

A Narrative-Rhetorical Analysis of John the Baptist's Christological Contribution to the Christology of the Gospel According to John

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Abstract

This article is the summary of the author's doctoral thesis completed under the supervision of Dr Annang Asumang. The extraordinary space and prominence given to John the Baptist's ministry in the Fourth Gospel have been chiefly elucidated as due to the Gospel writer's polemics against the Baptist's followers. It is postulated that the Baptist's followers claimed that he was the Messiah and the Light, and the author sought to correct and redirect them to Jesus. However, using a combination of narrative-theological and rhetorical methods, this thesis established that a more plausible explanation is that this phenomenon is a natural outflow of the close relationship between the Baptist, the apostle John, and Jesus. The apostle John, as the Baptist's former disciple, was markedly shaped by the Baptist's Christology in his christological beliefs and formulations of the

Fourth Gospel's Christology. Moreover, as a model witness, the Baptist's Christology was pivotal for the apostle John's rhetorical strategy and agenda.

Keywords

apostle John, Christology, Fourth Gospel, historical plausibility, the Baptist

1. Introduction

The study examined the nature and extent of the contribution of John the Baptist's Christology to the overall Christology of the Fourth Gospel. This was required since the author has allocated a remarkable amount of space and eminence to the Baptist in this Gospel. Accounts about the Baptist appear at the beginning and end of Jesus's public ministry. In John 1:6–9, he is a witness divinely commissioned to testify about the true Light, who was coming into the world. This witness was necessary for all people to believe the true Light. In John 1:15, the author links (οὗτος, this) with what he has narrated about the enfleshed divine λόγος (Word, vv. 1–14) with the Baptist's prophetic witness. Significantly, the purpose of publishing the Fourth Gospel (John 20:31) conceptually parallels the purpose of the Baptist's prophetic witness (John 1:6–9). Fittingly, in John 1:35–40, after the Baptist pointed two of his disciples (Andrew and John, son of Zebedee) to Jesus, they followed and remained with Jesus. This account (John 1:35–40) takes place after the Baptist has prophetically witnessed about Jesus's identity and mission (John 1:19–34). Therefore, it is significant that the two disciples changed their allegiance from the Baptist to Jesus based on the Baptist's witness.

Moreover, in the summary statement of Jesus's earthly ministry (John 10:40–42), the evangelist records that Jesus went back across the

Jordan, where the Baptist was earlier baptizing, and stayed there for an undisclosed number of days (v. 40). Also, many people followed him there (v. 41a). John 1:41b records that these people professed that everything that the Baptist had said about Jesus was true. Consequently, they believed in Jesus (v. 42). While they acknowledged his limitations, as he did not perform any sign, it is significant that everything he had said about Jesus was true. The current scholarly solution to this phenomenon proposes that it was due to the author's polemical intentions against the Baptist's followers (Aplin 2011; Brown 2008; 1979; Macleod 2003; Marcus 2018; McGrath 2001; van den Heever 2009; Wink 1968). It is opined that the Baptist's followers elevated him above Jesus. Specifically, the Baptist's followers claimed that the Baptist was the Messiah and the Light, and not Jesus. Therefore, the apostle John was correcting and redirecting them to Jesus, the divine Messiah and the true Light.

Against the predominant scholarly solution, this study examined the influence and contribution of the Baptist's Christology to the overall Christology of the Gospel. It also investigated the narrative-rhetorical contribution of the Baptist's Christology to the Fourth Gospel's rhetorical strategy and agenda. In terms of research methodology, given the complexity of this problem, three methods of exegesis,—historical-narrative, theological, and rhetorical—were employed. Three underlying assumptions were also made, namely, that the Fourth Gospel's genre is mainly Jesus's historical biography, that its background is the OT and the wider Second Temple Judaism (STJ), and that the Fourth Gospel is a unified text.

It is hypothesized that the phenomenon is a natural outflow of the close relationship between the Baptist, the apostle John, the Gospel's author or redactor, and Jesus. After a careful analysis of the primary evidence, it

was established that there were no secure grounds to reject the traditional view that the fourth evangelist was the apostle John who features in the Gospel's narrative.¹ The apostle John, as a former disciple of the Baptist, was substantially shaped by the Baptist's Christology in his christological beliefs and formulations of the Fourth Gospel's christological framework. Differently put, the apostle John had insider information about the Baptist's Christology. Therefore, he recorded it to show the Baptist's reliability as a prophetic witness about Jesus's identity and mission. Furthermore, he utilized the Baptist's Christology to achieve the Fourth Gospel's rhetorical strategy and agenda. This was fitting since the Fourth Gospel portrays the Baptist as a model witness (cf. Asumang 2010, 135–137; Bennema 2014, §3). The next sections summarize the findings of the study.

2. The Baptist's Christological Confessions and Their Contribution to the Christology of the Fourth Gospel

2.1 A narrative-theological analysis of the Baptist's Christology

The Baptist makes several prophetic confessions about Jesus's identity and mission in the Fourth Gospel.² Based on a narrative-theological analysis of these christological confessions, several conclusions regarding their backgrounds and meanings were made. First, Jesus is the God of Israel.³ This is based on Jesus being the Lord of Isaiah 40:3,⁴ the Baptizer with the divine Spirit,⁵ and the Bridegroom,⁶ However, Jesus is distinct from the

1 John 1:35–40; 13:23–26; 18:15–16; 19:26–27, 35; 20:2–9; 21:7, 20–25.

2 John 1:15, 19–27, 29–37; 3:26–30.

3 John 1:23, 33; 3:29.

4 Cf. John 1:23.

5 John 1:33; cf. Isa 32:15–20; 44:1–5; Ezek 37:1–14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; Zech 12:10.

6 John 3:29; cf. Hos 1–3; Isa 54:4–5; 62:4–5; Jer 2:2; 3:20; Ezek 16:8–14.

One who sent the Baptist;⁷ he is the Son of God.⁸ Also, based on Jesus's eternal pre-existence and divine supremacy,⁹ he is the Son of Man (Keener 2012, 457; Kraeling 1951, 56–57; Lange and Schaff 2008, 75). In other words, Jesus is the Danielic figure.¹⁰ The Son of Man title is associated with the Son of God title in the Fourth Gospel (Asumang 2010, 328; Michaels 2010, 219; Lincoln 2005, 204; Kanagaraj 2013, 58).

Moreover, emanating from these confessions, Jesus is from God/above/heaven and is the divine agent. Jesus, as the divine agent, is a representative of the divine council among humanity in the world. While Jesus is fully God, he is also fully man.¹¹ In fact, Jesus, as the divine agent, is the long-awaited Davidic Messiah.¹² In terms of the socio-religious function, he is the Royal-Priest.¹³ Furthermore, from his identification as the Lamb of God, he is the suffering Servant of Isaiah,¹⁴ the sacrificial Paschal Lamb,¹⁵ and the eschatological Triumphant Lamb.¹⁶

Ultimately, Jesus came into the world to create the new spiritual family of God (John 1:29–36). Jesus would achieve this through his atonement work as the sacrificial Paschal Lamb (John 1:29, 36) and his baptism of the people with the divine Spirit (v. 33). The pouring of the Spirit

7 John 1:33.

8 John 1:34.

9 John 1:15, 27, 30.

10 Dan 7:13–14.

11 John 1:15, 27, 30, 33; 3:27–28.

12 John 1:19–27, 29–37; 3:28; cf. Isa 9:6–7; 11:1–16; 16:5; Jer 23:5–6; 30:9; 33:15–17; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–28; Hos 1:11; 3:5; Mic 5:2; Zech 12:8–13:1.

13 Ps 110:4; Ezek 45:22; Zech 6:9–13.

14 Isa 42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12.

15 Exod 12:22, 46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20; John 2:13–24; 6:4; 11:55; 13:1; 19:14; cf. 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 1:5; 5:6, 9; 7:14; 12:11.

16 Rev 5:5, 12; 7:17; 17:14; 1 Enoch 90:9–12; T. Benj 3:8; T. Jos 19:8–9; cf., Brown (2008, 63).

upon the people, both in the OT¹⁷ and the broader STJ, specifically, the Qumran community¹⁸ was associated with the new creation. Therefore, the OT and the wider STJ traditions are the theological contexts of the Baptist's christological confessions. Based on Jesus's work of new creation, on the one hand, those who believe in him would be forgiven of their sins and would become the new spiritual family of God. On the other hand, Satan and those who love the world would be judged.¹⁹ While Satan will be completely dethroned and eternally judged at the eschaton, those who belong in the new spiritual family of God are delivered from his rule.

2.2 A comparison of the Baptist's Christology, Jesus's self-disclosure, and the apostle John's Christology

A comparative evaluation of the Baptist's Christology with Jesus's self-disclosure and the apostle John's Christology underlines coherence between the three figures' christologies. The coherence supports this study's hypothesis of the close relationship between the Baptist, the apostle John, the author or redactor, and Jesus. Jesus is the embodied divine council, namely, he is fully God,²⁰ and he is fully man.²¹

The three figures are also in agreement that Jesus is the long-awaited Davidic Messiah.²² Lastly, the three figures are in harmony that

17 Isa 32:15–20; 44:1–5; Ezek 37:1–14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; Zech 12:10.

18 IQHa 5:18–26; 6:11–13; 8:10–20; 10:11–13; 20:11–12; 21:12–14; 11Q13, Col. 2, 1–25; CD–A Col. 2, 11–13; IQ34, Frag. 3, col. II; IQS4:20–25.

19 John 1:29; 12:31.

20 The Baptist, John 1:15, 23, 27, 33; 3:29; Jesus, John 2:1–11; 4:4–42; 6:62; 8:24, 28, 58; 10:30, 38; 14:9–11, 20; 12:45; 13:18–19; 14:7, 9; 16:15, 19, 32; 17:1–2, 5, 10, 11, 21–24; 18:5–6; 21:6, 18–19, 22; apostle John, John 1:1–3, 18; 4:1; 6:23; 9:38; 11:2; 12:21.

21 The Baptist, John 1:15, 27, 30, 33; 3:27–28; Jesus, John 2:4; 11:33, 35, 38; 12:27; 13:3; 18:37; 19:26–27; apostle John, John 2:3–5; 4:6; 7:3–5; 19:25–26.

22 The Baptist, John 1:20–27, 29–36; 3:28; Jesus, John 2:1–11; 4:4–42; 7:27–29; 8:24; 10:1–18, 25; 13:19; 18:34, 36, 37; apostle John, John 1:17; 20:31.

Jesus is the embodied divine council's agent. The christological titles and concepts supporting this last christological aspect are that Jesus is from above/heaven/God,²³ sent²⁴ the Son/Son of Man/Son of God,²⁵ going/ascending to God/the Father,²⁶ and creator of the new spiritual family of God²⁷ underline his divine agency role in the Fourth Gospel.

Significantly, Jesus's self-disclosure is in-depth compared with the Baptist and the apostle John. However, the coherence of their Christologies shows that the Baptist is a reliable prophetic witness.²⁸ Furthermore, it points to the Baptist's influence and contribution to the apostle John's beliefs and formulations of his Christology in the Fourth Gospel. Though some might argue that this coherence is due to the author's literary and rhetorical designs, I found by comparison with the Synoptic Gospels that it is not unique to the Fourth Gospel, thus essentially underlying the essentially historical nature of the coherence. This historical plausibility will be addressed shortly.

2.3 A comparison of the Baptist's Christology and Jesus's interlocutors' christological confessions

A comparative evaluation of the Baptist's Christology and Jesus's interlocutors' christological confessions also shows coherence. However,

23 The Baptist, John 1:15, 27, 30–33; 3:28; Jesus, John 8:42; 16:27; apostle John, John 1:1–18; 3:31.

24 Jesus, John 5:24; 7:16, 33; 11:42; 12:44–45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21

25 The Baptist, John 1:15, 27, 30, 34; Jesus, John 5:24; 7:16, 33; 11:42; 12:44–45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21; apostle John, John 1:14, 18; 20:31.

26 Jesus, John 7:33; 13:3; 16:5, 7, 28; 20:17.

27 The Baptist, John 1:29, 33; Jesus, John 3:5–15; 4:10–26; 7:38; 8:12; 10:28; 12:36, 46–47; 19:30, 34; 20:21; apostle John, John 1:4, 9–13; 20:31.

28 John 5:31–35; 10:40–42.

during Jesus's earthly ministry, his disciples miscomprehended the significance and implication of their confessions, and they were not at the level of the Baptist's faith. Jesus's disciples only reached the level of the Baptist's post-glorification, after receiving the Holy Spirit.²⁹ Therefore, this firmly underlines the influence and contribution of the Baptist's Christology to the Gospel's christological project.

Overall, it is apparent from the comparative evaluations that the apostle John was heavily influenced by the Baptist's Christology in the formations and formulations of his christological framework in the Fourth Gospel. This is fitting since the apostle John was a former disciple of the Baptist. The influence of the Baptist is further evident in the early church.³⁰ On the one hand, one of the criteria to select a new apostle was that the person must have been part of the group starting from the Baptist's ministry.³¹ On the other hand, the former disciples of the Baptist who only received the Baptist's baptism were identified as believers.³² Apollos, although he only knew the Baptist's baptism, was highly regarded by early Christians.³³ Consequently, the current scholarly solution of the author's polemical intentions against the Baptist's followers is weak, and hence it can be discarded.

3. The Historical Plausibility of the Baptist's Christology in the Fourth Gospel

It can be counter-argued that the Christology attributed to the Baptist is that of the apostle John since the Baptist never wrote his theological treatise.

29 John 2:22; 12:16; 14:26; 20:21–28.

30 Acts 1:21–22; 18:24–19:7.

31 Acts 1:21–22.

32 Acts 18:24–19:7.

33 Acts 18:24–28.

Therefore, in order to respond to this counter-thesis, it was necessary to investigate the historical plausibility of the Baptist's Christology in the Fourth Gospel. A concise procedure entailing five key issues, namely, authorship, date and provenance, literary genre, source theory, and an approach to establishing the historical plausibility of the Gospel's materials was utilized.

The study adopts the traditional view that the apostle John is an eyewitness, evangelist and author of the whole Gospel (Asumang 2010, 383–390; Bennema 2014, §22; Burge 2000, 26–28; Carson 1991, 68–81; Keener 2012, 81–115; Köstenberger 2013, 3–7; Morris 1995, 4–25; Westcott and Westcott 1908, v–xxxii). The beloved disciple³⁴ is the apostle John. He was the last remaining apostle towards the end of the first century AD (Carson 1991, 682; Köstenberger 2004, 602; Jackson 1999, 21–22, 24; Keener 2012, 1240; Morris 1995, 775). Furthermore, the anonymous disciple in John 1:35–40 is the beloved disciple (Asumang 2010, 147–148, 383–384; Bennema 2014, §22; Bernard 1929, 53; Brown 2008, 73; 1979:32–34; Burge 2000, 75; Carson 1991, 154; Resseguie 2016, 547–549; Tenney 1976, 299; Titus 1950, 324–325; Tovey 2016, 135–136; Wright 2004, 15–16). Therefore, the apostle John is the former disciple of the Baptist (John 1:35–40), and he is an eyewitness of the Baptist's ministry (John 1:19–34).

The external evidence further supports the association of the beloved disciple with the apostle John (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20.4–20; cf. Borchert 1996, 88–89; Carson 1991, 68–70; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.8.4; Keener 2012, 96–98). Therefore, the apostle John, as a former disciple of the Baptist and Jesus's disciple, had insider information about the ministries of his two teachers. Regarding the date and provenance,

34 John 13:23–26; 18:15–16; 19:26–27, 35; 20:2–9; 21:7, 20–25.

the Fourth Gospel was written towards the end of the first century AD by the apostle John before his death, and he wrote it while in Ephesus (cf., Blomberg 2001, 41–42). He wrote it for both pastoral and evangelistic purposes, targeting all readers of the Fourth Gospel (Bauckham 1998; Burridge 1998).

In literary genre, the Fourth Gospel, like the Synoptics, is primarily a historical biography (*bios*) of the historical Jesus (Asumang 2010; Burridge 2004; Horsley and Thatcher 2013; Keener 2012; 2019). In terms of the source theory, three issues—hypothetical documents, John-Synoptics relationship, and developmental theory—are postulated. It is avowed based on the hypothetical documents that the Fourth Gospel was written from three primary sources: a miracles/signs source, a saying/discourse source, and a passion source (Bultmann 1971; Fortna 1970; 1988; von Wahlde 2010). Advocates of this view claim that these sources assist in explaining John's *aporiai*. However, a plausible alternative explanation is that John's *aporiai* are due to orally-preached materials (Blomberg 2001, 45; Carson 1991; Thatcher 2000; 2001, 2) by the apostle John that were woven together to form the Fourth Gospel.

The relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics has various explanations. This is due to both similarities and differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics (Anderson 2007, 128; Bird 2014, 192; Hurtado 2003, §6). Therefore, dating back to the patristic period, scholars have tried to explain their relationship. While there are diverse proposals, this study adopted a complementation theory. Some scholars (e.g., Asumang 2010, 374–376; Bauckham 1998; Gilliam 2006, 1–8) avow that the Fourth Gospel complements the Synoptics. In other words, the Fourth Gospel was written with the readers of the Synoptics (especially, Mark) in mind. While John knew the Synoptics (cf., John 21:25), he wrote this

Gospel independently with its readers in mind. The Fourth Gospel mainly supplements, augments, and clarifies the Synoptics on essential areas of Christian origins (Asumang 2010, 374).

Regarding the developmental theory, there are four approaches used to explain John's *aporiai*: the history of religions (Brown 1979), the sociological approach (Hurtado 2003, §6; McGrath 1998, 2001), the individual Johannine innovation (Anderson 2010; 2014), and the organic approach (Brown 1994; Dunn 1989; Hengel 2004). It is asserted that these approaches help explicate the high/developed Christology of the Fourth Gospel. Based on these approaches (especially, the first three), it is opined that the author used the Baptist's accounts for polemical purposes against the Baptist's followers. However, accepting this polemical interpretation undermines the apostle John's explicit claim of his reliable eyewitness testimony.³⁵ The apostle John, as one of the Twelve, his eyewitness testimony played an influential role in Jesus's tradition (Keener 2019, 369, 392).

I agree with scholars such as Keener (2019, 392), who claim that "memory is more reliable than unreliable." Especially a memory of extraordinarily rare and life-transforming experiences like those the disciples had. Fittingly, the christological confessions attributed to the Baptist are *ipsissima verba* (that is, are precisely uttered by him). This historical plausibility of the Baptist's Christology is further strengthened by the coherence between Baptist's Christology in the Fourth Gospel³⁶ and the Synoptics.³⁷ Differently put, the Baptist's accounts in the Fourth Gospel, although distinct, conceptually parallel the Synoptics's references to Jesus as the Messiah, God and creator of the new spiritual family of God.

35 John 19:35; 21:24.

36 John 1:15, 19–36; 3:26–30.

37 Matt 3:11–12; Mark 1:7–8; Luke 3:15–17.

Moreover, the Fourth Gospel supplements, augments, and clarifies the Synoptics on crucial areas of Christian origins. This is supported by the fact that a number christological titles and concepts (e.g., Lord, Bridegroom, eternal pre-existence, Messiah, “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (NIV), Son of God) are only explicitly recorded in the Fourth Gospel. Profoundly, these christological confessions were confirmed by Jesus and shaped the apostle John’s christological beliefs and formulations of his Christology in the Fourth Gospel (§2). Fittingly, the Baptist is portrayed as a reliable principal witness in the Fourth Gospel.

4. A Narrative-Rhetorical Contribution of the Baptist’s Christology in the Fourth Gospel

4.1 The rhetorical analysis of the Baptist’s christological confessions

The issue that needs to be addressed before an examination of a narrative-rhetorical contribution of the Baptist’s Christology in the Fourth Gospel is the argumentative value of his prophetic witness to his narrative interlocutors. This rhetorical analysis is foundational to the examination of his narrative-rhetorical contribution to the Fourth Gospel’s rhetorical strategy and agenda. The theory of new rhetoric based on the works of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) and Perelman (1982) was utilized. Five key aspects of this theory were considered, namely, the speaker and audience, the premises of argumentation, the techniques of presentation, signification and interpretation of data (that is, the Baptist’s confessions), and the techniques of argumentation.

The Baptist is the speaker,³⁸ and his audience is the whole of Israel.³⁹ The members of the audience that he directly interacts with are the religious authorities,⁴⁰ his two disciples, Andrew and John, the sons of Zebedee,⁴¹ his other disciples⁴² and the many people.⁴³ The purpose of his discourse with the members of the audience is to persuade them to believe in Jesus's identity and mission.⁴⁴ The Baptist's discourse falls under the rhetorical subcategory of an epideictic genre as it requires action from the audience (cf., Perelman 1982, 12, 20). His water baptism enabled him to meet with the members of the audience. In other words, the Baptist's water baptism attracted the audience to come to where he was baptizing. The audience wanted to establish whether he was a messianic/prophetic figure based on his water baptismal activity (John 1:19–27).

According to Perelman (1982, 11), "Argumentation is intended to act upon an audience, to modify an audience's convictions or dispositions through discourse, and it tries to gain a meeting of minds instead of imposing its will through constraint or conditioning." The Baptist's discourse achieved this purpose of argumentation, as he commenced from the premise/thesis (Jewish messianism) that the audience accepted and transferred this adherence to the conclusion, the new reality (Jesus is the long-long awaited Davidic Messiah, the Son of God, and the creator of the new spiritual family of God). Notably, water baptism within Jewish tradition was associated with the messianic/prophetic figures. Therefore,

38 John 1:15, 19–37; 3:26–30.

39 John 1:31.

40 John 1:19–27.

41 John 1:35–37.

42 John 3:26–30; cf. John 1:19–34.

43 John 10:40–42; cf. John 1:19–34.

44 John 1:6–9, 31.

his baptismal activity was an accepted premise by the members of the audience. Aptly, they associated him with the messianic/prophetic figure (John 1:19–25).

In John 1:20, the Baptist's denial of being the Messiah was his departure point. Importantly, this denial and his subsequent denials of being either Elijah or the Prophet (John 1:21–22) resulted in the audience asking why he was baptizing (vv. 24–25). In response, the Baptist testified about the "Coming One," whom they did not know, who was the Messiah, the Son of God and the creator of the new spiritual family of God.⁴⁵ Overall, this argument bears upon reality (truth), as there was Jewish expectation of the coming of the divinely promised Messiah. Furthermore, it bears upon the preference of Jesus based on value (infinite value, his identity and mission), hierarchy (superiority, his identity and mission), and general loci (his salvific work, both in quantity and quality).

The Baptist's discourse employed different rhetorical figures, such as allusion⁴⁶ prolepsis,⁴⁷ metaphor,⁴⁸ imagery direct speech,⁴⁹ and amplification,⁵⁰ which ensured that the members of the audience were attentive to his discourse (cf. Perelman 1982, 37). Also, based on signification and interpretation of data, the Baptist's argumentation was understood by the audience as many believed in Jesus.⁵¹ Significantly, the Baptist, in order to persuade the members of the audience, sets the different christological titles and concepts on equal footing. Concisely, the Baptist's

45 John 1:15, 20, 23, 26–27, 29–36; 3:28–30.

46 John 1:19–27.

47 John 1:24–27, 30–31.

48 John 1:29, 36; 3:29.

49 John 1:23.

50 John 1:19–36.

51 John 1:35–40; 10:40–42; 12:42.

argumentation claims that the different titles and concepts are equally fulfilled in the person of Jesus. There was communion about the different titles and concepts as their roots were in Jewish tradition; however, their convergence into the person of Jesus was a new reality. This new reality was the crux of the Baptist's discourse that the members of the audience had to accept. While many from the members of the audience accepted the new reality and then believed in Jesus's identity and mission, they did not fully comprehend the significance and implication of their confessions during Jesus's earthly mission. However, this was not due to the Baptist.

The Baptist's argumentation technique is association processes, which are "schemes which bring separate elements together and allow us to establish a unity among them, which aims either at organizing them or at evaluating them, positively or negatively, by means of one another" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 190). The Baptist's discourse is based on three categories of association schemes: quasi-logical argument (transitivity and comparison), arguments based on the structure of reality (pragmatic argument and argument by authority), and the relations establishing the structure of reality (particular case and analogy). Overall, based on these different aspects of the new rhetoric, the Baptist persuasively argued that Jesus is the long-awaited Davidic Messiah, the Son of God, and the creator of the new spiritual family of God. Fittingly, many of his members of the audience believed in Jesus's identity and mission.⁵² Therefore, his discourse had an argumentative value.

52 John 1:35–40; 10:40–42; 12:42.

4.2 *A narrative-rhetorical analysis of the Baptist's christological contribution to the Fourth Gospel's rhetorical strategy and agenda*

The remaining important issue is the examination of a narrative-rhetorical contribution of the Baptist's Christology to the Fourth Gospel's rhetorical strategy and agenda. Two issues, namely, the audience of the Gospel and an argument by model and anti-model, were considered. Regarding the audience, the Fourth Gospel was targeted to all readers, both believers and unbelievers. Mainly, it targeted the universal audience, which is "the whole of mankind or at least, of normal, adult persons" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 30). The aim was to convince them that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God, in order for them to become the new spiritual family of God when they believe in Jesus (§2).

The theory of argument by model and anti-model is particularly relevant to establish the narrative-rhetorical contribution of the Baptist's Christology. On the one hand, argument by model "encourages imitation" (Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 350). In other words, if the speaker/writer wants the audience to imitate certain behaviors, they would use behaviors of persons with authority and/or social prestige (cf. Perelman 1982, 110). On the other hand, argument by anti-model discourages imitation (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 366). The many people who believed in Jesus after concluding that everything that the Baptist had said about Jesus was true (John 10:40–42) is an example to be imitated. Therefore, all the Fourth Gospel's readers are encouraged to follow their example. Furthermore, the apostle John is a model based on his authority and social prestige in the first century AD as one of the Twelve and a leader in the early church, as well his substantial dependence on his former teacher's Christology. Jesus's disciples' growth in their faith post-Easter further encourages all believers

to grow in their faith. Importantly, these disciples, especially the Twelve, were prominent figures in the early church.

The characterization (conflict, hatred, and unbelief) of the authorities dissuades all readers of the Fourth Gospel from following their example. Significantly, based on the Baptist's characterization as a reliable principal witness,⁵³ he sets an example for all the readers of the Fourth Gospel. Remarkably, his accurate Christology, comprehension of the significance and implication of his confessions, and unwavering faith in Jesus's identity and mission are examples that all the Fourth Gospel's readers must imitate. This is further supplemented by the Baptist's authority and social prestige in the first century AD.⁵⁴ Therefore, the Baptist's characterization was crucial for the author to achieve his rhetorical strategy and agenda (John 1:6–9; 20:30–31). Fittingly, the predominant scholarly view of the author's polemical intentions against the Baptist's followers is severely undermined.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the nature and extent of the Baptist's christological contribution in the Fourth Gospel's christological project. This was necessitated by the remarkable space and prominence apportioned to the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel. In contrast to the predominant scholarly view of the author's polemics against the Baptist's followers, it was theorized that the phenomenon is a natural outflow of the close relationship between the Baptist, the apostle John, and Jesus. Three methods of exegesis, namely, historical-narrative, theological, and rhetorical, were utilized to achieve the study's objectives. The study made three underlying assumptions as

53 John 1:1–18, 19–39; 3:26–30; 5:31–35; 10:40–42.

54 Matt 3:1–17; 11:14; Mark 1:1–8; 9:11–13; Luke 1:14–17, 76–79; 3:1–20; 7:24–28; 16:16; 20:6; 17:10–13; Acts 1:15, 21–22, 10:37; 11:16; 13:24–25; 18:24–19:7; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.116–119.

a starting point: that the Fourth Gospel's genre is mainly Jesus's historical biography, that its background is the OT and the wider STJ, and that the Fourth Gospel is a unified text. Overall, the outcome of the investigation confirms the study's hypothesis. The apostle John, as the Baptist's former disciple, was markedly shaped by the Baptist's Christology in his christological beliefs and formulations of the Fourth Gospel's Christology. Furthermore, as a prototype witness, the Baptist's Christology was pivotal for the apostle John's rhetorical strategy and agenda.

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