



**A HISTORICAL SURVEY  
AND CRITICAL EVALUATION  
OF EXISTING INVESTIGATIONS  
CONCERNING DISCIPLESHIP  
IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL**



## 1. Introduction

This chapter indicates how the literature of the second half of this century has contributed to the understanding of discipleship in the FG.<sup>1</sup> The literature consulted is ordered and handled under the following categories: articles, monographs, commentaries, theologies, theological dictionaries, and encyclopedias.

## 2. Review of Literature.

### 2.1 Bibliographies:

The classified bibliographies of literature on the FG do not include a category for the theme of discipleship. This is surprising in the light of the fact that μαθητής occurs 78 times in the Gospel and is more prominent than most of the words on which major studies have been done. The closest these bibliographies come to offering literature which bears directly on discipleship are some articles and a few monographs about certain aspects of discipleship. The literature on discipleship in the FG will briefly come under discussion. Discipleship appears also in connection with other themes: in a few references to the Beloved Disciple<sup>2</sup> (Siker-Gieseler 1980; Culpepper 1983; Du Rand 1990); in some studies which have touched on this theme only indirectly in the Ecclesiology, in the Johannine School (Johannine Circle or community--Culpepper 1975; Ray 1983) and eschatology (Bultmann 1950; Pazdan 1982; Du Rand 1991), one direct case where discipleship has been related to the covenant (Palatty 1987), and in a another with Christology (Pazdan 1982; Domeris 1988; Du Rand 1991).

### 2.2 Articles:<sup>3</sup>

The concept of discipleship as a specific category in the four Gospels first appeared in the 1950's (Pazdan 1982:10).<sup>4</sup> **Schweizer** was the first to examine Johannine discipleship. In 1955 he wrote *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern*. In chapter six, 'Discipleship after Easter', he uses the FG as main source. The emphasis in the FG, according to him, is on 'following' (1:37; 18:12) which is itself a gift of grace (1970:84). He notes that the initiative for discipleship lies with Jesus, that the disciples are called to a service of witness and that the disciples share the life and destiny of Jesus (1970:80-84,87,91; cf Siker-Gieseler 1980:204; Du Rand 1992:312). Schweizer focussed on Johannine discipleship in its post-resurrection development (p 81). Discipleship was extended to those who were guided by the exalted One after Easter. For the FE the way to divine glory becomes the decisive aspect for which the earthly way is merely a

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<sup>1</sup> Only works regarding discipleship in the FG have been consulted and will be discussed here. In my survey of literature on discipleship in the FG, I consulted the following bibliographies: Malatesta 1967; Van Belle 1988; Borchardt & Vorster 1980, 1983, 1988, 1989, 1990; Schnackenburg 1975; Religion Index 1949-91; Religious and Theological Abstracts on CD-ROM 1961-91; New Testament Abstracts 1975-91; Nober (Elenchus) 1964-90; Theologische Realenzyklopädie 1988.

<sup>2</sup> There is some literature devoted to the problem of the Beloved Disciple, i.e. the question of his identity and the related question of authorship. The perspective of the BD as a symbol/ideal person for discipleship (see page 36) is particularly relevant.

<sup>3</sup> The discussion of discipleship in a chapter of a book will also be considered here.

<sup>4</sup> Consult Pazdan for an overview about works on discipleship in the Gospels from the 1950's. Probably the most extensive contribution which dominated the scene until Jiménez's contribution in 1971, came from Rengstorff which was published in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* edited by Kittel in 1942. Rengstorff's contribution will be discussed under the heading 'Theological Dictionaries'.

precondition (1970:85). The earthly goal is already achieved for the disciples. The disciples must only 'remain' and 'abide' in and with Jesus to secure a similar exaltation to that with which Jesus was glorified.

According to Schweizer the disciples receive discipleship as a gift of God's grace, but unfortunately he places too much emphasis on the 'new development' the FE gave discipleship as the way to divine glory and exaltation (Siker-Gieseler 1980:206).

Discipleship continued as a theme in the 1960's. The contributions on discipleship in this decade did not differentiate between or respect the individuality of each Gospel.<sup>5</sup> Since the seventies some major contributions to the topic have been made and represent a wide variety of approaches. The most extensive studies on discipleship in the FG which appeared in this and the following decade are those of Jimenez, Ray, and Pazdan.<sup>6</sup> The articles which appeared during this period will now be discussed.

**Rigaux** is the earliest representative of the 1970's approach to discipleship in the FG with his article '*Die Jünger Jesu in Johannes 17*'. His method was to examine certain terms by noting their use in LXX and NT literature and their development in the Johannine text. Rigaux provided new insight. He suggested that the *Sitz im Leben* of Jn 17 was the disciples, a group of friends who believed in Jesus and who knew him. Rigaux chose four terms to designate the relationship of Jesus with the Father to characterize the community of disciples: δόξα, ἀγιάζω, ἐν, Τέλειος (cf also Vellanickal 1980:131-147; Neethling 1984). Culpepper (1975:272; cf Du Rand 1991:313) built on this foundation and refined the Johannine school hypothesis. The community as a fellowship of disciples is engaged in learning, obeying, remembering and studying the traditions about Jesus.

**Schnackenburg** in '*Exkurs 17: Jünger, Gemeinde, Kirche im Johannesevangelium*' (1975) gives a brief survey of the presence of the disciples in the first major division of the Gospel. According to Schnackenburg they are introduced into these Johannine texts quite deliberately. He came to the conclusion that for the FE the circle of the disciples had a definite theological meaning in Jesus' work and activity on earth (1975:234f).

For Schnackenburg the disciples are representatives of the believers whom Jesus gained through his words and works, of the later community in contrast to the unbelieving Jews and of the later believers in their inadequate faith. This extension of the meaning of the term is based on theological reflection and an intended application of the word disciple. This process is, for Schnackenburg, in accordance with the FE's intentions as he regards the group of the disciples at the time of Jesus himself. For him the significance of the disciples existed wholly in terms of believing.

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<sup>5</sup> A few others published were: Schultz, A 1962. *Nachfolgen und Nachahmen: Studien über das verhältnis der neutestamentlichen Jüngerschaft zur urchristlichen Vorbildsethik*. Schürmann, H 1963. *Der Jüngerkreis Jesu als zeichen für Israel (und als Urbild des kirchlichen Rätstandes)*. Discipleship was also the central theme in a collection of essays, *Die Anfänge der Kirche im Neuen Testament*. In the first essay F Hahn discussed the nature of pre-Easter discipleship as the mutuality of following and being a disciple in *Pre-Easter Discipleship*. According to A Strobel in the second essay, *Discipleship in the Light of the Easter Event*, the shift of emphasis in the post-Easter discipleship was described differently in each Gospel. In the third essay, *Discipleship and Church*, E Schweizer developed the understanding of discipleship in the post-Easter Church.

<sup>6</sup> Jiménez (1972), Pazdan (1982), and Ray (1983) will be dealt with under the heading 'Monographs'.

**De Jonge**, two years later, wrote a chapter 'The Fourth Gospel: The Book of the Disciples' in his book *Jesus: Stranger from heaven and Son of God* (1977). He develops discipleship in the FG under five headings:

- (1) Regarding the purpose of the FG he concludes that it is 'primarily if not exclusively a book of the (Johannine) church' (1977:2).
- (2) The mission of the disciples is to act as Jesus' representatives and thus as God's representatives on earth, over against the hostile world (17:18) (1977:3-6).
- (3) In this section, dealing with chs 13-17 and related passages (1977:7) he sees the Spirit as the 'life-giving power of Jesus' word operating to those who believe in Jesus as the unique Son of God' (1977:9).
- (4) Under 'the true nature of discipleship' he develops the concept of the disciples as those who 'follow,' 'remain,' and 'come and see'. He argues that the disciples are portrayed as models for future believers in both their acceptance and misunderstanding of Jesus' word.
- (5) The last section indicates that in the final analysis a 'divine initiative' underlies and is manifested in the human positive reaction (1977:17).

The study of De Jonge is exemplary<sup>7</sup> in its balanced handling of both the disciples and discipleship in the FG.

**Siker-Gieseler** (1980) wrote a fresh and debatable paper on discipleship: *Disciples and Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel*. He presents new and stimulating insights. His study briefly surveys the state of research on the subject and attempts to offer a fresh perspective in which he indeed succeeds. He examines the FG in its present canonical form in order to determine what cohesive theological shape the author gave to the disciples and discipleship. His approach was to discern the prominent nuances of discipleship and to draw attention to the literary qualities of the theme rather than its historical development. According to him disciples and discipleship in the FG comprise one theme, which received a twofold nuance in the final form of the Gospel. He makes a clear distinction between the familiar disciples who historically accompanied Jesus and examples of discipleship portrayed by individual characters who encountered Jesus in isolated situations or scenes (i.e. the Samaritan woman, the Capernaum official, the man born blind, and Martha). He stated that each of the two nuances helps to interpret the other; both are necessary for a full understanding of the topic in the FG. Finally the two nuances are blended together in the FE's portrayal of the Beloved Disciple. The Beloved Disciple is then shown to function as the paradigm of discipleship among the disciples (Cf Jimenéz 1971).

In characterizing the disciples Siker-Gieseler concentrates on what the disciples say and do. In characterizing discipleship he focusses on how each character previously mentioned is portrayed in these scenes and how the scenes have been shaped to communicate the meaning of discipleship.

The main critique on this paper is that Siker-Gieseler treats the disciples only on the level of historical characters. Nowhere are they introduced as part of discipleship; they are reduced to chs 13-17 where they are taught by Jesus. He never refers to or indicates the other characters (Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and Lazarus--cf Dulles 1987:362;

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<sup>7</sup> Siker-Gieseler (1980:221) differs here. He separates the disciples from discipleship and concludes at a later stage that both disciples and discipleship are necessary nuances to a full picture of what it means to be a disciple according to the FG. The models of discipleship are not the disciples themselves as identified by the FE, but rather the other characters in the FG.

Pazdan 1987:145f; Doohan 1988:136f) in the FG as part of discipleship.

In the same year **Vellanickal** (1980) wrote a paper: *'Discipleship' according to the Gospel of John*. This title is very comprehensive. It is impossible to cover the concept of discipleship in sixteen pages. He starts with the Johannine Christ who is none but the Revealer, the last and decisive Word of God to humanity. He then indicates the series of words indicating the revelation. After giving an inadequate description of a disciple and the master-disciple relationship he draws a comparison between the FG and the Synoptic Gospels concerning the 'Call of the disciples'. He then concentrates on 1:35-42 and tries to indicate the essential notes of discipleship as the FG perceives it. In his analyses the following deeds are indicated, and followed by inadequate exegesis on each one: election and call, human testimony, hearing, following, seeking, finding, coming and seeing, remaining with Jesus, and missionary sharing. After the section of exegesis where he relates these deeds to discipleship, he discusses the relation of 'Discipleship as a deepening experience with Christ'. A disciple is one who, living with Jesus, gradually obtains a deeper and deeper insight into the person of Jesus and shares this experience with others. In the following section he discusses three 'conditions' of discipleship: (1) remaining in the Word (Jn 8:31-32), (2) hating one's life (12:25), and (3) serving Jesus (12:26). His sixth main heading is 'Love: the keynote of discipleship'. The distinguishing mark of the disciples of Jesus is brotherly love (Jn 13:35)<sup>8</sup> and the reciprocal love within the community is the criterion of the discipleship of Jesus for those outside. He concludes with the idea that the circle of the disciples of Jesus who love one another forms a new world within the world. According to him this is the case because the love itself there takes on a form that is strange to the world. His conclusion is that discipleship is an advanced stage in the life of faith resulting from a constant and dynamic indwelling presence of Jesus' words in his disciples.

While reading this article one may query whether the author has not too hastily come to some opinions which favour his viewpoint? On theological grounds one must ask whether the text really supports his conclusions.

**Segovia**, five years later, (1985) wrote an article *'Peace I Leave with You; My Peace I Give to You': Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel*. In his study about 'Discipleship in the FG' Segovia was influenced by Mark R Tannehill. Tannehill studied the narrative role of the disciples in the gospel of Mark. His study presupposes and is made possible by the continuing role of such a group in the Gospel and the presence -- despite possible variations in the size of the group -- of some common characteristics which define the group. He observes developments not only from scene to scene but also in terms of persons and characteristics. On the basis of these requirements Segovia applied the same kind of study to the FG. He turned to the characterization of Jesus' disciples in the FG as a way of probing further the concept of discipleship present in the Gospel and the community situation which it reflects and presupposes. To reach the above objective he forgoes detailed discussion of individual scenes or specific development between individual scenes and concentrates instead on the overall development of the narrative as a whole. He attempts to trace the overall development of the disciples in the narrative according to the original sequence of the narrative.

Hereafter he examines the main aspects of discipleship -- that is the central themes of the

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<sup>8</sup> In the abstract of his article concerning 'Remain in me' (15:5) Hartin (1991:1) says that '...it is the virtue of love which gives rise to the whole ethics of discipleship'.

disciples' characterization in the narrative -- in terms of the *Sitz im Leben* they reflect and presuppose in the history of the Johannine Community. He closes by referring to the title of his study on discipleship, where he had chosen Jesus' statement in Jn 14:27. It is because he believes that Jesus' promise of 'peace' reflects and captures very accurately the basic understanding of discipleship in both the community and its Gospel. On the one hand, the peace of the disciples is a peace which comes from knowing that they and they alone have provided access to the Father through Jesus and the Spirit. On the other hand, this peace is also a peace which implies and entails rejection, open hostility, and even the possibility of death. It is, therefore, in every way possible, a peace 'not of this world'.

Segovia maintains that, he confirms, refines, and sharpens the results of previous studies about discipleship but with no new aspects having been raised. His title ultimately has no direct connection with the contents of the study. The deduction made in the last paragraph of this article is suggested to justify the title.

**Palatty** (1987) wrote a paper of 29 pages on *Discipleship and the Covenant*<sup>9</sup> which is difficult to review on account of the fact that it is incomplete and still to be continued. This paper is rather vague and the presentation of his material too categorical. Some statistics could have been left out and actually do not prove anything. This theme would have had more credibility if the topic could have been viewed and interpreted from the Johannine communities' perspective as well.<sup>10</sup> This endeavour attempts to show that the important elements of the New Covenant promised in the OT (Eze 36:23-36) are realised in the new relationship established in Jesus Christ, who is the Redeemer and the Mediator of the New Covenant. According to him the FG has specific terminology to explain the theology of discipleship. For this purpose he considers the Johannine call narrative (Jn 1:35-51), in which the author has characteristic notions to impart regarding the theology of discipleship (compare with Vellanickal 1980). According to Palatty the call narrative is composed having specific OT covenantal concepts, imagery and ideas in mind. He concentrates on showing that in Jesus the promise of the New Covenant in the OT is being fulfilled in the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. In his efforts to prove this he looks at: (1) The nature and promise of the Old Covenant, elements of the New Covenant, and Covenant in the Johannine writings. (2) Johannine Terminology of discipleship: The FG's use of the words, 'hearing', 'following', 'seeking', 'finding', 'coming', 'seeing', 'knowing', 'believing', and 'remaining', is purposeful and denotes discipleship as a growing relationship between Jesus and the disciples beginning from hearing a witness and concluding in a personal act of remaining with Jesus. Palatty discusses the use of these terms from the perspective of the OT, Judaism, and LXX.

While Vellanickal looked at this relation from linguistic and theological perspectives, Palatty's approach was to indicate what discipleship is from a covenantal perspective.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> He indicates that in 1915-6 H A A Kennedy was the first person to acknowledge the relationship between discipleship and the covenant: 'The Covenant conception in the first Epistle of Jn.' Expository Times 28, 23-6. Since then more studies along this line have been undertaken i.e. Malatesta, E 1978. *Interiority and Covenant*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press; Edanad, 1981. *Johannine vision of Covenant community*. Jeevadhara 11 (no 62), 127-140. He was probably influenced by these scholars in this investigation.

<sup>10</sup> Martyn (1968) put forward a thesis which interprets the FG as a drama presented at two levels, one of which concerns Jesus and the other which concerns the community of the evangelist in which the tradition of Jesus was shaped.

<sup>11</sup> In reverse Pryor (1988) tries to prove that the Johannine community is not sectarian but covenantal. He approaches the attainment of this goal by using terminology which is normally used to describe discipleship:

**Winbery** (1988) wrote a paper on: *Abiding in Christ: The concept of discipleship in John*. He immediately begins, without an introduction, to explain what a disciple is. His focal point is 'Abiding in Christ'. He indicates clearly what the essential meaning of 'abide' concerns and concludes that it has a theological meaning (to abide) and a non-theological meaning (to stay or to remain). His interest in this article is in the theological meaning of discipleship in the FG.<sup>12</sup> His goal in this article is to indicate that the disciples' relationship with Jesus never obtained to the perfection of that between God and Jesus, but the relationship was seen as being similar to that relationship and patterned on it.<sup>13</sup> This is also the conclusion to which he came.

Winbery was not successful in keeping to his subject in his exegesis. He did not devote enough attention to this subject and to the three important chapters on discipleship in the LD (chs 14-16).<sup>14</sup>

**Du Rand** (1991:311-340) wrote a sound and interesting article on *Perspectives on Johannine Discipleship according to the Farewell Discourses* and uses Jn 13:35 as his key text. According to him Johannine discipleship goes hand in hand with perspectives on the Johannine community. He also incorporates the narratological function of the Farewell Discourses to cast light on Johannine discipleship. Du Rand correctly refers to the fact that in order to elaborate on these perspectives the exegete is compelled to obtain further information on discipleship from extra-textual data. According to him a Johannine disciple is particularly characterised by belief, knowledge and love.

From a sociological perspective the Johannine community finds its identity through a view on discipleship, implemented by the 'new' commandment and the Paraclete as manifested in the BD. According to Du Rand, 'The Johannine narrative contributes to this sense of identification by telling the story from a retrospective ideological view of transparency, concentrating on two lines, the Jesus-ministry and the disciple-ministry. The result is identification between reader and discipleship which leads to definite self definition of discipleship as the appropriation of realized eschatological salvation'. The value of this article by Du Rand is that it stimulates the mind to consider new horizons on the research of the concept of discipleship in the FG.

### 2.3 Monographs:

According to my investigation only a few monographs have been written about this theme (Schultz 1962; Jiménez 1972; Pazdan 1982; Ray 1983; Neethling 1984; and Tolmie 1992). These monographs will now be discussed briefly.

**Schultz** (1962) in his *Nachfolgen und Nachahmen* considers the FG specifically in two sections of his monograph. In the development of the concept, μαθητῆς indicates that the pupil of the historical Jesus had become the disciple of the exalted Lord, a member of the Christian community (1962:137-44). The typical characteristic of a Johannine disciple is

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οἱ ἴδιοι, Vine branches, Flock-Shepherd, Keeping-Abiding-Loving (Jn 15:1-7).

<sup>12</sup> This is a lexicographical explanation which is always vague. Words have meaning only in context (Louw 1976:46).

<sup>13</sup> According to him this is evident in the great discipleship chapters on which he did some exegesis.

<sup>14</sup> He uses sources sparingly and does not refer to the best commentaries on the FG such as Schnackenburg, Brown, Lindars, Bultmann, etc.

faith in the Messiahship of Jesus and his sonship with God in a community of life (1962:143). For the outsider discipleship becomes visible in the mutual aspect of the life of the community. Schultz concludes that the community's destiny is suffering on account of its association with Jesus, and not with the world (1962:143f).

In another section Schultz states that the FE was concerned with the basic relationship of the disciple to the Revealer (pp 172-176). Believing is the essential link for the one who desired to follow Jesus (p 173). Finally, Schultz returns to the distinctive notion of following in its Johannine development of withdrawal from the world and community with God through faith in Christ (p 176).

The next monograph followed ten years later when **Jiménez** (1971) wrote an extensive study on discipleship in the FG: *El discípulo de Jesucristo según el evangelio de S Juan*. According to Pazdan (1982:33)<sup>15</sup> Jiménez based his investigation on a three part study: a) a survey of the significance of the term μαθητής in the literature previous to the FG, i.e., Greek, Rabbinic, LXX, Synoptics and Acts; b) an examination of the term in the FG; c) an enrichment of the concept through the theological-trinitarian perspective which he considered to be the Johannine orientation.

In part two the theological meaning of μαθητής is based on a three-fold perspective: a) material use; b) formal significance; c) the Beloved Disciple as the embodiment of the term. In discussing the material use of μαθητής, Jiménez begins by noting the importance of the twelve apostles. A second consideration is the recognition of four other groups distinct from the twelve: a) the 'many' who believed because of Jesus' signs; b) 'many of his disciples' who are contrasted with the loyal twelve; c) 'your disciples' from Jerusalem and Judea; d) the disciples who were eyewitnesses to Jesus' works. The final consideration of μαθητής is its universal and transcendent meaning (Pazdan 1982:35).

In the second section of his analysis, Jiménez presented the formal significance of μαθητής by consideration of two individual verses: 8:31; 13:35; and a full unit (15:1-12). The first verse indicates that the true disciple must abide in Jesus' word. The second verse describes fraternal love as another essential mark. The third reference, the vine and branches pericope, best expresses the relationship between Jesus and the disciple.

In the third section of his analysis, Jiménez described the Beloved Disciple as a paradigm of discipleship (Cf also Siker-Gieseler 1980). Jiménez concluded the first part of his study by asking how the disciples could exist if there was no personal contact with Jesus (Pazdan 1982:32-38). According to Pazdan (1982:32) his purpose was a comprehensive treatment of the term because there was no indication in the literature of a work dedicated so exclusively to this topic.<sup>16</sup> Concluding the first part, Jiménez agrees with Schultz that to be a disciple of the historic Jesus is not an office or a profession for the FE, but is a saving grace consisting of the communication of life with Jesus (1971:288; cf Pazdan 1982:39).

In part three of his study Jiménez presents the theological-trinitarian projection of the concept 'disciple of Jesus' in three sections. The first section treats the relationship of the

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<sup>15</sup> Because I am not able to read Spanish, I shall follow the discussion of Pazdan, Siker-Gieseler, and Segovia on Jiménez.

<sup>16</sup> Pazdan (1982:32) indicates in a footnote that only one comprehensive article on this topic has been initiated by De Arenillas, P 1962. 'El discípulo amado, modelo perfecto del discípulo de Jesu según el IV Evangelio.' *Ciencia Tomista* 83, 3-68.



disciple with the Father. The second section deals with the relationship of the disciple to Jesus which is developed through a discussion of the Good Shepherd parable and the names given to the disciples in the second half of the Gospel. The third section is concerned with the relationship of the disciples with the Holy Spirit as indicated in the Last Discourse. Jiménez concludes this section by reasserting the disciples' relationship with the triune God. Siker-Gieseler (1980:206) wrote that Jimenez, who offers a valuable study on the disciples and discipleship in the FG, however, seems to be too concerned with describing the ideal disciple of Jesus. This third part of his study is also seriously hampered by his attempt to show how discipleship explicitly reflects the activity of the trinity.

The 80's indicate a new era of interest in discipleship in the FG. The third monograph appeared in this decade and was a thesis of 402 pages for the degree Ph.D in Theology by **Pazdan** (1982): *Discipleship as the appropriation of Eschatological Salvation in the Fourth Gospel*. In the first of the five chapters Pazdan tries to indicate how the literature of the present century has responded to the understanding of μαθητής and the FG.

Chapters two (79 pages), three (81 pages) and four (70 pages) form a trilogy. During the scholar's investigation she discovered six pairs of verbs which appear in a particular pattern throughout the Gospel: πιστεύω εἰς / ἐπέρχομαι προς; οἶδα / γινώσκω; ἀγαπάω / φιλέω; μένω ἐν / εἶναι ἐν; ἀκούω / τηρέω; ζητέω / εὐρίσκω. She wrote that it became apparent that the context for each pair indicates a relational reality. The πιστεύω εἰς / ἐπέρχομαι προς states the relationship of the believers to Jesus (Chapter two: 'The Basis for Discipleship -- Believing in Jesus'). The οἶδα / γινώσκω; ἀγαπάω / φιλέω; μένω ἐν / εἶναι ἐν expresses a mutuality of relationships between Jesus and the disciples and less frequently between the Father and the disciples (Chapter three: 'The heart of discipleship -- Mutuality of relationships'). The ἀκούω / τηρέω; ζητέω / εὐρίσκω signifies the continuing task of the disciples which fosters the above relationships with Jesus (Chapter four: 'The Tasks of Discipleship -- Hearing and keeping Jesus' word; seeking and finding Him').

In her conclusion (1982:307) Pazdan states that these six pairs of verbs point to the reality of discipleship. They suggest a theological synthesis based on the relational nature of discipleship which constitutes the selfdefinition and function of the Johannine community (Cf Käsemann 1968:30). For Pazdan discipleship in the FG is the appropriation of salvation.<sup>17</sup> It is a unique understanding of a particular group of believers which derives from their experiences of the risen Jesus whose unity with the Father is the basis for all relationships with the disciples.

In the successive year (1983) a thesis of 196 pages by **C.A. Ray** was awarded the degree Doctor of Theology in the division of Biblical Studies which is entitled: *The concept of Discipleship in the Johannine School*. This is an investigation into the possible backgrounds of the διδάσκαλος/μαθητής relationship and an analysis of the Johannine concept of discipleship by means of an examination of the literature produced by the Johannine school.

Chapter one of this thesis is a composition of the existence and history of the Johannine School. Ray tried to sketch the broad lines of development that are generally accepted by Johannine scholars. Chapter two of this thesis is an investigation of the διδάσκαλος/

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<sup>17</sup> Being a disciple is a lifelong process of relating to Jesus, the Father and other believers as one's identity and purpose. The verbal descriptions of a disciple (believing, knowing, loving, abiding, hearing and keeping, seeking and finding) indicate dynamic relationships rather than static associations.

μαθητής relationship prior to and contemporary with the FG. The third chapter is a study of the titles used by the FE for a disciple in the FG. Chapter four is an etymological and contextual study of words used by the FE to describe a disciple. The final part comprises the conclusions of the investigation. An attempt is made to analyze, evaluate, and arrange the material in such a way as to give a logical and complete explanation of the concept of discipleship in the Johannine School.

The historical-critical method of research is the primary method employed. This study is not a trustworthy analysis of Ray's objective and the exegetical work is also disappointing.<sup>18</sup> The conclusion contains no new and fresh aspects.

The next monograph is a dissertation of 107 pages for the degree *Bacalaureus Divinitatis* by **L.M. Neethling** (1984): *Dissipelskap in die Johannesevangelie*. In this study μαθητής and related terms have been investigated in texts which, according to him, are relevant to or can be connected with discipleship.<sup>19</sup> He worked on the basis of discourse analysis and in the concluding chapter systematizes his conclusions. After reading this dissertation one cannot help but to ask whether the author has not been too hasty dismissing his exegesis (as in the case of Ray) in favour of theological opinions which favour the author's subjective viewpoint. He makes conclusions and new statements in his last chapter which he has failed to argue in his exegesis (cf Neethling 1984:92). Neethling, who was strongly influenced by Vellanickal (1980), used Vellanickal to formulate his conclusion. Neethling's attempt to build this dissertation on discourse analysis alone is its basic weakness. This flaw appears throughout the work. No new insights are made<sup>20</sup> and also his exegesis is disappointing.<sup>21</sup> According to his title (as in the case of Ray), this study is also incomplete for in his summary he only refers to the characteristics and primary requirements for discipleship namely Love.

The last considered monograph is the one of **D F Tolmie** (1992), a thesis of 412 pages for the degree of Doctor Theologiae. The title of this study is: *John 13:1-17:16 in narratological perspective*. The purpose of the study is to conduct a detailed analysis of John 13:1-17:26 in terms of a narratological framework. In this study Tolmie attempts to prove that there is an important perspective on John 13:1-17:26 that is often neglected as a result of the preoccupation with the history of, or certain themes in the text (1992:9). According to him all the events narrated in these chapters form part of the coherent unified narrative of the FG, and are part of the overall organisation of the narrative.

Tolmie (1992:319) detected two important developments from these chapters concerning discipleship: 'Firstly, the paradigm of traits associated with the disciples is supplemented by a number of traits indicating what discipleship should look like, and secondly, the benefits of true discipleship are stressed.' Based on the way in which the different narratological facets are handled in chs 13-17, it is clear that one of the objectives the implied author aims to achieve is to provide the implied reader with a comprehensive ideological perspective on discipleship. According to him this perspective on discipleship

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<sup>18</sup> It seems as if his exegesis is subordinate to his theologic-philosophical understanding of discipleship.

<sup>19</sup> Jn 1:35-51; 2:1-12; 4:1-38; 6:1-21; 6:60-71; 7:1-9; 8:31-32; 13:1-36; 14:1-31; 15:1-17; 20:19-23; 21:15-19.

<sup>20</sup> Neethling's conclusion links up with Hawthorne (1975:130), Jiménez (quoted by Segovia 1985:77), Müller (1975:490) and others.

<sup>21</sup> He undertook a discourse analysis but did not succeed in explaining this analysis in terms of linguistic, semantic and theological explanation.

has already been introduced on several occasions in the first half (chs 1-12) of the FG. In chs 13-17 it is much more extensively developed and as such represents an important development: 'The ideological perspective on discipleship is conveyed in several ways, for example by means of the underlying deep structure, the way in which the surface structure between events is developed, the various ways in which the disciples are characterised and the ideological facet of focalisation.' He summarises the ideological perspective on discipleship in terms of the following aspects (1992:324):

1. The radical difference between discipleship and being part of the world.
2. The vital importance of the relationship between Jesus and the disciple for the constitution and existence of discipleship.
3. The absolute necessity of striving towards the embodiment of the values of true discipleship.
4. The urgent call to endure the hardships brought about by being a disciple within the world.
5. The overwhelming benefits associated with discipleship (i.e. receiving the Paraclete, the prospect of joy, peace, understanding, having requests granted, sanctification, being kept in Jesus' name, and glorification).

This is a valuable study on discipleship in the FG, but unfortunately with little theological discussion owing to the objective of the study.

## 2.4 Commentaries:

The commentaries indicated in the bibliography have been examined according to some relevant texts<sup>22</sup> concerning discipleship; where μαθητής and ἀκολουθεω regularly occur as well as the metaphor in 15:1-8 and the prayer in 17:1-26. Of all the commentaries consulted, only Schnackenburg (1975:231-245) gives an extended explanation of discipleship.

The commentary of Bultmann is the only other commentary which incorporates frequent references to discipleship in the exegesis and discussion of the text. In 13:36-14:4 Bultmann (1950:459f) discusses 'The promise of discipleship' which relates to the rest of ch 14. In his discussion of the Johannine vocabulary in Appendix I, Brown (1975:498) discusses words, relevant to discipleship: ἀγάπη, ἀλήθεια, μείνειν, πιστεύειν, ἐντολή, etc, but unfortunately not μαθητής or ἀκολουθεω. In 1:35ff he refers to discipleship in his exegetical exposition, but does not discuss it here or in other texts in which it is relevant. Although Brown writes in his book *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* that 'discipleship is the primary Christian category for John', he never really develops this in any of his extensive studies.

Morris (1975) also discusses important themes central to the FG, in addenda but never touches on discipleship. Fewer references in connection with discipleship occur sporadically in his exegetical material than in Bultmann. In general most commentaries in their exegetical discussions of texts incorporate or occasionally refer to discipleship.

## 2.5 Theologies:

In the theologies consulted no definite attention has been paid to discipleship although

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<sup>22</sup> 1:35-51; 6:60-71; 8:31; 12:26; 13:1ff; 14:1-16:33.

certain aspects<sup>23</sup> have been dealt with. Most theologies (Bultmann 1953; Conzelmann 1968; Jeremias 1972; Goppelt 1976; Kümmel 1977; Ladd 1979; Guthrie 1981; Morris 1986) respect the different main characteristics of each Gospel and therefore treat it accordingly.<sup>24</sup> Although Morris (1986) respects the individuality of each Gospel's theology, he pays attention to discipleship in the Gospel of Luke but ignores it in the Gospel of John. Thus the different theologies offer no definite contribution to the concept of discipleship.

## 2.6 Theological Dictionaries and Encyclopedias:

Under the headings disciple, discipleship and μαθητής the concept of discipleship has been treated and in some Dictionaries and Encyclopedias is not even mentioned. In all these works no differentiation and respect of the individuality of each Gospel receives preference. Almost the same information about discipleship occurs throughout namely: statistics, meaning, some characteristics, background, relation to the Greek world and Rabbinic realm and other groups of disciples. In most cases the content used is vague, general and concise. Only in the *Dictionary of the New Testament* (Müller 1975) the different words for being a disciple have been explained with respect to the individuality and distinctiveness of each Gospel. Only two paragraphs have been dedicated to discipleship in the FG (Müller 1975:483, 490). The *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Rengstorf 1942) is the most extensive on this subject and approaches the disciples in the Gospels and Acts collectively through a word study. He begins by noting the uniformity of usage of μαθητής in all the Gospels, saying that μαθητής always implies the existence of a personal attachment to Jesus which shapes the whole life of the disciple. Rengstorf does not develop the distinctiveness of any Gospel's portrayal of the disciples.<sup>25</sup> He is helpful in pointing out the differences between the μαθηταὶ of Jesus and the μαθηταὶ of the Philosophers and the talmid of the rabbis, stressing that the disciples of Jesus were committed to his person, whereas the disciples of the philosophers and rabbis were committed to their teachings. He also develops the concepts of the obedience of the disciples, their obligation to suffer, their role as witnesses, and the initiative of Jesus behind the disciples, which are themes common to all four Gospels. He offers two conclusions in summary of his findings: (1) The disciples were moulded by their self-awareness of Jesus; Jesus is for them their Lord, not the rabbi; and (2) The task to which they are called as his disciples is witnessing to Jesus, which testimony is based on the personal relationship of the disciples with Jesus (1942:450f).

In conclusion, although Rengstorf provides an extensive study of μαθητής in the Gospels and Acts as a whole, he does not really develop the FG's distinctive portrayal of the disciples. Just as the study of Bultmann can be criticized for presenting discipleship in the FG but neglecting the disciples, so on the other hand, Rengstorf's word study can be faulted for dealing extensively with the disciples, but neglecting the larger theme of discipleship in the FG (cf Siker-Gieseler 1980). For many years the contribution of Rengstorf on discipleship was regarded as one of the leading analyses on the topic.

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<sup>23</sup> Characteristics such as: Love, Faith, Abiding in.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremias 1971 and Bonziran 1963 discussed the theology of the different Gospels simultaneously.

<sup>25</sup> Rengstorf (1967) does mention a few elements of discipleship which are more distinctive in the FG than in the other Gospels: the disciples of Moses (9:28) are contrasted with Jesus' disciples; the question arises about two groups of disciples, a wider circle of those who believe, and a narrower circle of those who accompany Jesus; the failure of the disciples to understand is especially seen in the FG (4:51); and the Resurrection is the event that brings about their understanding.

## 2.7. Conclusions

### 2.7.1. Possible reasons for the relative lack of interest in discipleship in the FG.

During in the first seven decades of this century there was relatively little interest in μαθητής either as a Johannine term or as a theological concept. The literature consulted is sketchy about discipleship in the FG. Research on this concept has been limited to articles, a few monographs and references in writings which do not deal specifically with discipleship and only aspects of discipleship are addressed. According to Kysar (1975), until 1975, when he wrote *The Fourth Evangelist and his Gospel*, there had not been any explicit interest in the concept of discipleship in the FG. Thus by this time discipleship has not been rationalized by a comprehensive approach and study. The first substantial approach to research about discipleship in the FG came in 1971 when Jiménez wrote his *El discipulo de Jesucristo segun el evangelio de S Juan*. In the 80s greater interest followed. The first monograph appeared in 1982 when Pazdan wrote her thesis on *Discipleship as the appropriation of Eschatological Salvation in the FG*.

The increased interest in this subject in the 80s is due to Rudolph Bultmann. In his book *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* Ashton (1991:7) indicates the shift of interest in the different trends of research in the FG which have taken place. According to him the contribution of Rudolf Bultmann constitutes a watershed in the history of Johannine scholarship. The gap which Bultmann caused by virtually ignoring one particular area<sup>26</sup> of enquiry has marked the most significant advance in Johannine studies in the latter half of the twentieth century (Ashton 1991:44).<sup>27</sup>

Some factors then which could contribute to this lack of interest are:

- 1) The major theological focus in the Gospel has been Christological and Eschatological.<sup>28</sup>
- 2) There has been renewed concern about the sources for the Gospel.
- 3) There has been a growing interest in the community of believers.
- 4) In the 60s, 70s, and 80s articles and monographs addressed the identity and development of the Johannine Community(ies) and its self understanding.
- 5) Interest in the Johannine community determined the ecclesiological investigations and led to major contributions about the Johannine School. See Pazdan (1982:41-2), Segovia (1985:77), McPolin (1980:6-7,149).

This clearly shows why there was not much interest in discipleship on account of other

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<sup>26</sup> According to my judgement Ashton (1991) refers to the Ecclesiology.

<sup>27</sup> Ashton (1991) indicates that in the pre-Bultmann period the interest in research fell on:

Aims and audience,  
Authorship and origin,  
Composition and sources,  
History or theology.

In the Bultmann period it fell on:

Literary questions,  
Historical questions,  
Theological questions.

In the post-Bultmann period the interest fell on:

Theology: Christology and eschatology,  
Composition: sources and edition,  
Origins: influences, background and tradition,  
Audience: situation and circumstances.

<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, discipleship has a strong Christological point of departure.

topics which dominated the scene. After Bultmann, as has been seen, more attention was paid to the situation and circumstances of the audience<sup>29</sup> which definitely contributes to a greater interest on discipleship and ecclesiology in the FG.

## **2.7.2. General observations.**

### **2.7.2.1.**

In general the literature can be distinguished according to topical interest and methodology. The literature of the present century on μαθητής indicates three periods of methodology. Firstly, from 1900-1971 a thematic-theological approach highlighted some characteristics of discipleship as they appeared in all four Gospels, Acts and with some mention of the concept in the Pauline literature. Secondly, Jiménez caused a paradigm shift with his major contribution to restrict his study to discipleship to only the FG. Jiménez in 1971 limited himself to the FG, listed passages where the term μαθητής appeared, discussed three texts and offered the BD as the model of the perfect disciple. Thirdly, in the seventies, eighties and nineties exegetical methods such as the historic-critical, discourse analysis and narratological methods were used to come to an understanding of the function of the disciples and the meaning of discipleship in the different Gospels (Cf Pazdan 1982). The different topics on discipleship which have been investigated will be discussed in the following section.

### **2.7.2.2.**

Since the 70s a few important contributions have been made on discipleship in the FG (Rigaux 1970; Jiménez 1971; Schnackenburg 1975 and De Jonge 1977). Such contributions increased through the 80s although some of the experts<sup>30</sup> on the FG did not deal with this topic. During this decade an article or monograph was published on an aspect of this subject nearly every year.

### **2.7.2.3.**

Although no constant current of influence on discipleship in the FG throughout the different decades has been observed, most scholars are unanimous that the focal point of discipleship in the FG lies in the 'Last Discourses' (Du Rand, Hartin, Winbury, Pazdan, Rigaux, Jiménez, Tolmie).

### **2.7.2.4.**

There was a constant theological onslaught even when different exegetical methods were used (i.e. Vellanickal, Siker-Gieseler, Neethling, and Doohan to name only a few). The limited research undertaken did not provide many new insights, but rather highlighted certain aspects. These aspects will now be discussed under the following two headings:

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<sup>29</sup> Schweizer (1959), Schnackenburg (1961), D'Aragon (1962), Moule (1962), Grayston (1967), Pancaro (1967-8), Baumbach (1972), Haacker (1973), Culpepper (1975), Meeks (1975), Pancaro (1975-6), O'Grady (1975), Kysar (1977), Brown (1979, 1984), Collins (1979), Woll (1981), Renner (1982), Dahl (1986), Domeris (1988), Pryor (1988), Lombard (1989).

These studies begin to clarify and outline through their respective approaches the meaning and nature of Christian discipleship from the Johannine perspective. The results have not been at all dissimilar; indeed, general agreement may be said to prevail with respect to certain fundamental aspects of discipleship in the Johannine community: namely, the central role of belief and unity in such discipleship, the sustained contrast between believers and unbelievers, to mention only a few.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, Culpepper, Painter, Barret, Kysar, Lindars, Van der Watt, Ashton, Smalley, etc. In South Africa it was only Neethling (1984), Du Rand (1991) and Tolmie (1992) who offered contributions on discipleship in the FG.

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*Tendencies in discipleship found in this research and Different opinions found in the research about the essence of discipleship.*

### **3. Tendencies in discipleship found in this research**<sup>31</sup>

Quite a number of tendencies may be observed from the research done so far, but only those which occurs most frequently will be briefly discussed here.

#### **3.1. Terminology used to indicate the concept of discipleship.**

The term μαθητής is the favourite for and most common word in the FG to express the relationship (discipleship) of the believer to Jesus.<sup>32</sup> According to Müller (1975:485) μαθητής can be translated as *learner*, *pupil*, and *disciple*. The verb μαθησάω can then be translated as *to learn*. Generally, seen from the Synoptic Gospels and Acts it is used to indicate total attachment to someone in discipleship (Müller 1975:486). Rengstorf (1942:444) is of the opinion that μαθητής always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described as μαθητής, and which in its particularity leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative power. Vellanickal takes it further. According to him the term definitely carries a theological message (cf Schnackenburg 1975:233-6) according to the two level approach in the FG.<sup>33</sup> It is mostly used with the definite article referring to the twelve who accompanied Jesus.<sup>34</sup> Although they believe in Jesus (8:31), men still have to 'become disciples ...'<sup>35</sup> A disciple is someone who lets himself be instructed and guided by the Master (Vellanickal 1977:294). In complementary fashion Barth says (cf Barth 1965:14), 'The disciples are those who participate in the ministry of Christ, those, in Paul's terms, who "imitate" his ministry according to the example of the apostle' (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Eph 5:1; Phil 3:17; etc). Ray (1983) joins Barth. For him the most common usage of μαθητής is to refer generally to a person who follows Jesus without specific comment about the, depth of his commitment.<sup>36</sup>

The second word, rarely used by scholars, to indicate discipleship in the FG, is ἀκολουθεῖν. According to Rengstorf (1942:213f; cf Müller 1975:483), generally in Palestinian and early Christianity, the term views the fact that from the root of the pupil relationship there arose within it the wholly new and distinctive concept of following after Christ. According to Müller (1980:482f) the FG hints at its spiritual implications for fellowship with the Exalted One (especially 12:6f). He says the FE takes over the synoptic phraseology (1:43f), but tends to see it less in its particular historical context and more

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<sup>31</sup> In the following analysis it is not my objective to go into discussion as to whether an opinion or interpretation is correct or incorrect. The objective here is only to state what scholars have said about discipleship.

<sup>32</sup> Neethling (1984:16) states according to the occurrence of μενεῖν in Jn 1:38: 'A disciple is someone who wants to stay with God.' He interprets μενεῖν symbolically according to the Johannine symbolism.

<sup>33</sup> Neethling differs from this viewpoint. According to him the term μαθητής is rather founded in the broader Johannine message (1984:92).

<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately Vellanickal (1977:291) goes too far when he argues that μαθητής without the article, which occur only 6 times (cf Jn 8:31; 9:27,28; 13:35; 15:8; 19:38) refers to the nature of being a disciple. According to him these six texts show that it is a spiritual dependence that makes one a disciple of another. He refers to 19:38 saying that it is his spiritual attachment to Jesus that makes Joseph of Arimathea a disciple of Jesus.

<sup>35</sup> Rigaux (1970:202) differs from Vellanickal saying that 'Die an Jesus glauben, werden bei Johannes μαθηται genannt.'

<sup>36</sup> See also 4.1 *Different opinions found in the research about the essence of Discipleship*, later in this chapter.

within the framework of his (the FE's) total vision. Jesus appeared as Light and Life in the world. Anyone who 'follows' him (8:12) walks in the light and is saved (cf also Rengstorf 1942:214). Müller emphasizes that accordingly, following here means believing acceptance of the revelation. Ἀκολουθεῖω means having faith (cf Jn 12:44). To follow the call of the Shepherd (10:4,27) means both safety in Christ and fellowship in suffering with him (12:26) which in turn means 'exaltation' with him (12:32).

A third word used by the FE to indicate discipleship is μιμέομαι. This word, except in the case of Theological Dictionaries (Kittel, Brown), is never used or referred to by scholars.

### **3.2. Terminology used to indicate the process of discipleship.**

Brown (1971:78) said that the FE has used the occasion of the call of disciples (1:35-42) to summarize discipleship in its whole development. Vellanickal (1980) agrees with Brown and in a short analysis he points out the process of this development: election and call, human testimony, hearing, following, seeking, finding, coming and seeing, remaining with Jesus and lastly missionary sharing.

Palatty (1987:206) agrees with Brown and Vellanickal. He indicates this process in more detail and combines it with the covenant concept. According to him the FG has specific terminology to explain the theology of discipleship. The FE's use of the words, 'hearing, following, seeking, finding, coming, seeing, knowing, believing and remaining', is purposeful and denotes discipleship as a growing relationship between Jesus and the disciples, beginning from hearing a witness and ending up in a personal remaining with Jesus. Pazdan (1982:308; Segovia 1985:80) actually rounded it off by saying: 'Being a disciple is a lifelong process of relating to Jesus, the Father and other believers as one's identity and purpose. The verbal descriptions of a disciple indicate dynamic relationships rather than static associations'.

### **3.3. The character of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel.**

When discussing this tendency I would like to differentiate between the characteristics of a disciple and the characteristics of discipleship. This differentiation became obvious throughout the investigation (cf also Siker-Gieseler 1980:207; Culpepper 1983:115, Ray 1983:168f; Doohan 1988). The disciples are the 'people involved' in the 'process' of discipleship.<sup>37</sup> According to Culpepper (1983:151) the reader in the FG finds that the FE says a great deal that is implicit and has to be deduced from the text.<sup>38</sup> The continuous

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<sup>37</sup> Siker-Gieseler (1980) also makes this differentiation but does not sustain it. According to him the overall theme of 'discipleship' in the FG has been developed along two lines, disciples and discipleship. He says: 'Together, these two nuances function to bring out the familiar depth dimension of the FG. The disciples function primarily on the surface level in John, denoting the historic group of disciples who accompanied Jesus. Discipleship on the other hand has a deeper dimension that transcends a strict historical understanding, although it includes it.' He finds himself on a different and lonely track through this differentiation of the disciples as historical figures and some characters like the Samaritan Woman, Capernaum Official, man born blind and Martha, as paradigms of discipleship.

<sup>38</sup> In the FG there are two levels of meaning (Meeks 1986:70; Martyn 1979; Brown 1979; cf Painter 1980:23: the surface level and the deeper dimension. What seems clear and simple on the surface is never as simple for the prospective reader because of the opacity and complexity of the Gospel's sub-surface signals. Under this perplexity misunderstanding, irony, and symbolism are relevant to indicate the difference between the surface level and deeper dimension, and discipleship and the disciple:

(a) *Misunderstanding*: this depth dimension causes many misunderstandings in the FG; cf 2:19-21 where 'his temple' has a depth dimension; 4:10-15 where 'living water' was misunderstood by the Samaritan Woman (Culpepper 1983:153f).



implicit communication within the FG is a major source of both its power and its mystery.

### **3.3.1. Characteristics of Discipleship.<sup>39</sup>**

#### **3.3.1.1. Commitment to the Person of Jesus Christ.**

(a) The fundamental idea about the **nature of discipleship** was determined right from the beginning by Jesus' person to which his disciples bound themselves (Müller 1975:488; Dulles 1987:362; Schweizer 1955-6:88; Donahue 1985-6:76). The factor on which the whole emphasis rests exclusively is the person of Jesus. (See also Pazdan 1982:308; Vellanickal 1980:134 and Palatty 1987:206).

(1) In recollection it is never the isolated word of Jesus which either attracts to allegiance or repels. The word develops its true and binding force only when there is already commitment to him (Rengstorf 1942:445f). Schneiders (1978:45f) says the true meaning of Christian commitment is 'to believe in Jesus' and then strikingly defines what this means: 'To believe in Jesus is to accept him, to identify with him, to follow him, to grow in discipleship. It is, in brief, to commit oneself to Jesus with that totality of self-giving that is suitable only in relationship to God and one whom he has sent. By the fact and quality of one's adherence to this man one is proclaiming that he is the Son of God. This is a life stance which could only be legitimate if Jesus is indeed who he claims to be, the one sent by the Father'. It is only the powerful and direct impression of the person of Jesus on Peter and the others which, along with his personal Word, impels them to follow him and causes them to become his μαθηταί<sup>40</sup> (Rengstorf 1942:445f). His disciples saw in him the one, who with absolute and divine authority determines their life, the one who had himself, in ultimate obedience followed the path imposed by God (Schweizer 1955-6:89).

(2) There is a difference between Jesus and representatives of the Rabbinate and Greek philosophers. If allegiance to the rabbi has its ultimate source in the '*Torah*' which he expounds, the basis of allegiance to Socrates is to be found in the idea which he personally represents (Rengstorf 1942:450; Ray 1983:169ff). In contrast to both, Jesus binds his disciples exclusively to himself. The rabbi and the Greek philosopher are at one in representing a specific cause. Jesus offers himself. The difference becomes even clearer when the external relation of the disciples of Jesus to Jesus is considered.<sup>41</sup>

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(b) *Irony*: the depth dimension is also to be seen in the irony; the reader who sees, as well as hears, understands that the narrator means more than what he says and that the characters do not understand what is happening or what they are saying; cf 1:46; 4:12; 6:42; etc. (Culpepper 1983:165).

(c) *Symbolism*: the communion of the upper and lower spheres of reality and meaning become more intimate through the symbols which they share (Culpepper 1983:180f).

<sup>39</sup> In a certain sense Vellanickal (1980) forces the following characteristics of discipleship to appear from his exegesis on 1:35ff: a) In Jesus Christ elected and called by God self (1:35-36); b) Witnessing (1:35-36); c) To listen to the words of Jesus (1:37; 8:47; 10:26-27; 8:37); d) To follow Jesus (1:43; 8:12; 10:4,27; 12:26; 13:36; 21:18-19,22); e) To seek Jesus (1:38; 6:24; 7:34,36; 8:4); f) To find Jesus (1:38; 12:26; 14:2-3); g) To believe in Jesus (1:39; 6:35,40); h) To stay with Jesus (1:39; 15:4-7; 12:26; 14:2-3); i) To take part in missionary work (1:40-42; 17:18); j) To grow in the relationship with Christ (1:35-51).

<sup>40</sup> The calling of Nathaniel is parallel in every way (Jn 1:45f).

<sup>41</sup> According to Rengstorf (1942:450) there is, notwithstanding the formal kinship between the '*Talmid*' of later Rabbinic Judaism and the μαθητής of Jesus, no inner relation between the two. The reason is that in both origin and nature the disciples of Jesus are moulded by the self awareness of Jesus. He is for them, not the rabbi/διδάσκαλος, but their Lord. The fact that they are μαθηταί does not affect this. He further states (p 459f) that the relation in which the disciples are set by Jesus to himself implies already that witness to him is the task to which they are called as his disciples (17:18,20). Vellanickal (1980:132) agrees with Rengstorf but with a shift in accent. He says that Jesus presents himself as 'Teacher' or 'Master', not in the ordinary sense of the term, but in the sense of the Son of Man who is the Revealer of the Father.

**(b) Secondly**, this commitment to Jesus, involves **coming to Jesus and following Jesus**.

**(1) Coming to Jesus.** Some disciples are not personally called by Jesus to follow because they have been told about him by another of the disciples (Rengstorf 1942:447ff; Lindars 1972:112; Culpepper 1983:115; Gnilka 1983:20). According to the FG (1:35-37) John the Baptist urges the two disciples with him to join Jesus.<sup>42</sup> Segovia (1985:80) agrees with this: the early formation of the circle of Jesus' disciples is a process which is started by the Baptist himself (1:35-42)<sup>43</sup> and is then continued by Jesus in the area of Galilee (1:43-51; 2:1-12).

There are also occasions when Jesus takes the initiative and calls people to discipleship. We see this in 1:43 (Philip), where the challenge is ἀκολουθεῖ μοι (Rengstorf 1942:447; Müller 1975:488; Culpepper 1983:115; Jn 1:35ff; cf also 15:16, 21:22).<sup>44</sup>

**(2) Following Jesus.**<sup>45</sup> More significant is the fact that the disciples unconditionally accept the authority of Jesus, not just inwardly by believing in him, but also outwardly by obeying him (cf Hartin 1991; Winbery 1988). Where the believer abides in the word of Jesus (8:31) and keeps his ἐντολαί (13:34f; 14:15f; 15:10f), he is ἀληθῶς his μαθητής (8:31) (Rengstorf 1942:451f).<sup>46</sup> According to Doohan (1988:133), believing used with the Greek preposition εἰς and the accusative case, is used thirty-six times in the FG and 'means not merely accepting Jesus' doctrine but giving oneself to Him, to his allegiance (12:11), setting the whole of one's life in movement towards Him' (11:25f; cf also Donahue

<sup>42</sup> Schnackenburg (1977:308f) differs from this standpoint. According to him the brief report in 1:37-39 is meant to give the definite impression that the two seekers are won over by Jesus himself and that the Baptist was merely an intermediary (cf also 1:42,46). In 1:39 Jesus invites them to come with him.

<sup>43</sup> Brown (1975:77), Schnackenburg (1965:306f), Winbery (1988:104), (cf Cullmann 1975:90) claim that the first disciples of Jesus were former disciples of John the Baptist.

<sup>44</sup> Sawicki (1986:17f) disagrees with this point of view and argues differently. In his paper 'How to teach Christ's disciples' he wrote that for the Q tradition and the Synoptics, it is the teacher's (John the Baptist's) uncertainty which sends the disciples to Jesus. It is not the teacher but the disciples who 'hear and see' the evidence of healings and preaching. In the FG it is the teacher's own experience of revelation that gives him certitude about the identity of Jesus out of which disciples are sent to the Lord. The teacher has seen the dove descending and has heard the voice. What the disciples hear is the teacher's witness to Jesus' identity, a witness based upon the teacher's own inner certitude. The teaching (Mystagogical catechesis) of the teacher is meant to foster an intimate personal encounter with the Lord in worship and recognition of him as God's Son and Redeemer. Out of this encounter discipleship develops. In the conclusion of his paper Sawicki says that the teaching paradigms he examined link discipleship with discovery. An individual becomes a disciple out of a personal experience of discovering who Jesus is. Morris's (1971:155) point of view relates to that of Sawicki. According to him the theme of the FG is not the calling of the disciples (whom he calls apostles) into office; it is their congenial association with Christ. Strictly speaking there is no 'call' in the FG (except in the case of Philip -- 1:43). Jesus does not call, nor does the Baptist send. The disciples of the Baptist recognize the Messiah and spontaneously attach themselves to Jesus.

The problem precipitated by these scholars is that they categorize the acts of the Baptist, the two disciples, and Jesus and emphasize one at the expense of the other. *These three acts (sending, recognition of the Messiah, calling) cannot be separated but form a unity.* The one implies the other.

<sup>45</sup> According to Segovia (1982:96) the action of ἀκολουθεῖν to some extent becomes a *terminus technicus* for discipleship (1:37,38,40,43; 8:12; 10:4,5,27; 12:26; 13:36,37; 18:15). However the term can also be used to refer to those who actually reject Jesus' claims (6:2) as well as in a more neutral sense (11:31; 20:6). For Bultmann (1950:99) ἀκολουθεῖν in the first place means only 'they went after Him.' Yet the repetition of the word (1:38,40,43) already shows that ἀκολουθεῖν is meant to depict their 'discipleship' (cf 8:12; 10:4f,27; 12:26; 13:36f; 21:19f,22). The description of their 'following' is taken over from Rabbinic terminology. Vellanickal (1980) dedicates his whole article indicating that discipleship is the response to Jesus who is the Revealer and Teacher.

<sup>46</sup> Doohan (1988:134) adds: doing the works he does (11:12), loving Jesus (14:21), going out and bearing fruit (15:16), loving one another (15:17).

1985-6; Winbery 1988:104). Winbery (1988:104), without any fundamental reason asserts that the FE perhaps desires to emphasize such a relationship because he is so fond of the basic expression of 'obedience' to depict the relationship of Jesus with God, God with Jesus, of disciples with Jesus, and of Jesus and God with the disciples.

(3) *The failure to follow Jesus*. Regarding the response to Jesus' invitation Doohan (1988:140ff) points out that although the Johannine Jesus is presented as being in control and does not reject anyone who wishes to draw near to him, Jesus still experiences a number of failures regarding the response of disciples. After the Bread of Life discourse many of his disciples remark that Jesus' saying is hard and ask who can accept it? (6:60). They then return to their former life and no longer accompany him (6:66).

Not all the people Jesus met became his disciples. The man cured at Bethesda (5:15) did not follow him and Jesus' brothers did not believe in him (7:5). His ministry concludes with the sad acknowledgement that "Τοσαῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ σημεῖα πεποιηκότος ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν" (12:37). Those who receive Jesus (1:12), who are the Father's gift to him (17:6), who accept the light, are his own, and become children of God. They must reject darkness, the world, the devil and unbelief (Doohan 1988:140-142).

(4) *Failure of the disciples to understand Jesus*. According to Rengstorf (1967:450) the disciples' lack of understanding on the part of regarding Jesus' return to the Father is evident throughout the FG. While the FE indicates that the disciples of Jesus believe in him (2:11), he also refers to the fact that they had no real knowledge of his nature or understanding of his words (2:21f; 12:16; cf 16:19ff). Segovia categorizes the contents of the disciples' failure to understand Jesus differently. According to him the two most important elements are the disciples' failure to integrate the events of 'the hour' into their belief prior to 'the hour,' and their persistent lack of awareness concerning their own role in the context of Jesus' mission (1985:93).

Fortunately there is also another possibility. In his general commentary on Jn 1:35-51 Brown (1971:77f) comments that each day there is a gradual deepening of insight and a profound realization of who it is that the disciples are following. The FG insists on the gradual evolvment of the disciples' faith (6:66-71; 14:9). The FE, according to Brown, places on the lips of the first disciples in 1:35-51 a synopsis of the gradual increase of understanding that takes place throughout the ministry of Jesus and after the resurrection. Rengstorf (1967:450) agrees with Brown. He says that the FE agrees closely with Luke in testifying that it was only the resurrection which brought about a great change in the understanding of the disciples (2:22; 12:16) (cf Culpepper 1983:119). According to Culpepper (1983:118) their lack of understanding does not pose any threat to their discipleship.

### **3.3.2. The characteristics of a Johannine disciple -- from a theological perspective.**

The FE does not provide a list of characteristics, or record a comprehensive discourse by Jesus on the subject. Rather the FE's understanding of discipleship must be pieced together by looking at the words the FG uses to describe the disciples of Jesus (Ray 1983:77). The following list of words is probably at the centre of Jesus' concept of discipleship.

The majority of sources consulted<sup>47</sup> indicate two main characteristics of a disciple as depicted by the FG -- faith and love (see for instance Van Boxel 1975). A third

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<sup>47</sup> Howard 1943; Rengstorf 1967; Kümmel 1973; Ladd 1974; Painter 1975; Vanderlip 1975; Culpepper 1975; Müller 1975; Guthrie 1981; Ray 1983; Doohan 1988.



belonging to Jesus. Love for one another is only possible when the disciples abide in Jesus and obey his commandment of love (Du Rand 1991:317f).

### 3.3.2.3. γινώσκειν/εἰδέναι

These two words are used most often, according to most sources consulted, synonymously and without discrimination (Ray 1983:100; Vanderlip 1975:105; Westcott 1937:45f; Painter 1975:86ff). The basic focus in orientation towards Jesus, according to Du Rand (1991:317), is indicated by the disciples' understanding of Jesus' identity. It is only the believers, 'his own', who share the relationship of knowledge with Jesus. The disciples' failure to know and understand Jesus was a reality prior to his glorification (cf 14:4-9; 16:18).

When knowledge is related to faith it expresses the perception and understanding of faith (Du Rand 1991:317). For the FE to know God and Jesus was to have eternal life (17:3). Here the FE uses a present subjunctive to indicate that this knowledge was a continuing action (Brown 1972:741), cf also 13:17. Assurance of the existing state of knowing Jesus rested on constant obedience to him (Ray 1983:114; Vanderlip 1975:117).<sup>50</sup> The disciples' knowledge of Jesus is a criterion which separates them from those who do not know him because they do not believe in him (Pazdan 1982:159). Faith, knowledge, love are aspects of the approach of man to God, by which unity with God is attained (Howard 1943:170).

There are also other characteristics which are not explained so extensively and frequently: μαρτύρω, ἐκ του κόσμου οὐκ ἐστέ, τηρέω, γεννάω, μένω, Τὸ καρπὸν φέρον.<sup>51</sup>

### **3.3.3. The Characteristics of a Johannine disciple -- from a literary perspective.**

This is a way of probing further the concept of discipleship presented in the Gospel and the community situation which it reflects and presupposes. The precise way in which the disciples as characters function in the narrative, which, Markan scholarship has taught us, proves to be of considerable help in determining more closely what discipleship means and entails for the FE. Segovia undertook this task and came to the conclusion that this type of study of the characterization of the disciples confirms but also refines and sharpens previous results as well: (1) the narrative does present a sustained and deliberate contrast between disciples and non-disciples; (2) central, indeed exclusive, to this contrast in the narrative lies belief or acceptance of Jesus' claims vis-à-vis to the Father; (3) in the development of the narrative, such belief is portrayed as necessitating and undergoing a

<sup>50</sup> Such knowledge implies commitment, love, fellowship and obedience. It is made possible through Jesus, who alone knows the Father and has made Him known among men. Believing and knowing, while occasionally distinguished in the FG, are closely interrelated and at times appear to be used quite synonymously (Howard 1965:168; Vanderlip 1975:117; Painter 1975:90; Jn 17:21,25).

<sup>51</sup> - μαρτύρω--1:7; 4:39; 12:17f; 17:20f; etc. (Painter 1975:90f), Bultmann (1950:198f) adds 5:31-40.  
- ἐκ του κόσμου οὐκ ἐστέ--15:19; 17:14 (Doohan 1988:140f).  
- τηρέω--8:31,55; 13:34; 14:15,23; 15:10,12 (Rengstorf 1967:449; Culpepper 1975:271; Guthrie 1981:661f; Ray 1983:128f).  
- γεννάω--3:3-8 (Ray 1983:134f).  
- μένω--2:12; 4:40; 7:9; 10:40; 11:6,54; 14:25; 19:31, etc. (Ray 1983:152; Culpepper 1975:271; Vellanickal 1977:293f; Doohan 1988:135f). For Winbery (1988:104f) this word (especially the verb) itself is obviously a very important part of the the FE's concept of discipleship. He dedicates a whole article to the concept of 'abiding'.  
- Τὸ καρπὸν φέρον--Vellanickal (1977:291) indicates that in Jn 15:8 the glory of the Father is connected to two facts that go together, namely, the 'producing of fruits' and 'becoming disciples'. This communion with Christ is in his divine sonship. Besides, the future tense of αἰτήσαθε and γενήσεται shows also the dynamic growth of his communion in the filial life of the Son, that produces fruits and culminates in discipleship.

process of gradual understanding and perception (Segovia 1985:89f).

Segovia pointed out that the first two main aspects of discipleship are qualified to some extent by the third: although from the very beginning of the narrative the disciples are differentiated from 'the world', and although belief in Jesus' claims constitutes the sole basis for such a separation, belief itself is presented as requiring and undergoing a process of gradual understanding and perception.

Tolmie (1992) also makes a valuable contribution with his narratological analysis of John 13:1-17:26. He indicates successfully how the implied author aims to provide to the implied reader a comprehensive ideological perspective on discipleship.

### **3.4. Titles used to describe discipleship.<sup>52</sup>**

The Johannine community probably viewed itself as a continuation of the original group of disciples and therefore allowed both its activities and self-image to colour its description of the original disciples. The titles in the FG for the disciples reinforce the picture of the community. These titles occur relatively infrequently in the FG but make a valuable contribution towards the understanding of discipleship.

#### **3.4.1. Ἀδελφός:**

In the FG this term is used only twice (20:17, 21:23) to denote persons other than blood brothers. In these passages 'the brothers' are evidently a specific group of believers. In the former (20:17) one assumes that Jesus is referring to his disciples; in the latter (21:23), however, the Johannine community is clearly intended. The importance of this title and similarly Φίλος and Τέκνον as designations for the members of the community, is heightened by the use of the terms in the epistles (Culpepper 1975:275; Ray 1983:67f; cf Du Rand 1991:316).

#### **3.4.2. Φίλος:**

Rigaux (1970:202) stated: 'Μαθηταὶ wird näher bestimmt durch den Gebrauch von φίλος'. Lazarus is the only individual in the FG who is called a φίλος of Jesus and the disciples (11:11). He appears in the FG as a paradigm of Jesus' relationship with the members of the Johannine community. According to Culpepper the use of φίλος in the FG emphasizes the exclusivity of the Johannine community; Jesus loves 'his own' (13:1), who are to love one another as he has loved them (13:34f) (Culpepper 1975:272). Ray (1988) and Du Rand (1991) add that the FE uses φίλος in the sense of personal friendship. He also uses the noun as a title for a disciple. It occurs in this sense only in ch 15. The importance of the term is strengthened by the importance of this chapter in understanding the FG's concept of discipleship (Ray 1983:75). The disciples are friends (φίλοι) of Jesus rather than slaves because he has revealed to them what he has heard from his Father. They are friends because Jesus has chosen them (15:13). Their friendship rests on the disciple's obedience to obey his commands (15:14). In such a way love becomes the visible distinctive mark of discipleship, which is called friendship (Du Rand 1991:316).

#### **3.4.3. Τέκνον:**

The word Τέκνα occurs three times in the Gospel (1:12; 8:39; 11:52) and the expression τέκνα (τοῦ) θεοῦ twice (1:12; 11:52). Although there are several Greek words for a child, the FE uses only παῖς, τέκνον, and their diminutives. In the NT τεκνιον is exclusively a

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<sup>52</sup> These titles are designations for the members of the community (Culpepper 1975:275)

Johannine word. According to Ray (1983:76) the FE made a linguistic distinction between τέκνον and υἱός. Only Jesus could be God's Son, for there is but one son.<sup>53</sup> Disciples are related to God as children. Τέκνον was used outside the NT to refer to disciples, and the FE uses the word in this way also. Culpepper gives a better explanation from the Johannine community perspective. For them discipleship involves the ability 'to hear' which entails both understanding and obedience and which is given by the Father. In 'hearing' the scriptures and the words of Jesus they are διδάκτοι θεοῦ and hence τέκνα of God (cf Rengstorf 'μανθάνω'-- 1942:409f). Understanding and obeying what Jesus and the scriptures taught must, therefore, have been extremely important for the Johannine community because it was for this that they proved themselves the true τέκνα Θεοῦ (Culpepper 1975:275). Culpepper suggested that in the FG τέκνον and τέκνα are also used in a technical sense as pupils in a school. In 13:33-35 the term τεκνίον, particularly in combination with ζητέω as a technical word for the study of Scripture, can be understood in the sense of discipleship (Culpepper 1975:301f; Ray 1983:71). Schnackenburg (1975:242) indicates that this concept 'children of God' in 11:52 is not an entirely new concept but has simply been transferred from Is 43:6 to the new level of Christian understanding. Schnackenburg (1975:242) and Vanderlip (1975:74f) understand this image differently. They gave it an ecclesiastical dimension.<sup>54</sup>

#### 3.4.4. Οἱ ἴδιοι:

According to Vanderlip (1975:77) this expression has two different meanings in the FG. In 1:11 the reference is to the Jewish nation. In 13:1, the reference to οἱ ἴδιοι, is clearly to Jesus' disciples.

The expression οἱ ἴδιοι implies membership, ownership, or belonging (10:4). Since the parable of the sheep of ἴδιοι (10:3f) appears to include other sheep who would be brought into the flock (10:16),<sup>55</sup> it seems proper to conclude that for the FE 'his own' can probably be extended to refer by implication to all believers. Once again we have an expression that is equivalent to the Christian or believer. It is a designation, in other words, for the Church (Vanderlip 1975:77).<sup>56</sup>

It is remarkably noticeable how scholars with an ecclesiological focus used only certain titles. The titles mentioned (to describe discipleship), had a soteriological as well as a community dimension which shed some light on the status, character, relationships, qualities and activities of the disciples.

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<sup>53</sup> Du Rand differs on this point but agrees with Culpepper indicating that in 12:36 the term υἱός (son) is used figuratively to denote discipleship in the wider sense.

<sup>54</sup> Schnackenburg (1942-75:242) is correct that it would be wrong to interpret here the general concept of 'children of God' in the sense of the 'elect'. For him the FE is thinking in this context of the Gentiles, who form the Church of God that was established at the death of Christ together with the believing Jews.

<sup>55</sup> For Schnackenburg (1975:240) the terms οἱ ἴδιοι is deliberately placed at the beginning of the second main part of the gospel (13:1). It can also be linked to the image of the shepherd in the phrase "τὰ ἴδια πρόβατα" (10:3) and the words: "Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός, καὶ γινώσκω τὰ ἐμὰ καὶ γινώσκουσί με τὰ ἐμὰ" (10:14).

<sup>56</sup> Schnackenburg (1975:240) differs from Vanderlip. According to him οἱ ἴδιοι indicates the Johannine community's understanding of itself.

### **3.5. The use of the term μαθηταὶ seen from a concentric perspective<sup>57</sup>**

According to Ray (1983:62) μαθητῆς is not a static, inflexible category for the FE. He uses μαθητῆς to indicate different people or groups of people:

#### **3.5.1. The FG uses μαθηταὶ to describe disciples who do not belong to Jesus.**

Reference is made to the followers of John the Baptist (1:35-37; 3:35; 4:1). The use of μαθηταὶ here suggests a parallel ministry between Jesus and John the Baptist that is not found in the Synoptics. The reference to 'the disciples of Moses' by the Jews in (9:28) is a clause of intellectual kinship similar to that in Greek literature (Du Rand 1991:315).

#### **3.5.2. The FG uses μαθηταὶ to indicate marginal followers of Jesus and those more fully committed to him.**

##### ***3.5.2.1. Marginal disciples:***

These people are called disciples, but subsequent events reveal the lack of depth and devotion in their commitment. The most prominent of these disciples, and the only one who is named, is Judas, the Lord's betrayer (6:71; 12:4). In 6:60-66, the FE records that a group of people ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ became discouraged and disillusioned with the commitment Jesus demanded. Their reaction was to stop following Jesus (Ray 1983:64f).

##### ***3.5.2.2. Fully committed disciples:***

In the Gospel the most common usage of μαθητῆς is to refer generally to a person who follows Jesus without specific comment about the depth of his commitment. Most of the time the FG simply refers to those following Jesus as 'his' disciples or 'the' disciples (Ray 1983:64). Schnackenburg (1975:234f) divides this group<sup>58</sup> further under three headings where disciples are firstly Jesus' close companions, secondly his serious adherents and finally all later believers. This extension of the meaning of the term is based on theological reflection and an intended application of the word. This process is in accordance with the FE's intentions as he regards the group of disciples at the time of Jesus himself. The later believers are included among Jesus' disciples in any reference to the original disciples chosen by Jesus (Schnackenburg 1975:236f). We will now briefly consider each of these four groups.<sup>59</sup>

(a) Jesus' historical disciples the companions of Jesus. It is quite clear that there is a group referring to Jesus' companions or 'disciples' which plays a continuing role in the development of the FG. This group is presented as following Jesus wherever he goes in his ministry. Although their number or makeup is seldom specified, and the focus of attention may differ from scene to scene, it is quite clear that they have all -- with the sole

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<sup>57</sup> When theologians discuss the use of the expression 'disciple', they refer to disciple or μαθητῆς.

<sup>58</sup> Another distinction encompasses the distinction between a smaller circle of disciples and a much wider circle (1:35-37; 4:1; 6:60-71). οἱ μαθηταὶ are not simply the equivalent of οἱ δώδεκα. The terms οἱ δώδεκα denotes the narrower circle around Jesus as compared with the wider circle of μαθηταὶ (Müller 1975:499; Rengstorf 1967:450; Ray 1983:66; Morris 1971:382; Brown 1975:296). According to Dulles (1987:362) in the wider sense, the group of disciples includes persons such as Joseph of Arimathea (19:38). But according to Bornkamm (1956:147f) it is no longer possible to determine the precise limits of the circles of disciples. The disciples would be a circle of immediate followers who are commissioned to particular service.

<sup>59</sup> Culpepper (1975:271) and Müller (1980:490) suggest a fourth reference which will also be considered, namely, *the disciples as the representation of the Johannine community*.



exception of Judas -- accepted Jesus' claims and remain bound to him in a continuing bond (Segovia 1985:78).

**(b) Wider circle of disciples.** Even if Jesus is not recognized by many, because he has not passed through a school for Rabbis (Mk 6:2; Jn 7:15), it is certainly with reason that he is addressed as 'Rabbi' by his disciples (1:38; 3:10; 4:31; 11:28; 13:13-14; 20:16) and outsiders (cf 3:2) (Müller 1975:488).<sup>60</sup> It is by calling Jesus 'Rabbi' that the two disciples of John the Baptist follow Jesus, leaving their former master (1:37-38) (Vellanickal 1980:131).<sup>61</sup>

There are also references to other 'disciples' or groups of 'disciples' (4:1, with reference to 3:22-36). Jesus is said to have made and baptized (cf 4:2) more 'disciples' than John in the land of Judea; in 6:60-66 many of (not all) the 'disciples' who have followed him in the land of Galilee (with reference to 4:45; 6:2, 14f, 22-24) are said to abandon him because of the Christological claims he is making; in 7:3, while seeking refuge in Galilee, his brothers ask him to go back to Judea and show his signs to his 'disciples' there (with possible reference to 2:23-25 and/or 3:22-24; 4:1); in 9:27-28 'disciples' of Jesus include the man who had been born blind; in 19:38 Joseph of Arimathea is described as a secret 'disciple' of Jesus (Dulles 1987:362).<sup>62</sup> Thus, in addition to the group that follows him, the term may also be used of those who accept his claims but do not follow (9:28), of secret believers (19:38), of those who can go as far as accepting the claims (6:60-66), as well as for many whose precise response or status is impossible to ascertain (4:1; 7:3; 9:27; 18:19) (Segovia 1985:96).

**(c) The disciples also represent the later community**<sup>63</sup> in contrast to the unbelieving Jews (Müller 1980:490). According to Culpepper (1975:271) the frequency of the term's occurrence in the FG reflects the nature of the community which produced them; they were concerned with what it meant to be a μαθητής of Jesus during the period in which the Gospels were composed.

**(d) Later believers as disciples.** The characteristically Johannine outlook does not demote the twelve, but rather turns these chosen disciples into representatives (a position) of all the Christians who would believe in Jesus through their preaching (Brown 1972:1034; cf De Jonge 1977). For Bultmann (1950:434; also Müller 1975) μαθητής in 8:31 is a description of the Christian as is also the case in 13:35 and 15:8. Vellanickal<sup>64</sup> (1982, quoted by Neethling) states: 'The condition of the disciple, which was originally a privilege

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<sup>60</sup> According to Culpepper (1983:116), who also adds 1:49; 9:2; 11:8, the disciples are not with Jesus everywhere he goes. The silence of the FG about the disciples throughout ch 5 and the suggestion of Jesus' brothers in 7:3 imply this. Only a part of this sizable group actually follows Jesus wherever he goes (3:26; 4:1; 6:66). Segovia (1985:96) sees the presence of the disciples confirmed by the information provided in the transition statement of 3:22: the disciples are portrayed as accompanying Jesus from Jerusalem to the land of Judea. From now on, Segovia believes, the disciples should be seen as following Jesus wherever he goes, although their presence is not always explicitly acknowledged.

<sup>61</sup> This is a debatable statement.

<sup>62</sup> See also 'Models of Disciples' in the following section (3.6 of this chapter).

<sup>63</sup> Culpepper (1983:115f) suggests that the term 'Disciples' more easily includes believing readers. It is not clear to which readers he refers--the Johannine community, today's readers, or both.

<sup>64</sup> Vellanickal, M 1982. *Studies in the Gospel of John*.

of a selected group of particular men, was in the Johannine theology the response of all the believers to the word of salvation.'

### **3.6. Models of Disciples (Typology)**

Craig Koester (1989:328) states that the literary approach focuses on the characters as representatives of various types of faith. Culpepper suggests that the FE uses the characters to attract readers to positive exemplars of faith, to evoke sympathy for inadequate responses, and to alienate readers from characters who reject Jesus (Culpepper 1983:99-148). De Jonge offers a better analysis: '... the disciples, both in their acceptance and their misunderstandings of Jesus' words, are portrayed as models for future generations of believers (1977:12).'

When looking at the different characters in the FG we can possibly divide them into four categories:

#### **3.6.1. The first disciples.**

Segovia (1985:96) believes that the disciples are all, by and large, with the salient exception of Judas and to a lesser extent the BD, representative or typical of the entire group. Neethling (1984:16) takes it further: the disciples are an example for discipleship, which spells out something essential for discipleship. The first disciples are former followers of the Baptist and become models for those in the Johannine community who have made a similar transformation.<sup>65</sup> After the Baptist's witness they follow Jesus asking "ποῦ μένεις;" (1:38). On the level of discipleship Jesus tells them that he will live on in them and make his dwelling in their hearts (14:23; 15:4-10).

#### **3.6.2. Other models of discipleship.**

Here Doohan (1988:136f) discusses only three men as models of discipleship, namely: Nicodemus,<sup>66</sup> the man born blind<sup>67</sup> and Thomas. In these three the FE attempts to portray three different groups of disciples: (a) practising Jews, but secret Christians (Nicodemus), (b) the model for faith that illumines and leads to authentic confession of Jesus as Son of Man (man born blind), and (c) those who by implication of incomprehensibility (14:5) and unbelief (20:24-25) came to faith: "Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου." (20:28) (Thomas).

#### **3.6.3. Women disciples in the FG.**

Doohan mentions seven instances in the FG where Jesus meets women but does not discuss all of them.<sup>68</sup> These incidents focus on themes of discipleship which particularly stress belief in Jesus and proclaiming Jesus to others. He concludes that the women in

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<sup>65</sup> Müller (1975:489), incorrectly pointed out that the circle of the twelve was both a symbolic representation of the twelve tribes of Israel, and thus of the whole people of God, and also a section of the larger circle of disciples which Jesus summoned to discipleship from a still wider group of adherents.

<sup>66</sup> Nicodemus is unknown in early Christian tradition. His persistent appearance in the FG suggests that he may have had some special significance for the FE and his community. He seems in fact to symbolize an important element in the Johannine milieu (Rengsberger 1988:37).

<sup>67</sup> He too is a powerful symbolic figure, whose story can help us understand much about how the Johannine community interpreted its experience particularly in contrast to the people represented by Nicodemus (Rengsberger 1988:37).

<sup>68</sup> John 2:1-11; 4:7-30; 8:3-11; 11:1-44; 12:1-8; 19:25-27; 20:1-2,11-18. He does not discuss the adulteress (8:3-11), since this is not part of the original FG. He discusses Mary the mother of Jesus in the next chapter since she is a special case.

John are outstanding models of discipleship. Jesus calls the Samaritan woman,<sup>69</sup> even though the disciples seem to disapprove (4:27), and she proclaims Jesus in the region. Martha appears 'as the representative of the believing community' responding to the word of Jesus with a full confession of Christian faith. It is analogous to Peter as representative of apostolic faith in Matthew's Gospel. Mary carries out a central function in the anticipated celebration of the Last Supper. Mary Magdalene has 'apostolic primacy as witness to the paschal mystery' (Doohan 1988:138-140).

#### **3.6.4. The Beloved Disciple (BD).**

The studies which focus on the role of the BD in the FG deal with discipleship more directly. The BD plays a distinctive role in the FG (13:23-25; 19:26-27,35; 20:2-10; 21:7,20-24).<sup>70</sup> The question is whether the BD should be considered only as a symbol or as a historical person who represents ideal discipleship. Many scholars believe that the BD should be understood symbolically<sup>71</sup> because of the difficulty of linking him with a specific historical person. He is the ideal and perfect disciple who stands close to Jesus during his life and death and is the first to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead (Loisy 1950:127f quoted by Du Rand 1990:72). For Bultmann (1950:483) the BD is not a historical figure, but idealised.<sup>72</sup>

Conversely, the BD appears close to Jesus in the climactic scenes of the FG and the FE carefully defines his relationship with Jesus, Peter, and the Johannine Community. It is widely agreed that the BD is a real historical person<sup>73</sup> who has representative, paradigmatic, or symbolic significance in the FG. In this he is unlike the other Johannine characters only in that he is the epitome of the ideal disciple, the paradigm of discipleship (Du Rand 1990:72ff; Schnackenburg 1975:449ff; Culpepper 1983:121; Jiménez 1971; cf Siker-Gieseler 1980:221f). In him belief, love, and faithful witness are joined. He abides in Jesus' love, and the Paraclete works through him (Culpepper 1983:123). No misunderstandings, concerning Jesus' teaching, occurs in his characterization (Culpepper 1983:121).

The FE characterizes the BD unambiguously as an historical person as well as a paradigm for discipleship (a symbolic and ideal figure). If he had been addressed by a specific name, his duality would not have been so clear (Du Rand 1990:73).

### **3.7. Discipleship in relation to the loci of Systematic Theology**

#### **3.7.1. Christology and discipleship.**

From a theological perspective Johannine discipleship derives from Christology. The community of believers understands its identity and function from its members' personal

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<sup>69</sup> Pazdan (1987:145f) compares Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman as contrasting models of discipleship according to their status and reaction to Jesus' conversation. She states that neither the model of initial discipleship in Nicodemus nor mature discipleship in the Samaritan woman is praised or condemned in the text.

<sup>70</sup> The references in 1:37f and 18:15 are debated.

<sup>71</sup> Harrison (1949:228-38 quoted by Pazdan 1982:10) sees the BD as a model for contemporary believers.

<sup>72</sup> Bultmann regards the BD as the representative of Gentile Christianity and Peter as representative of Jewish Christianity (1950:483). For Dibelius (quoted by Bultmann 1950:483): The BD is for the FE the 'type of discipleship in his sense', the 'archetype of a discipleship which makes bearers of revelation out of hearers of revelation'.

<sup>73</sup> Doohan: He was a real person, but probably not one of the twelve (1988:39).

and communal experiences of the risen Jesus<sup>74</sup> (Pazdan 1982:337; Du Rand 1991:321). Christology is the primary means of expressing their needs, values and ideals (Pazdan 1982:328). Correspondingly, discipleship is a distinctive way of believing, and is the community's response to the risen Christ (Pazdan 1982:337; Du Rand 1991:322). Thus Jesus' life and ministry are correlated with the experiences of the community (Pazdan 1982:328).

Jesus is the model for discipleship. His relationship to the Father, especially in reciprocal knowing, loving and abiding, is the model for all disciples (Pazdan 1982:338).

### 3.7.2. Ecclesiology and discipleship

*Ecclesiology*<sup>75</sup> is the most prominent topic which indirectly touches on discipleship in the FG. According to Pazdan (1982:337) discipleship is related to ecclesiology because both seek to understand the nature and function of the community as a collectivity as well as its individual members. Discipleship and ecclesiology are interrelated ways of responding to Jesus. On the whole, according to Siker-Gieseler, the ecclesiological studies on the FG had little to say regarding discipleship (1980:200). The majority of studies have focussed on the extent to which there is an ecclesiology in the FG. Bultmann (1953:437) boldly declares that 'No specifically ecclesiological interest can be detected. There is no interest in cult organization in the FG'.<sup>76</sup> Kysar, on the contrary, points out that a large number of critics have argued that the ecclesiological theme of the FG is prominent and important in the total picture of the FE's thought, and it has been urged that a proper understanding of his view of the church would greatly enhance our grasp of his Christian perspective (Kysar 1975:241). This is affirmed by Schnackenburg (1961:93f), Vanderlip (1975:80), Smalley (1978:227f) and Doohan (1983:155f).

Schnackenburg (1975:236f) finds himself in a similar position to Schweizer. After his discussion of 'Jüngerkreis und Jüngerbegriff im Johannesevangelium' in his Exkurs 17, he concludes that the extension of the meaning of the term μαθητής is based on theological reflection and an intended application of the word. This is of considerable importance in the Johannine understanding of the church. Thus some theologians use discipleship to gain a perspective on the ecclesiology and to talk about the ecclesiology in the FG<sup>77</sup>. The

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<sup>74</sup> Aune (1972:135) is of opinion that 'It was this cultic experience of the direct or mediated presence of the exalted Jesus which provided the basis for retrojection of similar characteristics into the life of the Johannine Jesus.' In the same sense Domeris (1988:52) believes that there is evidence to show that the Christology of the Gospel reflects a social system which is markedly different not only from the usual patterns evident in the Graeco-Roman world, but also from the other Christian communities.

<sup>75</sup> The absence of the term ἐκκλησία led exegetes to find equivalent expressions in the text. Pancaro (1969-70:114f) wrote a paper "'People of God" in John's Gospel', while other tried to describe this characteristic in related terms: cf Culpepper (1975) 'Johannine School'; Cullmann (1975) 'Johannine Circle'; Vanderlip (1975) 'The children of God'; Rensberger (1988) 'Johannine Christianity'; Kümmel (1974:312) 'Community..'; Kysar (1975) 'Church'.

<sup>76</sup> Bultmann (1953:437) admits that there is a lively interest in the Church in this Gospel but says that 'the Johannine terminology pertaining to the Church comes ... from the area of Gnostic thought.' Käsemann regards the FG as a 'remarkable counteroffensive' against a movement in the Church towards a highly structured institution (quoted by Vanderlip 1975:87).

<sup>77</sup> Palatty (1987) reverses this approach. In his article, *Discipleship and the Covenant*, he uses the covenant concept to indicate what discipleship is all about.

relationship between ecclesia-discipleship,<sup>78</sup> when either of these concepts is employed, it should be borne in mind that the other concept is always implied. When Schweizer (1960:237) speaks of the emphasis on abiding in Christ and that discipleship is a gift according to the FG, he is admittedly more concerned about what discipleship in the FG tells us about the Church. His treatment of Johannine ecclesiology has little to say directly on discipleship.

The reverse is noticeable when a facet of ecclesiology at times touches on discipleship. This concerns the relationship between the individual and communal aspects as portrayed in the FG. Segovia (1985:77) and Schnackenburg (1975:237) point out that from time to time the individualism of the FG has been stressed and this would seem to be in a state of tension with the ecclesial aspect of the Gospel. Siker-Gieseler (1980:201) confirms this. It is true that the singular form is used in the so-called soteriological type of discourse and the promise to believers individually. Jesus also calls each individual to make a decision regarding faith. The impression that is given in the FG, then, is that it presents an individual view and does not emphasize the idea of community. According to Schnackenburg (1975:237f) this is a receptive impression, since the community of faith formed by Jesus himself is never entirely absent. Rengsberger (1988:36; cf Schnackenburg 1975:237f and Pazdan 1982:341) emphasizes that there is a considerable concern in the FG for group adherence and group solidarity; Johannine faith is by no means purely a matter of individual relationship to Jesus. Siker-Gieseler (1980:200; cf Pazdan 1982:341) indicates that Schweizer (see also O'Grady 1975) finds in the two metaphors of the 'Good Shepherd' and the 'Vine and branches' the appropriate community balance to the otherwise individualistic material of O'Grady (1975). He sees the parables as emphasizing the unity of the individuals in the community. Each is necessary to the other.

### **The Johannine community**

Du Rand (1991:318) stated that 'Johannine discipleship originated and developed within the social setting of the Johannine community.' The existence<sup>79</sup> of some sort of community associated with the Johannine literature generally is accepted as a foregone conclusion (Ray 1983:9). Cullmann (1975:ix) went as far as to say, 'The existence of this circle can hardly be challenged ...' Käsemann (1968:29) suggested that the FG 'presupposes an organized communal life.' Culpepper (1975), by isolating characteristics common to nine schools, believes he has derived criteria by which to identify an ancient school.<sup>80</sup> Brown (1978) makes major contributions to indicate the existence of a Johannine community. His understanding of the rise of the Johannine Christianity and its communities is related to the

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<sup>78</sup> Theologians sometimes use the same terminology and images when talking about ecclesiology and discipleship i.e. children of God, the people (ὁ λαός), his own, one flock, one shepherd, the vine and the branches (Howard 1965; Kysar 1975; Vanderlip 1975; Doohan 1988).

<sup>79</sup> Dionysius of Alexandria (264/5) was possibly the first person to indicate that the FG is the product of an independent tradition line (Lombard 1989:60). Lombard wrote about the foundation and development of the idea of a Johannine school that 'Die opvatting van 'n Johannese *skool* as oorsprong van die JE het in 1641 nuwe momentum gekry toe Hugo Grotius hoofstuk 21 van die boek as die produk van die Johannese Christendom in Efese geskryf het.... Die ontwikkeling van hierdie gedagte is verder gestimuleer toe biskop E Renan (1863) vir die eerste keer gepraat het van 'n Johannese skool.' Bousset (1909 according to Lombard 1989:61) goes further to say that the FG is a concerted action of a school of authors in the Johannine community. During the 60's Lindars (1961); Neufeld (1963); Schnackenburg (1964); Borgen (1965); Freed (1965); Brown (1966-70) and 70's Robinson & Koester (1971); Meeks (1972); Cullmann (1975); Kysar (1975); Culpepper (1975); Smith (1974-75); Martyn (1979); Brown (1979); and later Segovia (1982) and Hengel (1989), worked on the possibility of existence of such a community (cf Lombard 1989:61f).

<sup>80</sup> Hengel (1989:80) joins Culpepper in his view of a school.

views of J L Martyn. Like Martyn he sees the controversy between Christ-confessing Jews (i.e who hold Jesus to be the Messiah) and other members of the synagogue, leading to the expulsion of the former by the latter. He wanted to show that the FG was in mainstream confrontation with the synagogues and other churches. He indicates that there were at least two stages in the Johannine development. In the early period the Johannine community consisted of Jews whose belief in Jesus involves a relatively 'low' Christology<sup>81</sup>. Later there appeared a 'higher' Christology<sup>82</sup> which brought the Johannine community<sup>83</sup> into sharp conflict with Jews who regarded this as blasphemy. According to Brown (1979:25) there was also a third stage involving the entrance of numbers of Gentiles into the Johannine community.

According to Schnackenburg (1975:237) Johannine Christianity is no different from the rest of early Christianity in that it is convinced that Christian existence could not be realized outside or without the community. Pazdan (1982:341f; cf O'Grady 1975) agrees with this point of view. According to Schnackenburg (1975:237) the believer has a certain place in God's plan and in the missionary activity of the Son: in other words, a theological *locus* in which he is able to understand himself as a believer and as one who participates in God's life. The purpose of constituting the community is to enable those who believe in Jesus to live as his disciples. The community becomes the locus for the lifelong process of relating to Jesus, the Father, the community and outsiders (Pazdan 1982:341). The self-definition of the community is derived from the self-definition of discipleship, particularly in the mutual relationships of knowing, loving and abiding with Jesus and the Father. The Johannine community sees the fact of 'being disciples of Jesus' as imperative for their existence as a community. The function of the community is to foster discipleship as the appropriation of salvation (Pazdan 1982:342).

### **A unique community**

According to Smith (1984:78f) Johannine Christianity, on one hand, defines itself over against the rest of Christendom and on the other hand over against the world and Judaism. The view is prevalent that Johannine Christianity represents the development of an archaic, spirit-inspired form of Christianity which relies for its leadership and authority upon persons chosen informally for their charismatic qualities and prophetic gifts (Käsemann 1978:36f). Over and against such Christianity is placed the developing orthodox church represented in the FG by Peter (Smith 1984:79; cf Bultmann 1950:483).

Gottwald (quoted by Domeris 1988:51) wrote: 'Israel thought they were different, because they were different.' Domeris then parallels the Johannine community with this statement. He agrees with Smith about the difference of the Johannine community from the Christian community, but differs from Smith concerning the contents of this difference. According to Domeris the prime indication of this fact is the Christology found in the pages of the

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<sup>81</sup> 'Low' Christology involves the application to Jesus of titles derived from OT or intertestamental expectations eg. Messiah, prophet, servant, Lord, Son of God--titles that do not in themselves imply divinity (Brown 1979:25).

<sup>82</sup> 'High' Christology involves an appreciation of Jesus that moves him into the sphere of divinity, as expressed, for instance, in a more exalted use of Lord and Son of Man (Brown 1979:25; cf Käsemann 1968:36).

<sup>83</sup> Painter (1980:24) differs from Brown, suggesting that the FE holds a 'higher' Christology than some members of his community and that they appear to have tradition on their side.

Gospel, which is without direct parallel either inside or outside the NT<sup>84</sup>. Thus the FG is different because the community in which it was created was different. Domeris believes there is evidence to show that the Christology of the FG reflects a social system which is markedly different from the usual patterns evident in the Graeco-Roman world, as well as from the other Christian communities<sup>85</sup>. He indicates that it is in the oneness motif, and the emphasis on sacrificial love that we find the strongest indications that the inner composition of the community stood in stark contrast to the regular social systems of the day (Domeris 1988:52). Smith's point of view (1984:78) agrees with that of Domeris.

### **3.7.3. Eschatology and discipleship**

Du Rand (1991:322) wrote: 'Johannine discipleship is the appropriation of eschatological salvation in the sense of eternal life. Participation in the mutual life of Jesus and the Father through knowing, loving and abiding constitutes eschatological salvation. Through specific dimensions<sup>86</sup> of discipleship the believer appropriates eternal life'. The verbal descriptions of a disciple indicate dynamic relationships rather than static associations. The dominance of realized eschatology in the Gospel suggests that the possession of eternal life is a present but limited experience of the disciple (Pazdan 1982:308f).

For Pazdan (1982:329) the main elements of realized eschatology in the community are: a) present possession of eternal life; b) experience of present judgement; c) proleptic experience of Jesus' coming. These elements, according to Pazdan, radiate from the pneumatic worship of the community relationships (Pazdan 1982:326).

Realized eschatology is manifested in the community through an *imitatio Christi*, based on the present possession of eternal life and experience of judgment as well as the communal possession of the Spirit. In that sense, discipleship as a form of *imitatio Christi* is indeed the appropriation of realised eschatological salvation (Du Rand 1991:323).

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<sup>84</sup> Smith's reason came from the sphere of leadership, Domeris's reason from the sphere of Christology.

<sup>85</sup> Käsemann (1968:130) went so far as to call the community of the FG a completely isolated sect. This goes further than most scholars are willing to go. Domeris (1988:53) agrees with Käsemann. Over and against this point of view stands Cullmann who writes that the community whose beliefs the author shares, guides and articulates is not a sect in the sense of a small group polemicizing against the larger Church; but has as a distinctive tradition the validity which it preserves and defends. Cullmann uses this term only in a theological and church-historical sense, ignoring the sociological question (Meeks 1976:41).

Culpepper differentiates between 'sect' and 'school'. A sect is characterized by its devotion to the person or teachings of the founder or its adherence to a set of principles. Sects, therefore, share many of the characteristics of the schools and most of these ancient schools were part of sects. Schools have the additional characteristic of preoccupation with teaching, learning, studying and writing. Moreover, the term 'sect', as it is normally used, denotes a 'tradition' or 'movement' more than it does a school. In his study 'school' refers primarily to a community which may be part of a 'sect', 'movement' or 'tradition' and describes the nature of its communal life (Culpepper 1975:259).

Painter (1980:22) brings these discussions together. He clearly differentiates between Johannine community, --school, and --Christianity which was not always the case with other scholars. According to Painter the conflicts which appear in the Gospel are between the *Johannine community* which embraces believers of differing shades of opinion amongst whom was the FE and those closely associated with him, the *Johannine school*. After the separation from the synagogue the evangelist and his school played a formative role in the development of *Johannine Christianity*.

<sup>86</sup> Believing, knowing, loving, abiding, hearing and keeping, seeking and finding (Vellanickal 1980:134ff; Pazdan 1982:309ff).

### **3.7.4. The Covenant and discipleship.**

Palatty is the main exponent here (1987:202f). He tries to show that the important elements of the New Covenant promised in the OT are realised in the new relationship established in Jesus Christ, who is the Redeemer and the Mediator of the New Covenant. For this purpose Palatty studied the Johannine call narrative (1:35-51) where the author has characteristic notions to impart regarding the theology of discipleship. All his efforts concentrate on showing that in Jesus the promise of the New Covenant in the OT is being fulfilled in the relationship between Jesus and the disciples.

From the call narrative Palatty (1987:206) indicates that the FG has specific terminology to explain the theology of discipleship. The FE's use of the words, 'hearing', 'following', 'seeking', 'finding', 'coming', 'seeing', 'knowing', 'believing' and 'remaining' is deliberate and denotes discipleship as a growing relationship between Jesus and the disciples beginning from hearing a witness and concluding up in a personal remaining in Jesus. Pryor (1988:44-51) uses other texts to Palatty to reflect the relation between the Covenant and Johannine emphasis. In the Prologue the FE details not only his Christological perspective, but also presents a clear covenantal ecclesiology: the community of faith constitutes the true people of God who have experienced the glorious personal presence of the covenantal Divine Word in their midst, something only prefigured in Israel. God's covenantal purposes have reached their fulfilment, true grace has come (χάρις και ἀλεθεία), and God is truly in the midst of his people.

The key to the Johannine self-understanding is a profound theological reflection on the person of Christ and on the nature of the community of those who believe in him -- a reflection which draws upon OT imagery and which sees in its history the eschatological fulfilment of the covenantal promises. Also from Jn 10 (Flock-Shepherd), Jn 15 (Vine-Branches) and the LD (Keeping-Abiding-Loving)<sup>87</sup> he discusses this topic. If the elements of a new covenant community theology go back to Jesus himself, then the Johannine Community will have begun from the beginning to see itself as the flock of God, the people of the New Covenant (Pryor 1988:50).

## **3.8. Conclusions**

**3.8.1** All the literature is important even though scholars are not always unanimous concerning the interpretation of words, concepts or images. In general a comprehensive frame of reference has been created from which future research may be done.

**3.8.2** From a critical point of view, the FE's usage of μαθητής and ἀκολουθεω has not been fully explored in connection with the concept of discipleship. While ἀκολουθεω has not often been used to define discipleship, μαθητής is mostly used from a theologico-philosophical perspective except in a few cases where this is not the case. The micro-contexts where μαθητής occurs were not always considered exegetically and contextually.

**3.8.3** It may be concluded that *discipleship* is a status which a person receives because of his affinity with Christ. This relationship is made evident through the disciple, demonstrating the characteristics (3.2.2) and various facets (3.4) of discipleship. However Vellanickal, Palatty, Neethling *et al* indicate clearly through their contributions that discipleship is not merely a status but is also a process. This concept is stressed and

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<sup>87</sup> Keeping-Abiding-Loving are used in relation to the characteristics of discipleship. Jn 10, but especially Jn 15, are also related to discipleship.



confirmed through the repeated usage of the verbal form with regard to most of the characteristics.

**3.8.4** The most emphasis was placed on the 'devotional' aspect of discipleship (see Ray, Pazdan, Vellanickal, Pallaty, etc).

**3.8.5** The titles and characteristics assigned to the disciple in the FG do not only indicate the requirements and activities expected of a disciple, but also indicate the quality of relationship between the disciple and the Lord.

**3.8.6** The attempts where discipleship is viewed and interpreted from different perspectives in systematic theology (loci) were particularistic, categoric and very brief in certain cases. A comprehensive study where all these perspectives are incorporated still needs to be done in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of what discipleship is and means in the FG.

**3.8.7** Aspects neglected or which received little attention and which are prospects for future investigation are:

- From a Socio-historical perspective: Discipleship confirms the identity of the Johannine community.<sup>88</sup>
- From a Didactic perspective: The relationship between the Διδάσκαλος and his μαθηταί.
- From a theological perspective: Discipleship (the relationship between Jesus and his disciples) is based on the Father/ Son relationship. This implies that the relationship of Jesus with the Father characterizes the relationship between Jesus and his disciples.
- From a Narratological perspective: Although important contributions came from Culpepper, Segovia and Tolmie there is still the need for narratological investigation on this subject.

**3.8.8** It became clear that discipleship has an individual as well as corporative requirements and implications. The individual aspect relates to the relationship of the believer with Christ. This bond with Christ implies corporate implications which relate to the ecclesiology of the FG.

The fact that discipleship has been related to disciplines such as ecclesiology and covenantship, indicates that such an investigation may not only contribute to the enrichment of the Johannine theology but also to other disciplines, such as missiology, evangelization, church growth and the edification of a congregation.

## **4. Different opinions found in the research about the essence of discipleship**

### **4.1. Different opinions.**

During my research it was noticeable that different opinions were held concerning the 'essence' of discipleship. In this section this concept will be referred to only briefly. In some cases a text is given, in other cases a description of what discipleship comprises, but in

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<sup>88</sup> This was not the objective of Culpepper, Brown, and Cullmann when they wrote about the Johannine Community. The contributions of Ray and Doohan are unsatisfactory.

most cases both are provided. In our analysis the main text will be indicated first and then a description of what is reflected to be the essence of discipleship, where possible.

**Schweizer** (1970:81): -- He defines discipleship as a real sharing in the life and destiny of Jesus and a service of witness.

**Segovia** (1985:94): 14:27 -- He believes that the promise of 'Peace' reflects and captures very accurately the basic understanding of discipleship in both the community and its Gospel.

**Schnackenburg** (1975:237): 8:12,31,51 -- Being a disciple of Jesus is receiving and keeping his word. For him discipleship and the imitation of Christ have the same origin and therefore belong together.

**Müller** (1975:490): 'The essence of discipleship lies in the disciple's fulfilment of his duty to be a witness to the Lord in his entire life.'

**Hawthorne** (1975:130): 13:35 -- 'Although discipleship had many facets it was summed up in a single concept -- obedience to his command.'

**Culpepper** (1975:273): 6:45 -- 'For the Johannine community discipleship involves the ability to "hear" which entails both understanding and obedience and which is given by the Father.'

**Doohan** (1988:131-2): 15:9-10 -- 'It (John's Gospel) presents discipleship as the result of union with God in Christ rather than as an asceticism of daily struggle, though it does include an ascetic component.'

**Jiménez** (Segovia 1985:77): 8:31, 13:35 and 15:1-12.

**Tasker** (1972:52): 8:31 -- 'Discipleship means nothing less than abiding with Jesus for ever'. According to him, when a believer abides in Christ, Christ abides in him, and Christ's life invigorates and sustains the believer's life.

**Neethling** (1984:95): 13:35 -- 'The key to discipleship is love.'

**Morris** (1975:456): 8:31 and 15:14 -- When a man abides in Christ's word he is a true disciple. In 15:14 he says that 'once again obedience is the test of discipleship' (1975:675).

**Vellanickal** (1980:145): 13:35 -- 'Discipleship is the response to Jesus who is the Revealer and Teacher.' According to him, love is the keynote of discipleship.

**Winbery** (1988:111): Jn 14-16 -- 'The basic source for discipleship is the mutual abiding which enables them to know and to serve.'

**Bultmann** (1953:428): 15:12 -- According to him the centre of discipleship is 'keeping his commandments', which can be succinctly stated as the love commandment. In this commandment the inner unity of indicative and imperative becomes apparent. Out of the love we have received arises the obligation to love<sup>89</sup>.

**Dodd** (1980:397): 14:10-11,20; 15:4-5; 17:20-23 -- The true nature and character of discipleship 'is described in various terms, but chiefly in terms of the mutual indwelling of Christ and his disciples, reproducing the archetypal mutual indwelling of Father and Son'<sup>90</sup>.

**Käsemann** (1966:46): -- He sees the essence of discipleship as abiding and remaining with Jesus, the Word. The context within which discipleship takes place for the FE, according to Käsemann, is 'the community under the word' (1966:27-55). Only when the word is heard ever anew is discipleship possible (p 46).

**Du Rand** (1991:): 13:35 -- According to him a Johannine disciple is particularly characterized by belief, knowledge and love.

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<sup>89</sup> Discipleship is within the framework of Bultmann (1953:421f), 'faith as eschatological existence'. In the act of fulfilling the love commandment believers will be aware of their eschatological existence (p 428).

<sup>90</sup> '... the archetypal relation between Father and Son ... is here held forth as the final relation between God and men, to be realized through the incarnate Word ... is now declared to be realized in the disciples' (Dodd 1980:397).

From this analysis a diversity of texts and definitions are given. The most popular texts are 8:31 and 13:35. References that occur only once or twice are: 6:45; 8:12,51; 14:10f,20,27; 15:1-12,14; 17:20-23; chs 14-16. The different themes covered in these definitions are:

- *obedience* to Jesus' command
- to *abide* in the word of Christ
- mutual *indwelling* of Christ and disciples
- to *love* one another
- a *service of witness*
- *sharing* in the life and destiny of Jesus
- the promise of *peace*
- to *imitate* Christ
- is the *result* of union with God
- it is the *response* to Jesus

## 4.2. Conclusions

### 4.2.1.

The attempts of these scholars to indicate the essence of discipleship in the FG are helpful, but they also have serious problems. They are helpful inasmuch as they provide a focal point from which to understand discipleship in the FG. They are problematic in that each is too reductionistic and simplistic<sup>91</sup>.

### 4.2.2.

Siker-Gieseler (1980) indicates that scholars also tend to interpret discipleship through the lens of a hermeneutic not inherent in the material itself. To concentrate on the more important scholars, for Schnackenburg (1975) the lens is the 'ecclesial perspective'; for Bultmann (1941) it is the existential 'faith as eschatological existence'; for Dodd (1976; 1980) it is 'realized eschatology'; for Käsemann (1968) it is 'the community under the word', for Culpepper (1975) it is 'the community'; for Doohan (1988) the 'deep mystical state'; for Pazdan (1982) the eschatological salvation and for Palatty (1987) the covenant.

### 4.2.3.

Ashton (1991:3) states that there are many ways of approaching the FG. McPolin strengthens this statement by saying that each theme in the Gospel is linked to all other themes (McPolin 1980:17)<sup>92</sup>. What the Gospel reveals of itself will be coloured, or even controlled, by the interest one brings to it. Du Rand (1992:312; cf Ashton 1991:3 and McPolin 1980:17; Van der Watt 1991:93-126) states that a study of this kind can be approached from different angles and that in turn the conclusions depend heavily on the different perspectives from which the questions have been asked and from which angle it

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<sup>91</sup> Käsemann (1978:46) argues that this reductionism is inherent to the FE himself, since the FE made Jesus and his witnesses the sole context and criterion against which all else is measured.

<sup>92</sup>For McPolin (1980:17) scholarship has also proved how a comprehensive monograph on some single area of Johannine theology can at times be more penetrating and more valuable for understanding the FG than any commentary, however voluminous. Such works also show that each theme in the Gospel is linked to all other themes.

is perceived. (Cf also Meeks 1986:141). Thus, the definition of discipleship, as we have seen, depends on the perspective from which it is defined.

*All these endeavours to formulate the essence of discipleship indicate the multidimensional facets of discipleship. This implies that discipleship cannot be forced into a definition but has to be described in order to understand what discipleship in the FG comprises.*

*This historical survey indicates the lacunas in the investigation and legitimizes this study which will be approached from the Johannine theological framework which comprises the concept of 'agency'. Agency is the essence of discipleship and constructs the structure of discipleship. At a later stage it will be posited that the Johannine theological structure is based on the 'Agency'-model. If discipleship relates to μαθητής who ἀκολουθοῦντα his Ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ Ὁ κύριος in order to duplicate the 'master's' life in the life of his 'followers' through the Spirit, then it would imply that discipleship in the FG relates to the 'Agency' of Christ. This would mean that the relationship of Jesus with his Father is used in the FG as the model for discipleship (cf Pazdan 1982:338).*