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# Philip: A Connective Figure in Polyvalent Perspective (Chapter in Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel)

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## Philip: A Connective Figure in Polyvalent Perspective

*Paul N. Anderson*

While Philip plays no special role in the Synoptics, he plays more of a central role in the Fourth Gospel. Aside from references to Peter and the Beloved Disciple, Philip is mentioned in John more often (a dozen times) than any of the other followers of Jesus – either male or female. Interestingly, he plays a connective role in the narrative, and in several ways.<sup>1</sup> At the outset of the Gospel, during the calling narrative, Philip plays the role of an intermediary, connecting Nathanael with Jesus (John 1:43–48). At the beginning of the feeding narrative, Philip is asked by Jesus to feed the crowd (6:5–7), a request that correlates with his hailing from the nearby town, Bethsaida. At the end of Jesus' public ministry, Philip plays a pivotal role in connecting Greek seekers with Jesus, leading to Jesus' declaration that his hour is fulfilled (12:21–23). And, leading into the first of the final discourses, Philip asks Jesus to show the disciples the Father (14:8–9), whereupon Jesus invites all to a connection with God. As such, Philip provides a bridge between others and Jesus at pivotal points, playing a prominent ambassadorial role. This essay will suggest how that is so in terms of polyvalent characterological analysis, leading to interpretive considerations.

### Characterological Analysis and a Polyvalent Reading of the Johannine Text

As an approach to the subject, I want to advocate a polyvalent reading of the Johannine text, as the way one approaches some of the Johannine riddles invariably impacts one's treatment of others.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, literary, historical,

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<sup>1</sup> Cornelis Bennema rightly refers to Andrew and Philip as "finders of people" in his *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 47–53.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one of the main reasons leading Johannine scholars have disagreed with each other regarding John's composition and development is the lack of agreement over how to approach the Johannine riddles. Cf. Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011). For a polyvalent approach to John's lit-

and theological issues must be considered together, at least to some degree. First, however, a brief treatment of characterization and approaches to John may be serviceable. Indeed, a rich diversity of characterological studies of the Fourth Gospel has surfaced in the last three decades, following Alan Culpepper's pivotal 1983 literary analysis,<sup>3</sup> which I still consider the most important single work in Johannine studies since the Martyn-Brown illumination of the Johannine situation a decade or two earlier.<sup>4</sup> As great strides have been made by new-literary gospel approaches in both important monographs<sup>5</sup> and collections,<sup>6</sup> I am less concerned than Cornelis Bennema regarding the dearth of, or need for, standardization in characterological studies, although I do appreciate

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erary, historical, and theological dialectics, see Paul N. Anderson, "From One Dialogue to Another: Johannine Polyvalence From Origins to Receptions," in *Anatomies of Literary Criticism: The Past, Present and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (ed. Tom Thatcher and Stephen D. Moore; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2008), 93–119.

<sup>3</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); following, of course, David Wead, *The Literary Devices of John's Gospel* (TD 4; Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1970). Note the important studies following within a decade or so of Culpepper's work: Gail O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986); Jeffrey L. Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (SBLDS 82; Atlanta: SBL Press, 1988); Mark Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). These books were followed by several important literary-critical collections, including *Semeia 53: The Fourth Gospel from a Literary Perspective* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper et al.; Atlanta: SBL Press, 1991); and the two volumes edited by Fernando Segovia, *What is John? Volume I: Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*; and *What is John? Volume II: Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1996 and 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Paul N. Anderson, "Beyond the Shade of the Oak Tree: Recent Growth in Johannine Studies," *ExpTim* 119/8 (2008): 365–73. Note also the important interdisciplinary characteristics of Culpepper's work in pages 95–96 of Anderson, "From One Dialogue to Another."

<sup>5</sup> Note, for instance, the important advances in Johannine characterological studies sure to inform present and future investigations: Norman R. Peterson, *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1993); David R. Beck, *The Discipleship Paradigm: Readers and Anonymous Characters in the Fourth Gospel* (Biblical Interpretation Series 27; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997); Colleen M. Conway, *Men and Women in the Fourth Gospel: Gender and Johannine Characterization* (SBLDS 167; Atlanta: SBL Press 1999); Stan Harstine, *Moses as a Character in the Fourth Gospel: A Study of Ancient Reading Technique* (JSNTSup 229; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Additional important collections related to Johannine characterization studies include *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives* (ed. Mark Stibbe; NTTs 17; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993); *Characterization in Biblical Literature* (ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Adele Berlin; Semeia 63; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives: Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel in Århus 1997* (ed. Johannes and Sigfred Pedersen; JSNTSup 182; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); *Word, Theology, and Community in John: Festschrift for Robert Kysar* (ed. John Painter et al.; St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2002); *A Feminist Companion to John* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; 2 vols., Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings 4 and 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003).



both the clarity and the nuance he and others bring to the discipline.<sup>7</sup> Characterological studies of course build upon other literary critical approaches,<sup>8</sup> and several book-length treatments of the characters in the Fourth Gospel have begun to treat the issue comprehensively, posing a great help to interpretation.<sup>9</sup>

Over and against many other literary analyses of John, however, part of what an interdisciplinary approach might contribute is a feel for how the characterization of Philip in the Johannine narrative might have been perceived and experienced by its original audiences. If Philip as a historical figure might have been familiar to late first-century audiences in Palestine or Asia Minor (or elsewhere), how might that inform his presentation in the Johannine story? Literature, especially religious literature, is far more polyvalent than a singular discipline will allow, so I want to argue for an interdisciplinary approach, even to characterological Gospel analysis, as a reflective consideration alongside other serviceable ways forward.

Against monovalent literary analyses alone, though such can be profitable in and of themselves,<sup>10</sup> a polyvalent analysis of the Johannine narrative focuses

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<sup>7</sup> Cornelis Bennema, "A Theory of Character in the Fourth Gospel with Reference to Ancient and Modern Literature," *BibInt* 17/4 (2009): 375–421. I really appreciate his correct assertion that characters in the Fourth Gospel are rarely "flat" – they are more "round" in their presentation, as even minor characters play more than a singular role. On this matter, Bennema's appropriation of Yosef Ewen's continua of complexity, development, and penetration of characters for their analysis in the Fourth Gospel is highly serviceable, and that comes through in his work.

<sup>8</sup> On literary devices and operations in John, some of the most helpful works are Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1985); Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), esp. his chapter on representative figures, 33–77. An excellent collection of essays addressing a variety of related studies is *Interpretation* 49.1 on the Gospel of John (Oct. 1995), including Gail R. O'Day, "Toward a Narrative-Critical Reading of John" (341–46); R. Alan Culpepper, "The Plot of John's Story of Jesus" (347–58); Raymond F. Collins, "From John to the Beloved Disciple: An Essay on Johannine Characters" (359–69); Fernando F. Segovia, "The Significance of the Social Location in Reading John's Story" (370–78); and Urban C. von Wahlde, "The History and Social Context of the Johannine Community" (379–89).

<sup>9</sup> One of the first comprehensive treatments of characters in the Fourth Gospel was performed by Raymond F. Collins, *These Things Have Been Written: Studies on the Fourth Gospel* (Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 2; Louvain: Peeters, 1990); followed by Adeline Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom: A Feminist Historical-Literary Analysis of Female Characters in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1998); Frances Taylor Gench, *Encounters with Jesus: Studies in the Gospel of John* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Nicolas Farelly, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel: A Narrative Analysis of their Faith and Understanding* (WUNT II/290; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the integration of interdisciplinary inquiry can only proceed on the basis of more focused, limited disciplinary studies, having first ascertained the best approaches to particular issues and having conducted effective critical analyses of particular data. There is no substitute for narrow and disciplined approaches as foundations for further inquiry. However,



critically on the primary categories of the Johannine riddles, which are literary, historical, and theological.<sup>11</sup> Here one is reminded by Mikhail Bakhtin that literature itself is highly polyvalent in its origin, development, and operation.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in narrative there is never a first word, nor a last word, as we ourselves are involved in the making of meaning – and dialogically so. And yet, various levels of dialogical operation deserve consideration, even when performing characterological analysis within Johannine fields of inquiry.<sup>13</sup>

### *Literary Issues*

Literarily, while it is indeed perilous to infer too facily a text's authorial purpose, the Johannine narrator *does* declare a purpose in John 20:31 and does so more clearly than any other biblical text.<sup>14</sup> If the narrative is written to facilitate belief – both initial and abiding – the first characterological question is

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the weakness lies with the conducting of one type of Gospel analysis to the exclusion of other worthy (and related) approaches. On this matter, Donald A. Carson's critical analysis of the recent Johannine secondary literature is worth noting: "The Challenge of the Balkanization of Johannine Studies," in *John, Jesus, and History, Vol. 1: Critical Assessments of Critical Views* (ed. Paul N. Anderson et al.; Symposium Series 44; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007), 133–159.

<sup>11</sup> Having outlined eighteen major Johannine riddles in 2008 ("Polyvalence," 96–106), I expanded the lists to a dozen in each category and discussed them in greater detail in *Riddles*, 25–90, moving from theological, to historical, to literary riddles. For interpretation, though, the order must be reversed. The literary facts of the text must be considered first, followed by dealing with a host of history-related issues. Only then can theological subjects be understood and interpreted adequately and profitably. That being the case, characterological literary analyses precede historical considerations, and theological inferences hinge upon having done the earlier, foundational work well.

<sup>12</sup> In that sense, historical narrative functions identically to fictive narrative; both are rhetorical in their thrusts, employing characterological devices. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (ed. Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); see especially his essay, "Discourse in the Novel" (259–422), where he explores the multi-leveled character of living discourse within narrative.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to characterological analysis, the following levels of dialogue apply to all of John's literary features, as noted by Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1985); Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 33–77.

<sup>14</sup> The dangers of the intentionalist fallacy are well noted by William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (ed. William K. Wimsatt, Jr.; Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 3–18, and some Gospel scholars thus claim the Fourth Evangelist's purpose cannot be known and should not be sought. While appreciating the phenomenology of the text itself is a point worth making, the literary problem with such a judgment is the literary fact that the narrator declares his purpose in writing in John 20:31 – "These [things] are written that you might believe." Therefore, the signs, the witnesses, and the fulfilled word all contribute a basis for the reader's belief in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ (cf. Paul Anderson, *Navigating the Living Waters of the Gospel of John – On Wading with Children and Swimming with Elephants* [Pendle Hill Pamphlet 352; Wallingford, Pa.: Pendle Hill, 2000]), and characterization also plays a role in furthering that narrative purpose. The question is, how so?

what role characters in the narrative play in furthering (or detracting from) such a narratological goal.<sup>15</sup> Second, as the narrator draws the hearer/reader into the community of the author/editor dialogically, using corporate and personal references to the text's testimony ("we," "our," "his" claims, etc.), how is the audience drawn into the narrative personally and *identificational* via characterological presentations? Put in reader-response terms, do characters play an attractive function or a repulsive one – or both? Third, how do the actions and words of characters *function rhetorically* as a means of furthering the plot of the narrative? More pointedly, when characters get it right, they offer positive examples to follow; when they misunderstand or get it wrong, they pose negative examples to be rejected by later audiences.<sup>16</sup> All three of these features are highly dialogical in their operations, so considering the apologetic, identificational, and rhetorical features of characterization in John poses valuable ways forward in terms of its literary analysis.

### *Historical Issues*

Historically, characters also assume several levels of dialogical operation. First, *intratraditional dialogue* is also evident within the Johannine tradition, as earlier insights and perceptions are affirmed or amended by the narrator or a later editor. Therefore, character associations may also have shifted between earlier and later phases of the Johannine tradition, although establishing such distinctions is a notoriously difficult challenge. Nonetheless, if the later material included at least the Prologue, chapters 6, 15–17, 21, and eyewitness/Beloved Disciple references,<sup>17</sup> a literary basis for such judgments can be inferred in addition to explanatory asides. Second, *intertraditional dialogue* may be dis-

<sup>15</sup> Here Raymond Brown (*The Gospel According to John I [i–xii]*, [AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966], 1055–1061, and elsewhere) errs in pitting an appeal to abide (continuing faith) against a call to the gospel (initial faith), as though the presence of the former displaces the latter. While pastoral concerns are present, a plausible two-edition theory of composition exposes the fact that the main loci of the Johannine calls to abide are found in the later material (1:1–18; chs. 6, 15–17, 21; and "Beloved Disciple" and "eyewitness" references), leading to the likelihood that the first edition of the Johannine Gospel was apologetic in its call to faith, while the later material (addressing divisions in the community as exposed in the Johannine Epistles) calls for solidarity with Jesus and his community (Anderson, *Riddles*, 85–87). Therefore, the *purposes* of the Fourth Gospel were apologetic and pastoral.

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of revelation and rhetoric, two dialogical modes in the Johannine narrative, see Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* (WUNT II/78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996; third printing with a new introduction, outlines, and epilogue. Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2010), 194–97; and 17–24 of Paul N. Anderson, "The *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and Its Evolving Context," in *Critical Readings of John 6* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper; Biblical Interpretation Series; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 1–59.

<sup>17</sup> Of all the composition theories I am aware of, that of Barnabas Lindars accounts for John's major aporias in the most efficient and compelling way: *The Gospel of John* (NCB;



cerned where Johannine similarities and/or differences with other traditions seem telling. Of course, the Johannine narrators could not have had access to the full-fledged Synoptic traditions as we now know them, although at least general familiarity with some form of Mark is plausible.<sup>18</sup> While the Johannine tradition is pervasively autonomous and not dependent on alien sources or other traditions, differences may imply augmentation of or an alternative to Mark – with intentionality – at times dialectically so.<sup>19</sup> Third, *the history of the Johannine situation* plausibly informs the tension between history and theology in the Johannine narrative, and special sensitivity to the relation between the narratological presentation of characters and issues being faced by later audiences.<sup>20</sup>

### *Theological Issues*

Theologically, several dialogical operations are also at work. First, the *dialectical thinking of the evangelist* must be kept in mind when performing any analysis of Johannine themes or subjects.<sup>21</sup> Rarely does the Fourth Evangelist address any one theme with unoffending consistency; he nearly always presents his subjects in both-and ways instead of either-or ones. This is why Johannine characters are rarely flat (with Bennema); the evangelist invariably presents textured portraits of individuals and groups, defying monodimensional portraiture. Second, as the *agency of the Revealer* within the divine-human discourse is the *Leitmotif* of the Johannine evangel, noting how characters embrace or reject the Mosaic Prophet<sup>22</sup> becomes a key for understanding their roles within the narra-

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London: Oliphants, 1972), 47–54. John Ashton independently came to the same conclusion regarding Lindars' work in his *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 199–204.

<sup>18</sup> For an analysis of John's intratraditional and intertraditional developments using John 6 as a case study, see Anderson, *Christology*, 167–251. For an outlining of an overall theory of John's composition and development and its *dialogical autonomy*, see Anderson, *Riddles*, 125–155.

<sup>19</sup> For sketches of the Johannine dialectical situation, see Anderson, *Christology*, 119–27 and 194–251; *Sitz im Leben*, 24–57; *Riddles*, 134–141.

<sup>20</sup> For an interdisciplinary analysis of how the rhetorical design of the Johannine dialogues likely functioned within the dialectical Johannine situation involving seven crises over seven decades, see Paul N. Anderson, "Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Corrective Rhetoric of the Johannine Misunderstanding Dialogue: Exposing Seven Crises in the Johannine Situation," in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (ed. Roland Boer; SemeiaSt 63; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007), 133–59.

<sup>21</sup> On the dialectical thinking of the evangelist, see C. Kingsley Barrett, "The Dialectical Theology of St John," in his *New Testament Essays* (London: SPCK, 1972), 49–69; and Anderson, *Christology*, 137–165. See also the polarities regarding twelve major theological themes in John: Anderson, *Riddles*, 25–43.

<sup>22</sup> For twenty-four points of contact between the Johannine Father-Son relationship and the Prophet-like-Moses agency schema of Deuteronomy 18:15–22, see Paul N. Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father – Aspects of Irony, Agency, and Encounter in the Johannine



tive. Put otherwise, those who are scandalized by the divine initiative are usually exposed as bearing fixations upon that which is of human initiative – the world, the religious, the political, the conventional; to respond in faith to that which is from above, one must first release one's grip on that which is of creaturely origin. Third, the intended overall effect of these dialogical operations is to evoke a personal response to the divine initiative on behalf of the hearer/reader. Therefore, the *existential response* to truth and its revelation within the human-divine discourse becomes the final interest of characterological analysis, but such cannot be ascertained effectively from a distance. It can only be embraced or rejected as a personal factor of authentic faith. To read the Johannine text well, therefore, will inevitably lead to crisis, and the degree to which a literary paradigm facilitates such an existential engagement could be seen as a measure of its hermeneutical value.

### *Revelation and Rhetoric*

While all of these dialogical operations and levels are important factors to consider within Johannine interpretation, they need not be engaged in a linear way to be drawn effectively into one's analysis. In fact, one means of getting at several of them is to consider two dialogical modes within the narrative: *revelation* and *rhetoric*.<sup>23</sup> As the divine initiative scandalizes all that is of creaturely origin, so the Revealer, Moses, the Scriptures, the Baptizer, witnesses, the Father, Jesus' words and works, and the Spirit convey the saving/redeeming truth of God's love and light to the world. When human actants and discussants in the narrative respond in faith to God's agencies, from the narrator's perspective the result is life-producing; disbelief is conversely death-producing. Most of the narrative actions and discourses of Jesus in John are revelational – inviting audiences to make a response for or against the Revealer.<sup>24</sup> However, when the initiative shifts to a discussant or an actant – as people proclaim their self-assured knowledge or take bold actions – they are often exposed as unbelieving, or at least miscomprehending. And, in narrative, miscomprehension is always rhetorical, and correctively so.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, when characters respond in faith to Jesus, or other divine agents in the narrative, they pose exemplary views and stances to be embraced and

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Father-Son Relationship," 33–57 in *Semeia* 85 (1999). See also the rhetorical operations of the evangelist in creating a "sociology of light" in service to that goal in Peterson, *Sociology*.

<sup>23</sup> In addition to sources mentioned in fn. 16 and fn. 20, see Anderson, *Riddles*, 150–152.

<sup>24</sup> So Rudolf Bultmann puts it well regarding Jesus' Bread-of-Life declaration in John 6:35 (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 227): "Jesus gives the bread of life in that he is the bread of life".

<sup>25</sup> With Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 403, stupidity and incomprehension in narrative rip the masks off of lofty characters in narrative, exposing flaws in their thinking and acting with ironic potency.

imitated. Negative or partial responses conversely expose flawed views and stances to be eschewed. And, when characters seize the initiative in speech or action, reader beware! That figure is likely to be exposed as miscomprehending, not only of the Revealer, but of the character of divine-human discourse, itself. Such representations are often crafted ironically, with corresponding embellishment. In performing characterological analyses of Gospel narratives, the following questions will thus be serviceable: a) How is a character presented on the surface level of the text, in terms of frequency and extent of presentation, and how does he or she further the apologetic thrust of the narrative? b) What is the character's relation to the protagonist and other characters in the narrative in relation to the development of its plot? c) How is a character presented in relation to other contemporary texts, and does the Johannine rendering cohere with or seem at odds with parallel or related traditions? d) What is the rhetorical thrust of a character's presentation, and how would such have been received by targeted audiences in the Johannine situation? In considering the characterization of Philip in the Fourth Gospel, these and other issues begin to be addressed in polyvalent ways.

### The Characterization of Philip in John – the Surface Level of the Text

Before considering the rhetorical presentation of Philip in John, however, a few preliminary points deserve to be made about his presentation on the surface level of the text. These, of course, involve literary, historical, and theological considerations, and such are distinctive for every character analyzed.

#### *Literary Levels*

On a surface literary level, Philip is introduced in the four passages mentioned above, yet none of these describes him in lengthy ways. He is only mentioned directly in a total of eleven verses in John, and three of the four passages reference him only within a two- or three-sentence section. On the other hand, Philip plays an important set of roles with relation to the protagonist, Jesus and appears within larger, important scenarios. He brings disciples to Jesus (John 1:19–51), is tested by Jesus (John 6:1–71), brings Greek seekers to Jesus (John 12:9–50) and plays a leading support-role, asking Jesus a question as a means of providing a rhetorical platform on which to launch into the first of his farewell discourses (John 14:1–31). In these ways, Philip furthers the plot of the narrative consistently and progressively. Is his presentation, though, positive, negative, or a mixture?

Pivotaly, Philip's first appearance heralds themes that are echoed later in the narrative. Jesus' introductory invitation for him to "follow me" is matched



by a climactic exhortation for Peter to do the same – as book-ends of the narrative (John 1:43; 21:19, 22). As Jesus' true sheep know his voice and follow him (John 10:27), and as to serve Jesus is to follow him (John 12:26), Philip's recognizing and following Jesus at the outset signals the exemplary path for others to follow. While the narrator is silent on whether or not Philip follows Jesus directly, not only does he declare to Nathanael that Jesus is "the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote," as Jesus claims of himself later (John 1:45; 5:46), but Nathanael proclaims Jesus "King of Israel," even as the crowd does at the triumphal entry (John 1:49; 12:13). Philip refers to Jesus also as the familiar "son of Joseph," as do others (John 1:45; 6:42), but in contrast to the miscomprehending Judean and Galilean crowds, Philip and Nathanael get it right. As striking evidence of his authentic responsiveness, Philip echoes the very words of Jesus as his imitative witness, declaring to Nathanael: "Come and see" (John 1:39, 46).<sup>26</sup> Philip is thus presented in the opening scene not only as a willing follower of Jesus but as an effective and imitative agent of the Lord.

The presentation of Philip in John 6 bears intra- and intertraditional implications. Within the Johannine tradition, the reader is reminded again that Philip and Andrew (and thus Peter) are connected (John 1:44; 6:5–7; 12:22), and one is reminded of the Bethsaida link intertraditionally in Mark (mentioned in both Markan feeding narratives, Mark 6:45; 8:22) and intratraditionally in John 1:44 and 12:21. While a similarity exists between the Johannine and Markan feeding narratives regarding the cost of feeding the multitude being 200 denarii (Mark 6:37; John 6:7), in Mark the disciples reference the cost as an objecting question; in John, Philip simply asserts that such an amount of food would not be enough for each to have even a bit. The Markan thrust features the disciples' anxiety over perceived insufficiency of funds; the Johannine notes a realism-oriented concern over the insufficiency of loaves to satisfy such a multitude, even if purchased. Might these two very different sentiments reflect a Johannine knowing contrast to Mark's rendering?<sup>27</sup> Another distinctive fea-

<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the Samaritan woman issues the same invitation to her townspeople in John 4:29 and they believe. And, the crowd's caring for Jesus is echoed by an invitation to "come and see" the tomb of Lazarus in 11:34, after which Jesus weeps.

<sup>27</sup> Here John's differences with Mark seem to reflect simply a different rendering of the account, although other differences with Mark may suggest a knowing set of contrasts in ways designed to either provide an alternative view, or at times, to set the record straight; with Richard Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," in *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 147–71; cf. Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (Library of New Testament Studies 321; London: T&T Clark), 104–112, 128–173. If familiarity with Mark can be inferred (cf. Steven A. Hunt, *Rewriting the Feeding of Five Thousand: John 6.1–15 as a Test Case for Johannine Dependence on the Synoptic Gospels*; SBL 125; New York: Peter Lang, 2011), John's presentation of Philip is less negative than Mark's, as he is presented as simply commenting on the realism of the feeding challenge rather than objecting to the instruction to feed the crowd.



ture is that while the Synoptic Jesus is often tested by religious leaders, here Jesus tests Philip.<sup>28</sup> Andrew brings meager assistance, connecting Jesus with a lad having five loaves and two fishes, which Jesus multiplies, and by which the crowd is satisfied.

Chapter 12 presents another pivotal scene where Philip connects Greek seekers of Jesus with the Lord, after which Jesus declares the completion of his mission and time for the Son of Man to be glorified (John 12:20–23).<sup>29</sup> Ironically, whereas the Judean leaders question whether Jesus might launch a mission to the Greeks in the Diaspora (John 7:35), here Greeks come to him seeking redemption. The second Johannine mention of Bethsaida here also offers a clue to cross-cultural associations with Philip, pointing also to cross-cultural features of Jesus' own mission.<sup>30</sup> If the appointing of twelve disciples (Mark 3:14) had anything to do with restoring the rest of the twelve lost tribes of Israel scattered in the Diaspora, the linking of Hellenic Bethsaida with the cross-cultural reception of Greeks visiting Jerusalem at Passover is telling. In the Synoptics and John alike, Jesus can be seen to have a vision for the restoration of the fallen house of Israel, and in John Philip plays a central role in that cross-cultural mission.

The final scene in which Philip appears in the Johannine narrative (although he may be implicitly referenced as one of "two other disciples" mentioned in John 21:2) shows him providing a platform for Jesus to declare his relation to the Father as the opening thrust of his final discourses. As Thomas had just asked how to know the way, whereupon Jesus declares that he is the way, the truth, and the life, Philip serves a similar role. Following on Jesus' declaring the visibility of the Father through his revelatory work, Philip requests a clearer rendering of the Father's image (John 14:7–8). Jesus then declares his revelation of the Father through his works and words, promising also that the Holy Spirit would continue that disclosure process even after his own departure. Again, on a surface, literary level of the text, Philip plays a connective role between Jesus and others – now connecting past and future audiences, becoming an effective agent of Jesus' own mission and ministering effectively on his behalf.

<sup>28</sup> In John, rather than Jesus being tested by religious leaders, as in the Synoptics and the *Pericope Adulterae* (Matt 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35; Mark 8:11; 10:2; 12:15; Luke 10:25; 11:16; John 8:6), Jesus is the one who tests his followers (John 6:6).

<sup>29</sup> For the leading analysis of quest narratives in the Fourth Gospel, see John Painter's important work: *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community* (2d ed., rev. and enl.: London: T&T Clark, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Here John and Mark, the Bi-Optic Gospels, corroborate the cross-cultural mission of Jesus in ways similar-yet-distinctive (as they do a variety of other issues, cf. Anderson, *Quest*, 128–145). Just as the Markan Jesus ministered among the Greco-Roman Decapolis cities (Mark 5:20; 7:31), took his disciples to "the other side" of the lake to the land of the Gerasenes (emphasizing alterity, Mark 4:35–5:1), ministered to the Syrophenecian Gentile woman (Mark 7:26), and invited Peter's confession at the polytheistic worship site of Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27–29), so the Johannine Jesus climactically reaches out to the Greek seekers.

### Historical Levels

On the first level of history, the repeated linking of Philip with Bethsaida (John 1:44; 12:21) is significant. Josephus (*Ant.* 18:27) claims that around 30 C.E. the town of Bethsaida was elevated to the status of a “city” (πόλις) by Philip, son of Herod the Great, and that he renamed it Julias, after the Emperor’s daughter or wife.<sup>31</sup> Four years later, Philip is reported to have died and been buried in Julias (thus, Bethsaida, *Ant.* 18:108), and the prominence of the city would have been impressive at the time. These references by Josephus are corroborated by archaeological finds at the primary site associated with Bethsaida, to the east of the Jordan River, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. In addition, fishing equipment has been found (hooks, weights, etc.), so this is a likely site for fishermen such as Peter and Andrew to have lived (John 1:44).<sup>32</sup> It is also understandable that Jesus would have asked him to procure food for the crowd to eat before the feeding in John 6 (see also references to Bethsaida in Mark 6:45 and 8:22).

If indeed Philip had Hellenistic societal connections, with a recognizably Greek name, it is no wonder that Greeks came specifically to Philip in John 12, looking for Jesus.<sup>33</sup> The repeated mention of Bethsaida (John 12:21) thus points to such a cross-cultural role and associative link. This event is also pivotal in the narrative, as the Pharisees had just exclaimed in dismay that “the whole world” is going after Jesus (John 12:19), and it is followed by Jesus’ declaration that the hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified (John 12:23). While the implications here are highly theological, something of the cross-cultural thrust of Jesus’ mission here becomes palpable.

The final scene in which Philip is explicitly present in the Johannine narrative follows the last supper, where the question of Thomas is followed by his request: “Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied” (John 14:8). Jesus employs this request as a platform to emphasize his agency from the Father and the sending of the Spirit. Despite being rendered in distinctive terms, the

<sup>31</sup> Josephus’ first reference is to the wife of the Emperor, although he later in the same passage connects the name Julias with his daughter. In the view of Nikos Kokkinos, “The Foundation of Bethsaida-Julias by Philip the Tetrarch,” *JJS* 59/2 (2008): 236–51, the name change refers to the daughter of Caesar, not the wife.

<sup>32</sup> See the collections of essays edited by Rami Arav and Richard A. Freund, *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee; Vols. 1–4* (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 1995, 1999, 2004, 2009), although some scholars have proposed alternative sites to the south or east. While the sediment of the river has built up over the years, so that the village site is now over a mile from the shore, archaeological finds have produced incense shovels and a temple area, suggesting Greco-Roman cultic practices and worship sites.

<sup>33</sup> As a common Greek name, especially following Philip II, king of Macedonia and father of Alexander the Great, it is not surprising that the son of Herod would have been given the name Philip, and the inclusion of a Galilean Jew with a Hellenistic name among the twelve suggests something of the cross-cultural intentionality of Jesus’ mission.



Johannine Jesus promises the ongoing guidance of the Spirit (John 14–16) in ways parallel to the promise of the Spirit's guidance in the Synoptics (Matt 10:17–20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12), expanding a promise of Jesus upon the platform Philip's request provides. While Philip's role here is highly theological, with Synoptic literary parallels, it is simply interesting to note Johannine alternative presentations of traditional Jesus-sayings – evoked by Philip's request.

### *Theological Levels*

Theologically, Philip plays a role of extending the agency of the Son not only to the world, but also to diverse peoples in the world. As one who echoes the calls to discipleship of Jesus, trusts the Lord authentically, connects seekers with the Jewish Messiah, and provides a platform for Jesus' final teachings, Philip extends the reconciling work of the redeemer to other individuals and groups. As such, he further becomes a connective bridge between the narrative texts and later audiences in different phases of the tradition's development, reaching also Hellenistic audiences as well as Jewish ones on behalf of Jesus.

On these levels, it is not problematic to see Philip portrayed characterologically as a real person from the cross-cultural town of Bethsaida, who played particular roles within the narrative serving both literary and theological purposes. Whether the first level of the text's narrative bears any historical claim is impossible to ascertain – or to deny; it is, nonetheless, realistic in its rendering. In that sense, it also coheres with other presentations of Philip elsewhere in the New Testament and also in the writings of Eusebius.

### Philip's Presentation in the Synoptics, Acts, and Eusebius – A Familiar Figure

Given that Philip is presented as coming from the Greek village, Bethsaida, in John 1, it is not surprising that he is also presented as a cross-cultural bridge in such church histories as Acts (only incidentally in the Synoptics) and the writings of Eusebius. Therefore, a brief noting of parallel presentations outside of John may suggest aspects of familiarity for later audiences.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For an overall theory of interfluentiality between the Johannine and the Synoptic traditions, see Anderson, *Quest*, 101–26. Within this larger theory, (a) early pre-Markan and Johannine traditions likely had some interfluential contact, (b) the first edition of John appears to augment and provide an alternative to written Mark (perhaps heard by the evangelist as it was delivered among the churches); (c) Luke departs from Mark and sides with John no fewer than six dozen times, reflecting Luke's access to the Johannine tradition, probably in its oral stages of delivery; (d) as the Q tradition shows some affinities with the Johannine tradition, even including Johannine language on the Father-Son relationship, the early Johan-



*The Synoptics*

Philip appears in other Gospel narratives only in the Markan calling narrative (Mark 3:18; cf. Matt 10:3; Luke 6:14) and simply is listed alongside the other twelve: between Andrew and Bartholomew in Mark and between John and Bartholomew in Matthew and Luke. Might the extensive presentation of Philip in the Fourth Gospel have influenced Matthew's and Luke's shifting of the association of Philip with John instead of Andrew? Perhaps, although Philip is also presented alongside Andrew several times in John, so that likelihood is not impressive. Of interest is the far more extensive presentation of such disciples as Philip and Andrew in the Fourth Gospel in contrast to the Synoptics, as well as the featuring of Nathanael, who is mentioned by name only in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>35</sup>

*Acts 1*

Acts 1:13 connects Philip with Andrew, as he is likewise paired in Mark 3:18 and John 1:44; 6:5–7; 12:22. This may be simply a factor of an association, as the Johannine narrator mentions twice that Philip (likewise Andrew and Peter) is a resident of the town of Bethsaida, but if Philip indeed had a cross-cultural background, it is noteworthy that in Acts he also connects representatives of various people groups with Jesus and his movement. The distinctively cross-cultural bridge-work of Philip's connecting the Greeks to Jesus in John 12 and the rest of Acts is intriguing indeed!

*Acts 6*

A heightened featuring of Philip's cross-cultural identity and work is featured in Acts 6, where a disciple named "Philip" is chosen as a "deacon" by the "apostles" in order to care for the Hellenistic Jewish believers. While modern scholars have distinguished Philip the apostle from Philip the deacon and evangelist in Acts, such a distinction is nowhere made within Acts, nor is it asserted in the early church. After Philip's first appearance with the eleven apostles in Jerusalem after the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9–14), the next appearance of a person named "Philip" is in Jerusalem, where, in response to

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nine tradition may have played a formative role in the development of the Q tradition; (e) later Matthean and Johannine traditions appear to have some interfluent contact involving dialectical exchanges over Christian mission and modes of church governance. Whether or not the Q tradition follows the Johannine rendering in associating John and Philip together, Luke appears to follow either Mark or the Johannine tradition when linking Philip and Andrew together again in Acts 1:13.

<sup>35</sup> On this associative basis some interpreters have connected Nathanael in John with Bartholomew, but this can be nothing more than a guess, however, perhaps in the interest of inferring Nathanael's being one of the twelve.

the Hellenists' feeling that their widows were being neglected by the Hebrews in the daily distribution of food, "the twelve" invite seven deacons to be chosen, stipulating that they be "of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:1-7). One of those chosen is named "Philip," listed between Stephen (the main character in the next chapter) and Prochorus (associated in later traditions with John of Patmos). Is this the same person as the apostle, though, or is it another Philip?<sup>36</sup>

### *Acts 8*

The next appearances of Philip occur in Acts 8, where he comes "down from Jerusalem" and preaches about Jesus as the Messiah/Christ (Acts 8:5-13). As a result of his preaching, exorcisms and healings, many Samaritans come to believe in Jesus and are baptized, although some do not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John lay their hands upon them (Acts 8:14-25). Meanwhile, Philip is sent away by an angel to the Gaza road, where he encounters the Ethiopian eunuch – an official of the Queen's court – to whom he ministers successfully (Acts 8:26-39). Philip subsequently finds himself at Azotus, and he preaches at various villages until he arrives at Caesarea (Acts 8:40).

### *Acts 21*

Philip is later visited by Paul and Luke after traveling to Caesarea from Tyre and Ptolemais (Acts 21:8-9); they stay with "Philip the evangelist" and his four daughters, who have the gift of prophecy (affirming Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17). Here Philip continues to serve as a connection-builder; he indirectly connects Paul with the apostolic leadership back in Jerusalem, which marks a pivotal turn, then, in Paul's final witness-journey to Rome.

While the identification of Philip the evangelist as one of the seven deacons in Acts 6 is made explicitly in Acts 21:8, this does not necessarily deny his identification as one of the apostles, as described explicitly in Acts 1 and implicitly in Acts 8. One can appreciate how later traditions debated whether to distinguish Philip the deacon/evangelist from Philip the apostle, and yet the second-century tradition that Philip the apostle traveled throughout Asia Minor, along with his prophesying daughters (Acts 21:9) remains strong. Given that Philip's Martyrium in Hierapolis, near Colossae and Laodicea, would have associated the apostle's cross-cultural ministry to have extended to Asia Minor, his role as a connective intermediary continues beyond his representations in John and Acts.

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<sup>36</sup> While "the apostles" pray for those chosen in Acts 6:6, the text does not directly support a dichotomous distinguishing of these two groups.



*Eusebius and Characterological Receptions of Philip in Asia Minor*

While modern critical scholarship has assumed that Philip the apostle and Philip the deacon/evangelist were conflated into one, the reverse is actually true. Eusebius did not “confuse” two Philips – there never were two Philips in early church memory; modern scholars have “truncated” a single Philip – perplexed over Luke’s somewhat ambiguous presentation of a single Philip in Acts, but wrongly so. Neither Eusebius nor his sources, however, make such a move. In four sections of *Church History* Eusebius associates *Philip the apostle* with ministering in Hierapolis, having prophesying daughters (connecting Acts 1 and 6 with Acts 8 and 21).<sup>37</sup>

The point here is not to argue for the “historical” Philip, but to focus on how the characterization of Philip in the Fourth Gospel would have been received and associated in ancient memory with the same Christian leader who ministered and died in Hierapolis, less than one hundred miles from Ephesus in Asia Minor. This might account for three things in the Johannine narrative: a) how such a figure might have been known to some extended members of the Johannine audience (if indeed the Johannine Gospel were delivered and circulated among the Asia Minor churches), b) how a cross-cultural figure such as Philip may have been remembered as continuing a ministry of connecting the message of the Jewish Jesus with Hellenistic audiences, and c) how the characterological presentation of Philip in the Johannine narrative may have continued to serve as a rhetorical means of connecting later audiences with its protagonist, Jesus.

Therefore, audiences in such a Hellenistic setting, within which the Johannine narrative was likely delivered and preserved in written form, would probably have been familiar with Philip’s continuing, connective ministries. Not only did he connect actants in the Johannine narrative with the ministry of Jesus, but he continued to be a cross-cultural bridge between the Jesus-mission in Palestine with the mission to the Gentiles in the broader Hellenistic world.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.1.10–13; 3.31.1–5; 3.37.1; 3.39.9; 5:25.2. Also, Christopher R. Matthews, *Philip: Apostle and Evangelist: Configurations of a Tradition* (NovTSup105; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), argues convincingly that the apostle and the evangelist are the same Philip, despite some early and modern attempts to differentiate the two. Indeed, the Epistle of Polycrates, as cited twice by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.31.2–3; 5.24.1–2), declares that two great apostolic “lights” (Philip and John) are dead and buried in Asia Minor (Hierapolis and Ephesus). The point here is that Philip would have been familiar to at least some audiences in Galilee and Judea; he would also have been familiar to at least some audiences in Asia Minor. On both levels of the text, Philip continues to play a cross-cultural, connective role.

## The Characterization of Philip in John – Revelation and Rhetoric in Dialogical Context

On the second level of the text, the presentation of Philip as a bridge-connector figure would have played rhetorically in several powerful ways. Whether his portraiture on the first level of the text is rooted in historical or traditional knowledge, or whether it simply reflects an associative interest on the part of the narrator,<sup>38</sup> his characterization certainly functions to build bridges between later hearers/readers and Jesus. As the dialectical Johannine situation involved development among audiences over at least three phases within the Johannine situation, first in Palestine and later in a Hellenistic setting such as Asia Minor, the cross-cultural role of Philip in the narrative would have served a similar function within the evolving Johannine dialogical context.

### *Comprehension and Incomprehension*

As comprehension in narrative is normally exemplary, incomprehension and stupidity are nearly always corrective. Both presentations function rhetorically, and sometimes the same character in the Johannine narrative acts or speaks in ways suggesting positive examples to emulate as well as negative examples to eschew. In Philip's case, his following Jesus and bringing Nathanael to Jesus in John 1 provides a positive example for others to follow.<sup>39</sup> Just as he had come to believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, he also draws others into that circle of conviction, and on behalf of Philip's authentic witness, Nathanael too becomes a follower of Jesus. The same can be said of Philip's serving as a bridge between the seeking Hellenists and Jesus in John 12. Whereas they are presented as authentic seekers, coming and declaring their desire to see Jesus, Philip is the one who connects them with Jesus (along with Andrew),<sup>40</sup> and

<sup>38</sup> The thesis of Petri Merenlahti, of course, is that the ideological inclination of the narrator is the primary factor in the presentation of characters in his "Characters in the Making: Individuality and Ideology in the Gospels," in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 49–72; the same would be true of historical narrative as well as fiction.

<sup>39</sup> While some might infer that the narrator's silence on whether or not Philip actually followed Jesus, his faithful response is featured in the next sentence where he not only follows Jesus personally, but he even echoes the Lord's invitation to "come and see" by issuing the same invitation to Nathanael (John 1:39, 46).

<sup>40</sup> A comparison with Andrew may be significant. Like Philip, Andrew also is featured with greater prominence in John than in the other Gospels, often alongside Philip. Just as Andrew brings Peter to the Lord in John 1, so Philip brings Nathanael; whereas Jesus tests Philip at the feeding, Andrew finds a lad with loaves and fishes; while Philip and Andrew introduce the Greeks to Philip, it is Philip to whom they have come, and without his bridge-work, Andrew would not have had a role to play in John 12. Therefore, the characterological roles of Andrew and Philip in John are complementary rather than elevating



later hearers and readers are thereby encouraged to bring seekers to the Lord, however the opportunity might present itself.

On the other hand, Philip's responses to Jesus in John 6 and 14 appear to be incomprehending, yet they both provide platforms for Jesus to perform a sign or deliver a discourse, thereby advancing his mission. When considered alongside the first Markan feeding narrative, there the disciples object to the cost of feeding the crowd; in John, Philip questions whether human provision itself would suffice. Therefore, Jesus' "testing" Philip becomes a case study in trust. Will future followers of Jesus trust in divine provision, or will they feel limited by their own resources or the lack thereof (Mark 6:37; John 6:7)? In John 14, Philip asks Jesus to show them the Father, to which Jesus replies that he has been doing so all along. On one hand, Philip's request hints at incomprehension; if Philip has not seen the Father in Jesus' ministry so far, where has he been? Then again, Philip's asking the right question, that Jesus show his followers the Father, becomes a means of accentuating the representative mission of Jesus as the one who is sent from the Father as the true Mosaic agent (Deut 18:15-22) from the beginning – continuing on through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14-16). In both of these instances, Philip's role within his brief dialogues with Jesus serves as a platform for Jesus to demonstrate his glory and to fulfill his representative mission from the Father.

*The Connective Function of Philip for the Johannine Audiences –  
Characterization in Received Contexts*

Within the three phases of the Johannine situation, the characterization of Philip as a connective agent would speak clearly to later audiences, inviting their identification with him as an exemplary character within the narrative. During the first phase (the Palestinian Phase, 30-70 C. E.) featuring dialogical engagements between northern Galileans and southern Judeans and between followers of Jesus and the Baptizer, Philip's characterization would challenge conventional sensibilities directly. For Judean leaders advocating a Judean Messianism rooted in David's city, believing that Jerusalem might be a light to the nations (Isa 60:3), Philip shows that Jesus is already reaching "the nations" by their coming to him, as the Jewish Messiah, *in* Jerusalem. And, for followers of the Baptist, Andrew's leaving him and following Jesus, along with Philip and others, points the way as even a fulfillment of John's self-declared mission: the whole reason he came was to point to Jesus (John 1:31).

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one at the expense of the other. If Nathanael is conceived of as a disciple, though not one of the twelve, the connective roles of Andrew and Philip might have been understood as bridges between Jesus and the twelve (Andrew) and Jesus and the rest of his followers (Philip) respectively.

Following a move to one of the churches in the Gentile mission during the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Johannine evangelist found himself addressing audiences involving both Jewish and Gentile members. During the first Asia-Minor phase (70–85 C. E., and there is no more conducive setting than the traditional memory of Ephesus), the characterization of Philip would have pointed local members of the synagogue to Jesus as the Messiah, given his testimony: “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth” (John 1:45). In the light of a second crisis during this phase, involving the Roman presence during the reign of Domitian (81–96 C. E.), Philip’s bringing Nathanael to Jesus, confessing “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:49), this confession would have challenged the pressures of the imperial cult. Philip indeed came from a royal village, Bethsaida, so Rome-based divine and royal honors faced a direct challenge in Philip’s witness to the divinely commissioned mission and identity of Jesus.

During the third phase (the second Asia-Minor phase) of the Johannine situation (85–100 C. E.) the rhetorical effect of Philip’s characterization would have been most pointed in its thrust. Within the larger mission to the Gentiles, Philip’s role in bringing Hellenistic seekers to Jesus would have inspired the Johannine mission to the Greeks within its new setting.<sup>41</sup> Just as Philip came from a cross-cultural village, the cross-cultural mission among the Pauline churches had an apostolic precedent. Further, members of the emerging Christian movement within the Lycus Valley may have known or heard of Philip, who was buried in Hierapolis, three days’ walk from Ephesus, so Philip’s role within the narrative may have even connected with audiences’ contemporary familiarity with Philip and his later ministry. Whatever the case, Philip’s connecting Greek seekers with Jesus would have inspired the Johannine mission to the Gentiles, encouraging others to take up the mantle of becoming cross-cultural connectives to Jesus. Regarding engagements with other Christian communities and leaders in the region (such as Diotrophes and his kin, 3 John 1:9–10), Philip would have pointed the way to Jesus and the Spirit, who convey the will of the Father for the Church in directly mediated ways (John 14–17) without need of human (hierarchical) intermediaries.

Therefore, in each of the six crises discernible within the three main phases of the Johannine situation (including a seventh, if engagements with other Gospel traditions are included), Philip plays an important rhetorical role for later audiences. Not only does he point the way for others to point the way to

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<sup>41</sup> Kiyoshi Tsuchido, “*Ἐλλην* in the Gospel of John: Tradition and Redaction in John 12:20–24,” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John: In Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 348–356.



Jesus cross-culturally, but he also becomes an extension of Jesus' agency, inviting later seekers of the truth to "come and see" for themselves.

### *Dialogism, Identification, and Meaning*

As the dialogical function of the Johannine narrative and its dialogues is designed to facilitate an imaginary dialogue with Jesus within the perception and experience of later audiences, the question is how that might happen for later readers of the text. As the Johannine community can attest: *we* have seen his glory, *we* have received from his fullness grace upon grace, and *we* know the Beloved Disciple's testimony is true (John 1:14, 16; 21:24), the use of the first-person plural pronoun in association with Philip likewise bears identificational overtones.<sup>42</sup> First, his declaration to Nathanael, "*We* have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth" (John 1:45) becomes an invitation to future audiences to receive Jesus as such – entering the community of first followers of Jesus: Philip, Andrew, Peter, Nathanael, and an unnamed disciple. Second, Jesus invites Philip (and those identifying with him) into partnership with him as his friends in the furthering of his mission and work: "Where are *we* to buy bread for these people to eat?" (John 6:5; 15:14–15). Third, in the Greek seekers' coming to Philip on their way to Jesus, hearers and readers are welcomed to identify with seekers who would profess in later settings also: "Sir, *we* wish to see Jesus" (John 12:21). Fourth, in requesting "Lord, show us the Father, and *we* will be satisfied" (John 14:8), Philip elevates the spiritual interest of subsequent believers to the front-and-center stage of Jesus' final words. In the promise of ongoing revelation of the Father's way and will in the world, future followers of Jesus are thereby sustained by the agency of the Son and the Spirit sent by the Father and by Jesus (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

In these and other ways, the dialogical presentation of Philip in the Johannine narrative engages later audiences as a facilitator of transformative encounter. As the reflective dialogue between perception and experience is provoked by the exemplary characterization of Philip in the narrative, later audiences are drawn into the world of the text in ways that lead to the discovery of meaning. In identifying with Philip and other communities presented in the text, the meaning of the narrative becomes personal, and the hearer/reader is drawn experientially into its world. In so doing, the invitation to "come and see" moves the experience of the hearer/reader from an observer to a participant within the narrative as a continuing and unfolding story.

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<sup>42</sup> Note how the Johannine narrative draws readers into the community of the text experientially, either as waders or swimmers, helping them feel included without becoming exclusive; Anderson, *Riddles*, 1–5, 240–41.

## Conclusion

While fictive approaches to characterological Gospel studies can be serviceable in and of themselves, the genre of the canonical Gospels fits better within the genres of Jewish and Greco-Roman biographical accounts.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, considerations of originative and developing histories must accompany delivery-situation analyses in considering the tradition history of the material as well as its final rhetorical operations. Historical narrative, like its fictive counterparts, involves characterological crafting of actants in the narrative, but they are also ordered by perceived historical realities, or at least associative perceptions. Remarkably, the Johannine presentation of Philip matches his cross-cultural representations in Acts and the sources of Eusebius, so at least we have corroborative associations – if not historical memory – here at work. Therefore, a polyvalent analysis of his presentation in John is all the more important, as it helps us consider not only the narrative designs of the narrator, but also the narrative associations likely to have been effected among the targeted audiences of the evolving Johannine situation.

The characterization of Philip in the Fourth Gospel thus presents him as a connective bridge between others and Jesus in ways that further the plot and thrust of the narrative within its delivered contexts. Considered in polyvalent analysis, from a *literary* standpoint, Philip's characterization furthers the narrator's purpose – leading audiences to initial and continuing belief in Jesus as the Christ, creates identificational connections with later audiences drawing them into association with the ministry of Philip, and poses an exemplary case study in faithful discipleship for later generations of believers seeking also to be authentic followers of Jesus. From a *historical* standpoint, Philip grounds the Johannine narrative in the Galilean ministry of Jesus – connected from the outset with the cross-cultural history and repute of Bethsaida. Philip's presentation in John also corrects the relative dearth of his treatment in Mark and the Synoptics, and it shows his ministry to be far more apostolic and cross-cultural, which is also taken further in Acts. As a result, the presentation of Philip in the emerging history of the Johannine situation would have connected with audiences during all three of its phases, plausibly even engaging regional memories of Philip and his ministries *among* the Hellenistic-mission churches, familiar at least to Christians in Asia Minor. From a *theological* standpoint, Philip affirms Jesus' representative divine agency, bolstering further chapters of Johannine cross-cultural mission, inviting later audiences

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<sup>43</sup> Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (2d ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 213–32; see also Jo-Ann A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004).



not only to be connective agents as witnesses in their settings but also to welcome experiential encounter with the subject of the narrative – Jesus – as audiences in every generation and setting are invited to “*come and see*.”