has a better claim to be regarded as an ‘editorial note’ by a ‘redactor’....”⁵ Likewise, B. Lindars points out that “grammatically the verse is a parenthesis, and ..., may well be an editorial addition, to bring John into line with the Synoptic tradition.”⁶ So also J. P. Meier in his quest of the historical Jesus agrees with Dodd and others to attribute the aside to a later redactor. Meier writes: “[The redactor] apparently found the idea of Jesus baptizing objectionable, and in his usual wooden, mechanical way he issues a ‘clarification’ correcting any false impression the narrative might give.”⁷

R. Bultmann is more cautious in this regard. While holding the idea that 4:2 is “an editorial gloss,” he expresses a doubt by asserting that “it is hard to see why the editor did not make the correction at 3.22.”⁸ F. F. Bruce is more affirmative about the presence of the aside within its narrative context. He

⁴ Raymond E. Brown (*The Gospel according to John* [AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966] 164) proposes that the final redactor made the clarification because he “was afraid that the sectarians of John the Baptist would use Jesus’ baptizing as an argument that he was only an imitator of John the Baptist.” The presence of the unusual word *καίτοιγε* (a *hapax legomenon* in John as well as in the whole NT) is often taken as an indication of the involvement of a different hand. See also, R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Translated by G. Beasley-Murray. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971) 176.

⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 311.

⁶ B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (Greenwood: Attic, 1977) 177.

⁷ J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew* (vol. 2; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 122. Meier argues that in asserting that it was actually the disciples who baptized and not Jesus, the redactor shared, although independently, the Synoptics’ tradition (in which there is no account of Jesus’ involvement in baptismal activity). Here, in Meier’s view, “the criterion of embarrassment” is at play. For the later redactor, just as for the Synoptics’ authors, it is embarrassing to put Jesus “too much in the permanent shadow of the Baptist.”

⁸ R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Translated by G. Beasley-Murray. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971) 176. Bultmann, Brown (*The Gospel according to John*, 164), and C. K. Barret (*The Gospel according to St. John—An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978] 230) points to *καίτοιγε*, which is a *hapax legomenon* in John, as an indication that 4:2 comes from a different hand.

admits the possibility that 4:2 might have been the work of an editor, but he thinks that “it does not, however, contradict the substance of the previous verse or the report of John 3:26.”⁹

Meanwhile, other scholars and commentators pay more attention to the theological implication of 4:2. Going back to the time of the Fathers, John Chrysostom gave a theological explanation to the passage. Chrysostom explained that the evangelist gives further clarification in 4:2 because Jesus had not yet given the Spirit. This is why he did not baptize. Yet his disciples did because they wanted to bring as many to faith as possible.¹⁰ Augustine insists that in 4:2 the disciples baptized through the authority of Christ. “They performed the service of baptizing. The power of baptizing remained in Christ.”¹¹ Wolfgang Musculus, a commentator from the time of reformation, argued that the ministry of baptizing is performed by the disciples because it is of less importance. The ministry of preaching the gospel, which is more important than the ritual of baptism, is done by Jesus himself.¹²

Modern scholars such as F. J. Moloney think that the issue here is “a proliferation of baptizers!” At first the narrator tells us that there was only

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 100. Bruce writes, “He who acts through a duly appointed agent is the real author of the act performed.” Thus, in his view, the statement in 4:2 substantially does not contradict 4:1, because Jesus is the real actor in baptism, although he acts through his disciples.

¹⁰ Philip Schaff, *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (NPNF 1 14; Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1956) 100.

¹¹ Joel C. Elowsky (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament IV a John 1-10* (Downers Grove (IL): InterVarsity, 2006) 142. To underline Jesus’ authority over the baptismal ministry by the disciples, Augustine further explains that even if baptism was administered by Judas Iscariot, as long as he was still among the disciples, it was done under the authority of Christ. “Those whom Judas baptized, Christ baptized.”

¹² Craig S. Farmer, *Reformation Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IV, John 1–12* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014) 121. Musculus refers to the event in Acts (10:48), in which Peter does not baptize Cornelius and his family but he orders them to be baptized, presumably by someone other than himself. Musculus also points out that the apostle Paul insists that he was not sent to baptize but to preach the gospel (1 Cor 1:17).

“one baptizer, John (1:28); then there were two, John and Jesus (3:22-23); now there are many baptizers, all the disciples of Jesus (4:2).”¹³ The increase in the number of baptizers is so that more people may come to Jesus.

J. R. Michaels explains the aside in terms of technicality. He asserts that “if Jesus sponsored and supervised a ministry of baptism in Judea, it is fair to say he ‘was baptizing,’ whether he personally anointed or dipped candidates in the waters of the region or whether his disciples did it for him.”¹⁴ Accordingly, in Michael’s view, 4:2 is not a “serious denial” of the previous account that Jesus baptized. He suggests that the aside in 4:2 is meant to be the author’s further clarification to differentiate Jesus from John. Jesus is not merely a baptizer like John.¹⁵

The argument that 4:2 is an evidence for an editorial process is worth taking into consideration from the source and redactional point of view. Yet, are these approaches sufficient to explain the presence of 4:2 within the Johannine narrative? The editorial hypothesis, as T. Brodie has pointed out, “does not really explain why 4:2 is as it is.”¹⁶ Arguing that it is unlikely that an editorial process takes place here, Brodie then proposes that the author’s purpose for the assertion in 4:2 is “to alert the reader to the fact that ... Jesus is changing roles. He no longer does all the things he used to do.”¹⁷

From the narrative point of view, Brodie points to the right direction. Editorial hypothesis attempts to explain the genesis of the text, but it does not explain why 4:2 is as it is in terms of its significance within the whole context

¹³ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, (SacPag 4; Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997) 116.

¹⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010) 234.

¹⁵ Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 233-234.

¹⁶ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John – A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 220.

¹⁷ Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, 220.

of the Johannine narrative. However, I do not share Brodie's view that 4:2 underlines a changing of role. Brodie comes up with this view because he interprets the passage of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman that immediately follows 4:2 as a narrative that evokes Jesus' final hour.¹⁸ Thus, before the coming of the hour it is time for the disciples to replace Jesus. However, as I will argue later, if the relationship between Jesus and his disciple is taken into account, 4:2 speaks about interchange of role, rather than "change" of role, as Brodie proposes.

Thus, although various proposals based on historical or literary and theological analysis of this passage have been offered to explain the aside in 4:2, there is still a significant point that needs to be taken into account in order to understand the significance of the aside within its literary context. In my view, the aside is not merely "a mechanical way ... [that] issues a 'clarification' correcting any false impression the narrative might give,"¹⁹ as Meier suggests. Or, the author's belated comment cannot simply be considered as "an appeal to a technicality, who actually baptized," as Michael proposes.²⁰

Here I attempt to show that, whether or not the historical proof for the presence of another hand involved in the final redaction of John can be established and whether or not Jesus baptized can be assured historically, the passage serves the Johannine theological purpose. The aside in 4:2 is in line with the overall Johannine narrative strategy to impart the teaching on Christology and discipleship as a closely intertwined message. A literary narrative analysis of John 4:2 will help us to see the relationship.

¹⁸ Brodie (*The Gospel According to John*, 221) takes the element of Jesus' exhaustion in 4:6 and the reference to the giving of the Spirit in the dialogue with the Samaritan woman as pointing to Jesus' death and glorification.

¹⁹ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2, 121-122.

²⁰ Michael, *The Gospel of John*, 234.

2. Pursuing the Author's Intention: A Literary Narrative Analysis of the Aside in 4:2

Apart from the historical standpoint, as Michaels has pointed out, one can deal with this issue from a literary point of view. If the historical approach asks whether Jesus baptized people (as John did), the literary approach focuses on the author's intention in telling the narrative in a particular way. Michaels is right in suggesting that one "must decide whether to look at it from the standpoint of historicity ..., or from the standpoint of the Gospel writer's literary intention."²¹ In his view, if the historical question is "Was the historical Jesus in fact a baptizer like John?" then the question for the author's literary intention is "Does this Gospel intend to present Jesus as a baptizer like John?" To this later question Michaels gives a negative answer. He suggests that through the aside the author intends to underline that Jesus is not simply a baptizer as John is.

I agree with Michaels on this point that within its literary context the aside in 4:2 is the author's literary strategy to underscore his theological view concerning Jesus; here, by way of a comparison to John. Jesus is greater than John, as the narrator has portrayed in John's witness about Jesus so far in the narrative (1:6, 15, 23, 27, 30; 3:28-30). However, limiting the question of the author's literary intention only to Jesus relation to John does not do justice to this passage. One should also ask, "how does the author, through the aside, intend to present Jesus in relation to the disciples?" This question is crucial because by saying that it was not Jesus but his disciples who baptized, the narrator seems to have not only transferred the responsibility of the Pharisees' threat (in 4:1) from Jesus to his disciples, but he also attributes what previously (in 3:22, 26 and 4:1) has been described as an action of Jesus to be an action of

²¹ Michael, *The Gospel of John*, 233.

his disciples. Therefore, how the author perceives Jesus in relation to the disciples needs to be properly taken into consideration.

So far in the narrative John has portrayed the disciples as a believing community responding to Jesus' revelation with faith. The disciples are introduced for the first time in the story of the two disciples of John who became the disciples of Jesus after hearing John's witness about Jesus (1:36). The disciples applied various Christological titles to Jesus (1:41, 49). This shows that within the Johannine narrative context the disciples follow Jesus and stay with him on the basis of their knowledge of him.²² Jesus' promise that the disciples will see greater things (1:50) begins to be realized when they witness Jesus' first sign at Cana (2:1-11). They respond to the revelation of Jesus' glory (δόξα) with faith. They believe in Jesus (2:11).

In the story of the cleansing of the temple, John portrays the disciples as a community whose faith in Jesus is deepened through their remembrance of the Scripture (2:17) and, in a post-resurrection perspective, their remembrance of the words of Jesus (2:22).²³ Then in 3:22 John portrays the disciples involved in Jesus' baptismal activity.

Thus, so far in the narrative, the author of the Fourth Gospel portrays the

²² R. Alan Culpepper (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983] 116) notes: "In sharp contrast to the Gospel of Mark, where the disciples struggle without much success to discern who Jesus is, in John they know from the very beginning. The disciples do not have the benefit of the prologue's affirmation of Jesus' pre-existence, but other than that the disciples have a fair start with the reader; both know who Jesus is,"

²³ On the relationship of "remembrance" and "faith," in the Fourth Gospel see, Josaphat C. Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (WUNT 2, 299; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015). Tam summarizes the apprehension of Jesus in the opening section of the Johannine narrative (1:19-2:22) in the following three points: "(1) Faith comes from seeing, knowing, and following Jesus, which leads to confessing his identity and further apprehension promised. (2) Faith develops further in seeing miraculous signs. (3) Faith is refreshed further through remembrance and reflection on the Scriptures and on Jesus' historic words, through which the readers are involved." (63). Notice that in all three steps, the disciples play a central role.

disciples as a believing community that responds to Jesus' revelation with faith. They come to Jesus, follow him, remain with him, remember his words, and express their faith in him. For the audience they are a good example of what the author intends to achieve through his witness: believing in Jesus (20:31). Reading the aside in 4:2 within this context, the aside also functions as further elaboration of Jesus' relationship with his disciples.

In 4:1, the narrator tells the audience that when Jesus realized that the Pharisees had heard that he was making disciples and baptizing (μαθητὰς ποιεῖ καὶ βαπτίζει) more people than John, he left Judea and returned to Galilee (vv. 1, 3). Previously in the narrative the audience has been told that Jesus was indeed baptizing in Judea (3:22), and that the disciples of John have noticed that Jesus is more successful than John (3:26). Here the audience are told that Jesus now holds the same view as what John's disciples report to their master.²⁴

But rivalry with John is not the reason for which Jesus' departure from Judea.²⁵ What seems to lie in Jesus' concern is that the Pharisees had heard about this fact. The Pharisees had once sent delegates to question John about his ministry of baptism (1:24). Is Jesus trying to avoid the Pharisees by returning to Galilee? But one may ask, "Is there no threat from the Pharisees in Galilee?" Yet, this is not a concern within the narrative. Instead, the narrator quickly adds that Jesus himself actually did not baptize. The audience, through an aside, is being privileged with knowledge of the inside story possessed by the omniscient narrator: it was his disciples (οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ) who baptized (v. 2). In 4:3 the narrator continues to recount that despite the fact that it was not Jesus but the disciples who baptized, Jesus left Judea and once again

²⁴ Michael, *The Gospel of John*, 231.

²⁵ On the contrary, John has testified about Jesus and two of his disciples followed Jesus (1:37). John has also admitted that "He must increase; I must decrease" (3:30).

(παλίιν) returned to Galilee.

When the aside in 4:2 is read within its immediate context (4:1 and 4:3), there is a brief (temporary) movement in the narrative focus. It moves from Jesus (4:1) to the disciples (4:2) and back to Jesus (4:3). Jesus remains the central figure of the narrative. It is Jesus who makes and baptizes disciples. And it is Jesus who takes the initiative to travel from Judea to Galilee where he had to (ἔδει)²⁶ pass through Samaria (4:4) in order to avoid the Pharisees.²⁷ This journey back to Galilee brought Jesus to a well where he encountered a Samaritan woman (4:4-42). This journey is Jesus' journey. All the verbs in 4:1-7 are in the third person singular. It refers to Jesus as the one who takes the action. Yet, Jesus is not traveling alone but with his disciples, as is implied in 4:8. The reason for the journey is because of the baptismal activity which is done by the disciples but attributed to Jesus. The presence of the disciples, although in the background of the narrative, is crucial not only to bring the narrative forward, but also to clarify the Johannine theological concern. When John clarifies Jesus' identity, it is not for its own sake. It functions, at the same time, to define the identity of the disciples. Here, 4:2 plays a significant role.

Jesus remains the central figure in the narrative, yet the brief movement in the narrative focus from Jesus to the disciples underscores the Johannine

²⁶ Scholars hold different views on whether the necessity to pass through Samaria is a geographical or theological one. Brown (*The Gospel of John*, 1, 169), Leon Morris (*The Gospel according to John* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971] 226), Moloney (*The Gospel of John*, 116) think that the use of ἔδει here is theological. On the other hand, Bultmann (*The Gospel of John*, 176), Barrett (*The Gospel according to St. John*, 230), Rudolf Schnackenburg (*The Gospel according to John* [Vol. 1; translated by David Smith and G. A. Kon; New York: Crossroad, 1982] 422) tend to suggest that it is a geographical necessity. From a narrative point of view, passing through Samaria enables the narrative to move forward.

²⁷ By explicitly mentioning Judea and Galilee here as the starting point and the destination of Jesus' journey, the narrator helps the audience to appreciate the reason for Jesus' passing through Samaria. It is the shortest route between the two regions. See, Michael, *The Gospel of John*, 235.

theological perception that between Jesus and the disciples there is interchange of role and responsibility. On the one hand, the disciples take Jesus' role of baptizing people and, in doing so, making disciples for Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus takes the responsibility for the disciples' baptizing by leaving the region of Judea, presumably to avoid the threat from the Pharisees. Thus, if the author's intention in portraying Jesus in relation to the disciples is taken into consideration, it is sufficient to say that the aside in 4:2 displays an intertwined relationship between Jesus and the disciples, and accordingly, between the Johannine teaching on Christology and discipleship. I will further elaborate on this in the next section.

3. The Movement from Christology to Discipleship in 4:2

In saying that Jesus baptizes and makes more disciples, but then quickly explaining that it was the disciples who baptize, John does not contradict himself. Even if the aside may have come from a later hand (redactor), the phrase does not disrupt the logic of the narrative but instead enables it to move forward. By doing so John attains his theological purpose in presenting who Jesus is. Here, John presents Jesus' identity through the intertwined relationship with the disciples. The aside in 4:2, therefore, can be seen as another example to show that in John the Christological teaching is not an end in itself but one that leads to the teaching on discipleship.²⁸ The intertwined relationship of Christology and discipleship in this passage can be explained in the following three points:

First, the aside displays John's tendency to portray Jesus as the model for the disciples. For John, the disciples do what Jesus does. The act of the teacher

²⁸ On the relationship between Christology and discipleship in John see, Hera, *Christology and Discipleship in John 17*.

becomes the act of the disciples. In John, Jesus is the prime model for discipleship.²⁹ This does not necessarily mean that Jesus was involved in the act of immersing people into the water for baptism in order to give an example to the disciples. The author's intention is not to tell the audience that the disciples copy or imitate what Jesus does or that they have taken over what Jesus used to do, as Brodie proposes.³⁰ Instead John employs irony³¹ as a literary device to highlight Jesus' identity here in terms of his unity with his disciples. In hearing the author's belated comment in 4:2 the audience realizes that the jealous disciples of John (3:26) and the Pharisees (4:1) had unknowingly attributed the act of the disciples to Jesus himself. Yet ironically their mistake underscores the unity of Jesus and the disciples. At the same time, in light of 4:2, the audience comes to a better grasp of what the narrator has told them in 3:22 about Jesus' baptismal activity. The omniscient narrator knowingly considered the baptismal ministry of the disciples to be that of Jesus. In correcting what the audience has told previously, the narrator did not mean to admit lying or giving an inaccurate account. Instead, the narrator's belated comment highlights the unity of Jesus and his disciples. Jesus becomes

²⁹ That Jesus is the prime model of discipleship can be seen within the Johannine narrative. For example, in the Prologue Jesus is portrayed as the "Son" who shares the glory of the Father (1:14, 18). Similarly, those who receive and believe in him are given the status of "children" of God (1:12, 13). In the discourse of the bread of life (chapter 6), those who eat the bread of life live because of Jesus, just as Jesus lives because of the living Father (6:57). In the saying about the light of life (8:12), those who follow Jesus possess the light of life just as Jesus is the light of the world. In John 17, Jesus is the model for unity, for being separated from the world, being sent into the world, and being loved by the Father. Although Jesus is the model for the disciples, his identity is unique because he is the only Son of the Father. See, Hera, *Christology and Discipleship in John 17*, 172-174.

³⁰ Brodie, *The Gospel of John*, 220

³¹ On the use of *irony* in the Fourth Gospel, see, Culpepper, *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 165-180. According to Culpepper, "... the identity of Jesus and the various ways it is manifested and announced are frequently the specific object of irony." (171). Culpepper, however, does not mention our passage in his discussion.

the model for the disciples because of something deeper than just imitation or taking over of the baptismal ministry. For John, the interchange of role between Jesus and his disciples is possible because of their unity, one that is modeled on the unity of Jesus and the Father.³² Thus, John's primary concern in 4:2 is to portray Jesus as the model for the disciples on the basis of their unity, rather than just to clarify whether or not Jesus was involved in the actual act of baptizing people. Even if the aside may have come from a later hand (redactor), the clarification is therefore truly Johannine.³³

Second, the aside presents Jesus as the ultimate goal of discipleship. By saying that it was actually the disciples who baptized, John clarifies the purpose of the baptismal activity of the disciples. It is to lead people to become disciples of Jesus. Within the Johannine narrative, Jesus is portrayed as the ultimate goal of discipleship.³⁴ In the story of Jesus' first disciples, on hearing John's testimony of Jesus the two disciples of John leave their master and follow Jesus (1:35-37). Later in the story of the healing of the man born blind, the blind man expects the Pharisees, who claim to be Moses' disciples, to become Jesus' disciples (9:27). After all, the purpose of the Fourth Gospel's testimony of Jesus is to lead people to faith in Jesus (20:31), in other words, to become Jesus' disciples. In the Johannine narrative, Jesus is the ultimate goal of any kind of act of discipleship. The narrator's statement in 4:1 that Jesus was making and baptizing many disciples (not merely many "people") clarifies the inner significance of the disciples' baptismal activity recounted in the aside in

³² The theme of the unity of Jesus and the Father is depicted throughout John in general and in the Farewell Discourse in particular.

³³ From a redactional point of view, this may answer Bultmann's question as to why the redactor does not make the clarification earlier in 3:22 or 3:26. John does not make the clarification until 4:2 but allows the opponents' misunderstanding to linger in order to make his point.

³⁴ See, Hera, *Christology and Discipleship in John 17*, 88.

4:2. They baptized many people to become the disciples of Jesus, because Jesus is the ultimate goal of discipleship.

Third, the aside shows that in the Johannine discipleship there is a profound need for both God's providence and human responsibility.³⁵ To understand this significant aspect of the Johannine discipleship, once again one needs to pay close attention to the phrase "making and baptizing disciples" (μαθητὰς ποιεῖ καὶ βαπτίζει) in 4:1. The pairing of the two verbs, making (ποιεῖ) and baptizing (βαπτίζει), is significant because both are interrelated. As pointed out above, baptism results in becoming a disciple of Jesus. Through baptism, a person "comes to him" (3:26) and becomes his "disciple." If this is the case, any attempt to draw a line that separates the act of baptism by the disciples and the making of disciples by Jesus is to miss the point of the Johannine discipleship. To say that "Jesus does not win people by the baptismal activity of the disciples"³⁶ conveys only half of the truth about the Johannine teaching. In the Johannine discipleship there is a profound need of the two seemingly paradoxical aspects, namely, divine sovereignty and human responsibility. For John the baptismal activity of the disciples is a must. That God does not need human help to attain God's will is true theologically, but it is not the whole

³⁵ In Hera, *Christology and Discipleship in John 17*, I have also argued that another significant character of the Johannine discipleship is the need for both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. One can only come to Jesus if the Father draws him (6:44, 65). But discipleship also requires human responsibility. The promise of eternal life requires a positive response of coming to Jesus and believing in him. (172).

³⁶ See, Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, (WUNT 2, 31; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988) 82. Okure writes, "The conclusion to be drawn from this evidence, then, is that while v 2 attributes the activity of baptizing to the disciples, it does not thereby attribute to them also the "making of disciples." She further explains that, "In the NT evidence and general Christian practice, baptism is administered to those who believe. From the standpoint of the community, it constitutes the community's recognition of this belief and serves as an act whereby the community welcomes the believer into its "fellowship" with God (1 Jn 1:4); but baptism itself does not *cause* one to believe or become a disciple."

truth in the Johannine context. For John, it is Jesus alone who makes disciples because one can only come to Jesus if he or she is drawn from above (6:44, 65). When John's disciples told their master that Jesus is baptizing and all people came to him, John answers, "No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven" (3:27). It is true that becoming a disciple of Jesus is a given from above. But at the same time, the divine capability to draw people to himself does not take away the disciples' responsibility to bring people to Jesus, here in this case, through their baptismal activity.

4. Conclusion

To return to our question, "Who Baptized: Jesus or His Disciples?" The answer is a theological rather than a historical one. Within the Johannine narrative context, the answer cannot be given by simply choosing and arguing for one or the other. Reading the aside in 4:2 within its narrative context I have argued that by letting the jealous disciples of John (3:26) and the Pharisees (4:1) unknowingly attribute to Jesus the act of the disciples, and by knowingly considering the baptismal act of the disciples as being that of Jesus, the author attains his theological purpose in presenting who Jesus is in relation to his disciples. Through the aside John presents Jesus as the model for the disciples. The act of the disciples is considered the act of Jesus. There is interchange of both role and responsibility between Jesus and his disciples. This interchange is possible because of the unity of Jesus and his disciples, the model for which is the unity of Jesus and the Father.

Furthermore, in relation to the phrase "making and baptizing disciples" in 4:1 the aside, on the one hand, clarifies the purpose of the disciples' act of baptism. The ultimate purpose of any act of discipleship is to lead one to Jesus. On the other hand, the aside displays another significant aspect of the

Johannine discipleship, namely the profound need for the two seemingly paradoxical aspects: divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God's divine power to draw people to Jesus does not take away the disciples' responsibility to bring people to Jesus through their baptismal ministry.