

CHAPTER SIX

Method of data collection, discussion and synthesis of findings.

6.1 Introduction

Chapters four and five respectively dealt with the symbolic universes of 1 John and African (Zulu) people. We discovered how much influence each universe exerted on their inhabitants with regard to their perception of reality. In fact it became evident that people become what they are due to the strong influence exerted by symbolic universes. Berger and Luckmann (1966:102) call symbolic universes sheltering canopies because of their ability to absorb, integrate and order reality.

But the fact that we live in a fast changing world, which is impacting and challenging every individual's universe, made this empirical research necessary. Whilst there exists enough documented information based on research done in the past, which is not taken lightly in this research, researcher would like to check those findings against modern perception to ascertain whether a shift in people's perception has not occurred and to ensure that conclusions that we finally arrive at are authentic.

The aim of this chapter is therefore twofold: First, to give a brief exposition of the empirical research method that has been followed in gathering data. Within this section it will be explained why it became necessary to do qualitative research when already there is available documented information on the subject as shown in chapter five. The qualitative research here is

designed to show how much or less some of the ideas purported in chapter five are still prevalent and how the symbolic universe has been adapted to meet modern needs. The qualitative approach that has been chosen and employed here, which we think is appropriate for a study of this nature, is familiar in the field of social sciences. This method is appropriate for our purpose in that it will bring us into close contact with the people whose views we seek to discover. More reasons as to the appropriateness of this method will be given below. What has been said so far will suffice for the purpose of this introduction.

Second, the aim of this chapter is to compare and synthesise the material in chapters four and five with the results of the qualitative research in order finally to get a unified picture. The data, which will be generated through this method, will enable us to integrate the material in chapters four and five based on documents with the results of the qualitative research. This will enable us to get a unified picture of what Africans or Zulu people believe. This will also enable us to compare and demonstrate whether there exist points of convergence and differences between the symbolic universes of 1 John and the Zulu people. Points of correspondence will provide material for the construction of a hermeneutical bridge whilst differences pose a challenge for ongoing discussion in our reading endeavour. Due to the fact that 1 John employs a lot of familial terminology, our empirical research focuses on symbols relating to family and family relationships.

6.2 Why has the qualitative approach been chosen?

In this chapter a brief exposition of the method of investigation and strategies that are employed in this research will be given. We will begin by stating the reasons why we believe the qualitative approach is best suited for the research we are embarking on.

The qualitative approach is idiographic, that is, holistic in nature and it aims at understanding social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life (De Vos 1998:241). A qualitative method also recognises the role played by the subject. Shipman (1988) rightly points out that in social sciences, those being studied also describe, analyse, give meaning to political, social, economical events and build up models of human behaviour in order to interact with others.

In qualitative research the emphasis is usually upon the use of descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words (De Vos 1998:243). This may involve asking the respondents to outline their subjective impressions of the social reality around them. This is important because the details that respondents give provide an account of the context within which people's behaviour takes place. Qualitative researchers believe that this approach is also context dependent because behaviour is best understood within its specific social or organisational context. Whereas quantitative researchers concern themselves with uncovering 'objective facts' about the social world, qualitative researchers focus on the way in which such facts are socially constructed. The latter maintain that behaviour is not static but evolves over time with the unfolding of new events

6.2.1 Population size and delimitation of the study

The study was conducted in Empangeni in the KwaZulu Natal Province. The target population is the Zulu-speaking people of the age of eighteen years and above. According to 1996 census, the total population size of Empangeni was 32 407. The size of the sample will be about 60 persons. The researcher believes that this size is in line with the requirements of qualitative research and will accurately represent the population under survey.

6.2.2 Sampling procedure

A purposive sampling method has been utilised in this study. Brotherson states that a purposive sampling is whereby information-rich participants with both depth and breadth of experience and who share commonalities are identified (in De Vos 1998:317; Paton 1990:335). The researcher made use of their common cultural background and location for homogeneity.

The researcher also made sure in his selection that all ages are represented. This was done because the researcher sought to discover how all these age sectors view reality within which they find themselves. Women and some young people were approached and asked to participate to ensure that their views were represented in each group.

6.2.3 The method of data collection

De Vaus (1990:98) says that traditionally, face-to-face interviews have been seen as the most effective method of securing a good response rate. However,

in this study the focus group interview method was preferred because the anticipated responses were likely to produce richer and more important information. Focus groups all contain two commonalities:

- i) Focus - according to Steward & Shamdasani (1990:10) because the research/data collection session is focused on a limited number of topics or one specific issue (in De Vos 1998:314).
- ii) Group - because the issues or topics are discussed amongst a number of individuals who have some relationship to the topic or issue under discussion.

The focus group interview is appropriate for this study because in our research we seek to discover how symbolic universes impact on the way people view and relate to the reality around them. This method has been used and popularised by Marketing researchers as a way of eliciting information. It is called a focus group interview because it involves a specified number of individuals who focus on a specific theme under investigation, and under the skilful facilitation of a trained moderator. Focus group interview is therefore a purposive discussion of a specific topic or related topics (De Vos 1998:314).

The focus group interview method provides direct contact with the respondents allowing clarification and follow up questions. It also gives the subjects an opportunity to respond to the comments of other participants. An advantage of this kind of data collecting method is that it is administered to all people irrespective of whether they can read or write.

Questions were grouped together under seven sub-headings or six themes. Six groups of ten people each were targeted for participation in the discussion,

with each group focusing on a specific theme under investigation. The researcher made use of facilitators whom he had earlier briefed as to the purpose of the study and in how they need to manage their groups. Recording of the voices was not done, due to the wishes of participants. The facilitators were also responsible for recording the data that was generated in the discussions.

6.2.4 The instrument

A non-scheduled structured interview was conducted. It was structured in that a list of issues to be investigated was made prior to the interview in the form of questionnaire. The list contained precise questions and their alternatives.

It was a non-scheduled interview that is the interviewer was free to formulate other questions as deemed appropriate for the emerging situation. In this method, respondents were not confronted with already formulated definitions or possible answers, but were given freedom to choose their own definitions or describe the situation or express their views or give answers to the questions the way they feel.

6.2.5 A questionnaire

Krueger (1994) says that because questions are the heart of focus group interview, they must be carefully selected and phrased prior to the focus group interview in order to elicit the maximum amount of information (in De Vos 1998: 318) A questionnaire suited to the qualitative research methodology was designed. Here we enlisted the help of Professor De Vos,

the editor of 'Research at Grassroots' to ensure that questions leaning more towards a quantitative type of research were identified and reformulated to make them suitable for qualitative research. We took her recommendation to the effect that there should be a mixture of quantitative and qualitative type of questions. Where quantitative questions have been asked, these were followed immediately by qualitative questions that seek to build upon the answers and explore the theme further.

The questions were administered in Zulu. Participants were not given the whole questionnaire but only the relevant sections of the questionnaire relating to the theme that each group was asked to discuss. The themes were as set out in the questionnaire, (see - Annexure one for the English version or Annexure two for the Zulu version). In our reading of 1 John we noticed that the author used a lot of conventional symbols taken from family language. For that reason our aim was also to examine some of those symbols in the Zulu context to discover whether any measure of congruency as far as meaning of these, exist among them. Identifying congruency or correlation would assist us in our attempt to find a hermeneutical bridge.

The usage of the questionnaire was for the purpose of making sure that the researcher had a slight control over the content so that the data was not bulky and without direction. The researcher wanted to have a slight and not complete control due to the warning by Bogdan & Biklen (1982) and Baldrige (1978) that once the content is controlled too rigidly, so that the participant are not able to tell their stories as they desire, the investigation falls out of the qualitative range of interviewing (in Nxumalo 1986:72).

6.2.6 Permission and ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from the participants and their right to withdraw from participation at any time was assured. Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were also guaranteed to the participants.

6.2.7 Pilot study

For this purpose, a group of ten Zulu-speaking persons were selected in the church of the Holy Cross, Empangeni in order to test the instrument, to assess the feasibility of the research project, the clarity of questions; the practical possibilities to carry it out, the correctness of the sample and the reliability and validity of the instrument. The results of the pilot study were helpful in exposing the weaknesses such as the wording of questions. The results also enabled the researcher to see that some of the questions tended to elicit quantifiable results. The results of the sample were also helpful in that questions that were not clear were corrected or modified. The pilot study also yielded some helpful indications as to the direction and results that could be expected.

6.3 DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS

6.3.1 Introduction

The researcher's initial purpose was to involve about sixty people in the discussion. The number of groups also facilitated a good coverage of each theme under discussion. The fact that seventy- two people participated is

viewed in a positive light. The researcher made use of a purposive sampling method, whereby, according to Brotherson (1994), information-rich participants with both depth and breadth of experience and who share commonalities were identified (in De Vos 1998:317). The researcher is, therefore, confident that the results are a good reflection of the information he sought to discover. The limitation of having this number of groups is that it did not allow all groups to discuss themes that other groups had dealt with.

The researcher went further to ensure that other categories of people such as women and youth were well represented in each group in order to get their views. During the second two-hour session, no new information was forthcoming. This was a sign, as Glaser & Strauss, (1967) states that each theme had been saturated (in De Vos 1998:317). During the second session we also wanted to ensure that no detail had been left without thorough discussion to the satisfaction of the participants.

The basic hypothesis which we want to test in this thesis is: that there exists a measure of congruency between the universes of 1 John and Zulu people, which if properly identified, investigated and exploited, could enhance a smooth construction of a hermeneutical bridge of understanding of the message of 1 John, leading to its heightened relevance and significance within the Zulu symbolic universe.

In order to test our hypothesis, an interdisciplinary approach is pursued in this chapter. The approach is interdisciplinary in that the researcher will be drawing a comparison as well as synthesising the material in chapter four dealing with the symbolic universe of 1 John and the material in chapter five

focusing on the African symbolic universe with special reference to Zulu people with the result of our focus group interviews.

The aim of this exercise is to establish points of congruency as well as incongruency between the two universes under discussion. Both similarities and differences will enable as well as facilitate our quest for building a hermeneutical bridge. We will try as closely as we possibly can to follow the format of the questionnaire. We are aware of the fact that there will be a lot of overlapping and repetition among the answers that will be given. The questions were constructed purposely to ensure that we got as many accurate answers as possible.

Below are listed the results of the focus group discussion. The first group focussed on questions dealing with family, which we discovered was central in both the universes of 1 John and the Zulu people. The subjects constituting the various themes are indicated either by a vowel or consonant. The questions being answered are represented with a vowel or consonant plus a number then a discussion follows in which we compare and synthesise the material as already explained above. In our discussion, the views of scholars who have already done research in this area will be quoted either to support or show differences.

6.4.A FAMILY

6.4.A.1 How would you define a family?

In their definitions of family, members of the focus group came up with a variety of definitions thus showing a diversity of understanding that people have of family. A great number of participants still hold the traditional African view of family as being inclusive of a number of individuals bound together by blood relationships and under the leadership of inkosana (heir) or head of the family, usually a male.

It also became obvious that there has now emerged a group that views the family in terms of a nuclear family consisting of the father, mother and children, a view which the group saw as representing an emerging trend among Zulu people. The exponents of the view argued that modern families especially in town situation are now constituted along these lines. The representatives of this trend however added that this unit (nuclear family) is but one brick that makes the bigger entity-society.

The Traditional view of family as held by the majority of members of the focus group confirms the African view as stated in chapter five. In this chapter it was stated that communalism, which features so strongly in Africa operates on a triad footings of family, the clan (or extended family), and the total community. This view is broad and much more inclusive of a number of blood relations than the latter view. What is obvious with the view representing the emerging trend, is that it still bears traits of the traditional view. Even though family is defined in narrow terms, the fact that it is seen as

a brick used in building the bigger entity – society, shows that in their thinking, it still constitutes an important part of the larger whole – society. However this view is in line with and affirms the one postulated in chapter five where family was defined as one of the stones of the whole building – the whole building being the whole house – society (Bowker 1983:184).

Family, according to our participants ensures that a chain of continuity linking the living and the dead is not broken. This is concretised through a number of ritual enactments whereby the living-dead are brought back and integrated with other members of the family who are in the land of the dead but still connected to the living.

1 John does not present us with the full picture of what is really meant by a family. All we would like to note here is the strong usage in 1 John of common conventions taken from family language, such as: birth, life, father, son, brothers and children. These, in our thinking underline the fact that family was an important social phenomenon especially in the author's mind as he formulated his understanding of the mystery of the incarnation. The abundance of language taken from family is clear evidence that this symbol played a significant role in constituting the author's thinking.

In the situation of confrontation with the deviant viewpoint posed by the secessionists, the author appealed to members of his community to remain united by tapping into the family stock of language. By so doing he succeeded in speaking the language accessible to them thus explaining divine truths using terms they were familiar with. The concern for contextualisation shared by most biblical scholars is that scriptural meanings get all the way across

what might be pictured as a 'hermeneutical bridge' into the real-life contexts of ordinary people (Kraft 1979:144). The author of 1 John succeeded in doing that. The fact that family features so strongly in Zulu culture should be viewed positively in the search for a hermeneutical bridge. We continue below examining the influence families have on individual members.

6.4.A.2 What influence does the family have on the lives of its members?

Regarding the influence that families have on individual members, participants were unanimous in identifying the following: that families create a sense of identity and belonging thereby engendering unity and security. Families inculcate values, norms and behavioural standards expected by each family and society; that they are responsible for traditioning their members i.e. passing on their customs and cultural heritage through teaching.

What the above points emphasise is that it is within the context of family that each individual learns all that is necessary for proper integration into society. This view is confirmed by Isler (1994:7) who says that it is within society and as a result of social processes that the individual becomes a person and attains an identity. According to this view, a family may be likened to a school where individuals learn about life, values, traditions and customs, that is, where they learn about life in general.

It is within families that individuals learn most symbols, which they use to interpret reality. Within families, people learn basic life skills, behaviour, the meaning of love, respect, obedience and charitableness. In fact, family is

where individuals are humanised – *benziwa abantu*. Family also provides the support system necessary for the well-being and survival of every member in this fast changing world. The picture emerging from the result of our empirical research emphasising the importance and centrality of family confirms the view on African family painted in chapter five.

6.4.A.3 What are the functions of a family?

A whole range of functions were attributed to the family, such as bringing up children, feeding, loving, educating them; creating an environment conducive to their health and wholeness; training them to be good citizens; teaching them to respect other members of society and human life and caring for each other. Family is also where each member is protected and nurtured and where they learn the importance of belonging. In order to have well-balanced members of society, it is important that the functions just enumerated are found in each family unit. A family teaches one to be truly human and underscores the importance of belonging.

6.4.A.4 Do you think it is important for people to belong to a family? If yes or no, Why?

It was therefore fascinating to learn that belonging to a family for many people is regarded as very important and still treasured very highly. Most participants saw the family as providing a good support system necessary for the well-being of each individual. Malina et al (1996:24) affirm the importance of belonging to a family when they points out that members

depend upon each other. Belonging to an especially strong family provides the individual with a strong basis upon which to build future relationships.

6.4.A.5 How does one become a member of a family?

On the question of how one becomes a member of the family, participants identified three ways in which one becomes a member, that is, by birth, marriage, and by adoption.

The chain of continuity within a family is dependent on the birth of children who carry forward traditions. Birth was the most important way of becoming a member of the family as shown by Malina et al (1996:21). Birth in Zulu society defines one's identity and status and situates one within a network of family relationships. Members of the family are in most cases referred to as Children of so and so – the head of the family. It also means one is entitled to all privileges and emoluments available within the family. Birth creates a sense of belonging for individual members thereby engendering a sense of security.

This view is in line with 1 John's view of family. Those who are 'born of God' are called 'children of God' (1 Jn 3:1-3; Jn 1:12). However the birth referred to in both 1 John and the Gospel of John is not a literal one that is, physical, but a figurative one that is, spiritual. Being 'born of' resulting in being called 'children of' is a point of congruency between 1 John's understanding of how one becomes a member of a family and the Zulu understanding as borne out by the above statement.

The other way in which one becomes a member of a family is through marriage. In the Zulu community marriage plays a significant social role. It is a rite of passage from one stage to the other. The ritual process connected with this begins from the moment the man sends his spokespersons to the father of his fiancé to negotiate the 'lobolo', the 'bride-price' either in the forms cows or money. The culmination of these is the day of marriage, which is the joining of the bride to the husband's family.

A lot of other rituals connected with the official introduction of her to family ancestors follow. Marriage in the Zulu culture as a public and communal event has to do with the transformation of the status and relationship of the couple both to each other and to the community as a whole. The participation of both families intensifies the ritual significance and formalises the marriage.

The third way in which a person became a member of society was by adoption. Once adopted a person has all the rights belonging to kinship. Malina et al. (1996:21) point out that adoption grants an individual the status of kinship. We find no allusion in 1 John to this way of becoming a member of God. All rights according to 1 John belong rightfully to those who have become members of God's family through birth. Malina et al. (1996:21) show that birth in 1 John or adoption describes the beginning of a whole new way of life as a member of God's family, a reference to what the New Testament calls 'salvation'. Birth as a symbol within both universes could be used meaningfully in the search for a hermeneutical bridge. Both universes can relate to its importance and meaning even though in 1 John it refers to spiritual birth.

6.4.A.6 'Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu' what does it mean for an individual's position in the family or community?

The majority of the members of the focus group pointed out that the Zulu saying 'Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu' emphasises the fact that the wholeness of the individual can only be guaranteed within the network of family and community relationships. Outside this framework or network, the community runs the risk of being infested with imbalanced people. It also stresses the centrality of family or community over the individual.

This also confirms the strong idea of community emphasised by Zulu creation mythology quoted in chapter five in which it is stated that the community emerged as a group along with their cattle and other domestic animals. The myth begins with people in community, not with an individual. It does not also mention a god, even though the mention of *uthlanga* presumes the pre-existence of a god from whom the community broke off. This is a starting point of traditional Zulu belief system.

In Zulu society there is no rigid separation, as too often found in western religion, between the sacred and the secular. All life is sacred. Zulu traditional beliefs (like all African traditional beliefs) are involved with the life of the community, a view supported by Suggit (1997:128). Individualism is whittled down deliberately at the expense of the community. The community comes before the individual and its role is to affirm the individual member. What Suggit (1997:128) says is true of the Zulu community that the sense of community is enhanced by the stress on *ubuntu*, being human, and realising one's true nature as a human being in relation to others. *Ubuntu* also implies a

fundamental respect for human nature as a whole. Masenya (1997:443) states that *ubuntu* is a social ethic, a unifying vision enshrined in the Zulu maxim and philosophy as quoted above. This belief exhibits some similarity with some of the ancient Mediterranean cultures where the group came first as opposed to the western tendency, where the individual takes precedence (see Setiloane 1979:63). This view affirms Masenya (1997:443) highlights the communal or corporeal mentality of Africans as a whole.

The sense of communality in 1 John is underscored by the employment of such words as ‘κοινωνία’ (1 Jn 1:6), ‘being born of God’ (1 Jn 3:9), and ‘children of God’ (1 Jn 3:1). By using these words, the author of 1 John is not merely defining the importance of community but a new community whose identity derives from God. Birth is a major social phenomenon, which does not only serve to identify the individual but also to locate the person within a defined social hierarchy.

The centrality of community and the common understanding exhibited by the various contexts (Ancient Mediterranean and current Zulu context) demonstrates a measure of congruency. It is this measure of congruency which is viewed as constituting the raw material for the construction of a ‘hermeneutical bridge’.

The strong moral basis within each family demonstrated in the lives of children and the rest of the membership of that particular family, is reflective of the kind of family it is. This is what differentiates members of one family from other families. Children during their socialisation assimilate traditions, morality and customs. This is supported by Van der Watt (1999:242), who

says that within an ancient family the transmission of customs that represented, as well as expressed the 'character' of that particular family, formed a cornerstone of the communal system.

Because of belonging to a group one's identity is defined in terms of the group. As Isler (1994:7) points out, it is within society, and as a result of social processes that the individual becomes a person and attains an identity. Van der Watt (1999:243) cites Philo for whom loyalty, respect, and responsibility towards the individual's community and its traditions were naturally part of a person's self-identification. What Philo said is true of Zulu families. All that people become as an adult in most cases is reflective of their family background and the kind of upbringing they received. The strong view among members of the focus group against any action that is contrary to family traditions, values and norms, can be cited strongly in support for group orientation.

Individuals do stand to benefit if they find their rightful place within the family and society. Reference was also made by members of the focus group to so called 'street children' a phenomenon that has emerged and how this is becoming a fountain of crime in most towns and cities. The 'street children' phenomenon is attributed to the fact that 'street children' grow up without the support network of family that ensures their development into whole persons.

The strong sense of belonging encapsulated in the statement 'Umntu ungumuntu ngabantu', exhibits similarities with what the author of 1 John calls 'being in fellowship'. Within the 'network of fellowship' exist unity, harmony, obedience and love, symbols that are important within both

symbolic universes and which are all necessary for creating a climate conducive to wholeness for each person even within the family of God.

ROLES

6.4.B FATHER

The second group dealt with issues relating to roles within families. The discussion was limited to two specific roles relevant for this study, i.e. the role of the father and that of children. The role of the son will be discussed later as we consider that in relation to Jesus Christ.

6.4.B.1 What is the role of the father in a family?

6.4.B.2 What do you think are the duties of the father towards his family and his children?

To avoid repetition, questions 6.4.B.1 and B.2 will be discussed together here because of the close correlation between them. In response to B.1, members of the focus group defined the role of the father in terms of headship, which role in Zulu society places him in a very dominant position. Everything in Zulu society revolves around the man and therefore defined in terms of the head. The home is the 'house of one's father' as emphasised by Masenya (1991:174), the children are 'children of so and so' – meaning the head. If the head is highly respected the same respect is expected as well as given to members of his family. As head and leader of his family he is a symbol of unity. This role is well demonstrated in the position of the Zulu monarch, who is a symbol of unity for the Zulu nation.

In response to question 6.4.B.2 the duties of the father towards his family and his children, the following functions were identified: to provide security, direction and guidance for the family; to provide shelter, material and spiritual needs, to give love and care to his family and to educate his family in co-operation with his wife; to nurture his children and to provide discipline; to act as a mediator, a reconciler for his family. Where all the above are lacking, members of that particular family become a menace to society. As head and leader, he exerts the greatest influence in the socialisation and education of his children.

The father's role was also described as that of being a priest in his household and a role model for all members of his family. The term 'priest' has biblical connotations but the participants used it to describe the role he played at the family altar, offering sacrifices to the ancestors. 'Family altar' will be explained later. The roles will further be explored below while at the same time a comparison will be drawn with 1 John and the general African worldview. Below we explore further some of the functions of the father within the context of his household.

6.4.B.1.1 Education of the children

That this role of being teacher belongs to the figurehead of the family – the father, was strongly emphasised by members of the focus group, who see it as one of the many functions belonging to fatherhood. Here a comparison could be drawn between the educative role of the father in Zulu society and other ancient societies. While the educative role was associated and performed mostly by women in many communities as du Plessis (1998:317) argues, the

position of the father embraced this role and function in a very strong way especially with regard to his son's education. Even though this role was not particularised by participants as relating only to the education of sons, in practice, it is true that sons spend more time with the father, observing and learning from him than daughters do.

Among ancient cultures of the Mediterranean world, the educative role of the father is emphasised (De Vaux 1968:49). But it is a role that in most cases fathers handed to people they had appointed to do this work. Shelton (1988:104) points out that with regard to their sons, their education was the special duty of fathers. As the writer of Ecclesiasticus (30:4) so aptly states, a son learns from his father so as to produce his father's life in his own (Malina et al 1996:60). The teaching role of the father did not cover only the general and professional side of education but he also had to teach how to uphold the honour of the family in public as shown by Malina et al (1996:64). De Vaux (1968:49) further points out that the educational role of the father also explains why the priests, whose mission was to teach are called 'fathers' (Jg 17:10; 18:19). Masenya (1991:175) holds the view that the teaching role belonged to both parents.

Although we cannot be sure how far education within the family involved the ability to read and write, it appears from Deuteronomy 6:9 and 11:20 that every head of a household was expected to write down parts of the law, and other references also imply that literacy was quite widespread, at least from the time of the judges, and not confined to those specially trained as scribes (Josh 8:32; Judg 8:14; 1 Sam 10:25; Isa 8:1; 10:19; 30:8) (Bimson 1988:144).

In 1 John the educative role of God the father is implicitly expressed in terms of the commands, which his children must obey and in terms of Christ's example, which they must emulate (1 Jn 2:6). Another function that was associated with the role of the father, especially as head of the family, is the priesthood of the family, which we will now discuss.

6.4.B.1.2 The protection of children

The protection of the children was also identified by participants as one of the duties belonging to fatherhood among Zulus. When this is compared with duties of fathers in other ancient cultures, there are marked similarities as well as differences. Masenya (1991:174) supports this view and states that the father had the responsibility of securing the safety of his children and providing for them. Van der Watt (2000:333) identifies caring and protecting one's family as the basic function and responsibility of a father in the ancient Mediterranean world. He had to earn money to buy food and other things (Malina et al. 1996:69).

Individual members also had the duty to emulate the father's example of caring and protecting one another, a view which finds support in De Vaux (1974:21). People always wonder why there are so many tribal or clan wars among the Zulus. The answer to this is that each member as part of the collectivity has to be protected so that as Esler (1994:31) points out, affront to the honour of one member was an affront to the honour of all.

Some of the duties of the fatherhood in 1 John are either expressed implicitly or explicitly. For instance, the fact that believers are in 'fellowship with the

Father and the Son' (1 Jn 1:5); that 'they are children of God' (1 Jn 3:1-2) and that they 'live in Christ and Christ in them' (1 Jn 3:24) are implicit references implying some form of protection for the children of God.

The only explicit reference with regard to the children's protection in 1 John is against sin. The author in 1 John (5:18) says 'We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil cannot touch him'. Therefore those who belong to God's spiritual family can be assured that they will be kept safe. Their safety is dependent upon their remaining in fellowship with God and his Son.

6.4.B.1.3 The priesthood of the family

Participants mentioned that the head of the family in Zulu society functions as priest and mediator for his household. The father's role as priest for his family can be observed in other ancient cultures. For instance, Hofius (1986:617) writing in reference to Hebrew fathers stated that they were responsible for seeing that family life was in accordance with the beliefs of their families and children received religious education, a view, which is in line with the one stated above. This view is also confirmed by Ferguson (1987:129) who, with regard to the Greeks asserts that religious responsibilities were primarily the duty of the head of the family. Joubert and Van Henten (1996:123) point out that the fact that only a father could perform the various religious duties required by law towards his children underscored the dominance of man.

In Zulu society, the head of the family performed religious duties at the family altar - *eAltarini lasekhaya*, called '*Ofindo*' (Ndwandwe 1997:30),

which is usually in a hut called '*kwagogo*', that is, the grand mother's hut. If the reason for the ceremony was to seek reconciliation for a member of the family, then he would communicate with the ancestors and offer whatever sacrifice was deemed fit for the occasion. In most cases the goat was preferred for slaughtering. The essence of the sacrifice does not lie in the goat but on the blood that brings about reconciliation.

Apart from the goat that is slaughtered at the family altar, a beast would also be slaughtered. The slaughtered beast is for celebrating the restoration of this member into the family fellowship. The Biblical story that comes close to this is the story of the prodigal son. We are not given any details in it of what went on but the whole act of restoration is sealed with slaughtering of a fattened calf and celebration. In Zulu society, deviation from this norm occurred only in extreme cases i.e. when there was no suitable male to officiate, then a very senior woman would perform religious duties.

Another point relating to the father's role, as stated by members of the focus group was that as leader, he leads in conjunction with his wife. This introduces a new dimension in the role that in Zulu society has traditionally been assigned to the man. This shows that to a degree the role and influence exerted by women in families, is beginning to be recognised and given due respect and the dominance of males coming under scrutiny and critique. Below is a discussion of one objection raised during the course of the focus group discussion

6.4.B.1.4 Dispute regarding the father's role

Some of the members of the focus group disagreed with the view that accords the father all the functions stated above. They claim that the father-image is the source of all the suffering and abuse that women and children experience. Many voiced the feeling that the stereotype kind of father-image in Zulu society causes almost as many problems than it solves. This view shows that within Zulu context, there is clear evidence that a paradigm shift is taking place, or has already taken place, regarding the role of women in society.

This is echoed by Davies (1979:42), who focussing on a global level points out that there are many women on that level who see the 'father image' and all duties assigned to him as a symbol of bondage, of oppression, of male dominance and of limitation within a patriarchal and male centred world-view. What Davies says is worth underlining because it affirms what has been identified in the above paragraph as a paradigm shift. Wren (1989:55) along the same lines locates another problem area as being language and argues that if language powerfully shapes our thinking and behaviour, then the maleness of God – language, where God is traditionally 'He', 'King', 'Shepherd', 'Lord', and 'Father', becomes a crucial issue. It is through language that male dominance over women and children is perpetuated. Congruency on the functions of fathers within both symbolic universes with regard to an earthly and a heavenly family can be observed. This is another area where there exists a strong possibility for building a hermeneutical bridge.

6.4.B.3 Could this role be associated with being the light?

The response to the above question was a resounding ‘Yes’, then the participants went further to state their reasons. Here are some of the reasons: that by virtue of his position he is expected to be exemplary thereby allowing those he leads to emulate him; that as leader he provides direction for his family and his actions can never be misconstrued. Being exemplary means providing a shining example for member of the family thereby becoming an icon for goodness. What is obvious is that light here has been used in a metaphorical sense.

6.4.B.4 What are the implications of seeing the father as light?

If the father is metaphorically seen in terms of light that means that no member of his household will ever walk in darkness because of lack of knowledge. What is clear in both 1 John and the Zulu (African) contexts is that light is a metaphor for sound ethical behaviour. Walking in darkness is a metaphor for bad behaviour. Anything that light stands for will become obvious among members of his household, that is, good behaviour, respect for others, obedience and love. Those who do not follow the example of the father who is light exhibit behaviour that is contrary to the above hence the statement that they walk in darkness.

The symbolic or metaphorical role of father as light could be compared with the picture presented in 1 John where God is referred to as light. But caution should be exercised with regard to the comparison drawn above of the metaphorical meaning of light especially when dealing with metaphors within

a cultural situation to which they did not originally belong because misunderstanding is likely to occur.

The metaphorical understanding that was apparent to the original readers of 1 John may no longer be apparent in the Zulu context. To understand a metaphor, we need to know what in that particular culture are the most common associations. Other cultures as Wren (1989:88) rightly points out might have different associations. Therefore, one should be careful not to assume that the metaphorical meaning deriving from the original text is transferable without its subtleties being lost.

Taking into cognisance what has just been stated above, the metaphor of light as shown with reference to father does operate meaningfully within the sphere of family. Participants in the focus group did not find it difficult to associate the light metaphor with the father's role. They asserted that the father's position requires of him to exemplify light. He is light in the sense that he provides his family with an exemplary life, which they need to emulate. By referring to an exemplary life, there is already an allusion to morality. Being the light means that moral uprightness is expected of him, an example that should be seen in the lives of members of his family.

In 1 John the symbol of light, which applied metaphorically to God is also employed in relation to those who are born of Him. They are expected to walk in the light. Since God is all goodness and in him there is nothing ugly and no shadow of darkness (1 Jn 1:6), those who belong to his family, who believe in the name of his Son, should walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7). What this means is that moral transformation is the expected consequence of being born of God,

resulting in obedience and love (1 Jn 3:9; 4:7; 5:18). Since 1 John makes reference to God as father as well as light, we think this constitutes another area of convergence, which could be explored to bring about a better understanding of God.

What is the purpose of using the metaphor 'light' Φῶς for God? Doveton (1995:27) points out that metaphors are agents of integration or construction, but also agents of disintegration. Authors sometimes use metaphors either to undermine and destroy the existing reality or symbolic universe or to construct a new reality, a new way of being in the world. If we take the statement as a whole i.e. that 'God is light and in him there is no darkness at all' (1:5), we will notice that the author is using a double-edged sword.

Metaphors serve to construct a new manner in which believers should see themselves. The author is concerned here with constructing a new symbolic universe for believers. At the same time the emphasis he places on the second part of the statement, is designed to smash what we assume to have been the claims of the secessionist group. Those who are of God, who have fellowship with him, never walk in darkness. Being in fellowship with God does not only create a new reality for them but also means that ethically believers become impeachable.

6.4.C - CHILDREN

6.4.C.1 What role do children play within a family?

Regarding the role that should be played by children, participants were in agreement that they are to assist their parents; that they bring happiness to the home; that they are a binding force between parents.

6.4.C.2 What, if any, are their obligations as children?

As to the obligations or duties of children, the members of the focus group stated that children have to obey, respect, listen and do what their parents tell them to do. An opinion was expressed to the effect that children today do not want to be taught. Members felt that it needed to be emphasised that as children they have to be teachable and must report to their parents what they are doing, that wherever they are they represent what their family values and norms.

1 John states in no uncertain terms that believers are children of God. By saying that they are children of God, the author activates something in the minds of listeners who probably share the same knowledge with him. The author employs this common social convention to express such a profound spiritual truth that their birth is different from physical birth or earthly children. Children of God point to their belonging to a heavenly or spiritual family. As children of God, they have the duty to uphold their heavenly Father's good name in public (Malina et al 1996:67).

6.4.C.3 What do you think would be expected of children or any other member of the family regarding family norms and values?

There was also unanimity among members of the focus regarding the fact that children and all members of the family are expected to know family norms and values, keep or comply, respect them and display them in the community.

1 John exhibits a similar viewpoint. The children of God love one another, they walk in the light and they keep God's commandments. The author points out that any action contrary to these norms is a clear demonstration that the offending party is not of God's family but the devil's. It must again be pointed out that this is an area where congruency is obvious and where we believe there exists a possibility of erecting a hermeneutical bridge.

6.4.C.4 Within a family, is anyone allowed freedom to differ? If Yes or No Why?

With regard to the question of freedom to differ with family norms and values, opinions differed very widely. There were those among the group who cherished the traditional view that no one is allowed to differ. Others felt that we now live in a democratic situation, and being a member of a family should not deprive one of his or her individuality. Therefore they felt that one is free to differ. Still other members of the group stated that being a member of a family does not take away your freedom of choice especially when your conscience is against what the family stands for, especially when it comes to

partaking in sacrifices in honour of the ancestors. But on the whole setting yourself against family norms and values is still viewed seriously

This answer confirms the African viewpoint, which sees any person who sets himself or herself against what the family stands for as a threat. Setting yourself against the family could lead to being ostracised. Members of the Johannine community were facing a similar situation. Some of their members had broken away and had become a serious threat to the well being of the community. By calling them 'Antichrist', the author was employing one of the common mechanism for dealing with a threatening viewpoint, that is, demonise them and their view.

6.4.C.4.1 Children and their responsibilities towards parents

In almost all the questions above relating to children, there is unanimity about the society's expectations of them. They are expected to reciprocate the love, care and honour, which is thrust upon them by virtue of being born into those families. They are to honour and obey their parents because parents in most cases were regarded as God's agents who had the responsibility to care for their children (Van der Watt 1999:141).

The children's obligation to honour and obey their parents could be equated to performing a religious duty. Van der Watt (1999:141) emphasises this fact by pointing out that by showing honour to them, and vice versa, honour was paid to God. Children, therefore, by virtue of being born into a family and as extensions of their parents (Malina et al. 1996:67) are cast into stereotypical moulds, that is, their responses and behavioural patterns are expected to be in

line with those of the rest of the family. No action which is contrary to group norms could be contemplated by children.

This confirms the African view postulated in chapter five where complete obedience and emulation of the father's example was expected of them, a view, which is supported also by Malina (1981:40). Any act of disobedience towards one's parents was construed as tantamount to disobedience to the ancestors and ultimately to God.

Similarities are exhibited by this view when compared with that in 1 John, where the author states in unambiguous terms that being born into the family of God determined one's new identity. Integral to the teaching about the new birth into the family of God is the notion that a radical discontinuity with the past and a fundamental internal change is required if one is to enter the family or kingdom of God (Kynes 1992:575). 1 John 2:3 states that those who know him (born of him or belong to his family), show their belonging by keeping his commandments. The commandments in both contexts stand for that which the head of the family requires. Children are to mirror the good image of the family. They were expected to mirror these through sound morals and good behaviour. Children should not behave in a manner that disgraces the family.

In 1 John the author has so skilfully manipulated conventional symbols belonging to the family to define for his group the new relationship existing between them and God. By metaphorically applying these symbols he is already pointing to the new reality, which has happened and is described in terms of 'being born of God'. They are children of God by virtue of being born of God. Through the birth metaphor, the author describes for his

Christian community a new reality, a new way of being in the world for members of his universe (Doveton 1995:26-27). There is a lot of common ground between the Zulu understanding of the role of children and the view held in 1 John. This accounts sufficiently for congruency and correlation between the two worlds with regard to this particular symbol, something that would enhance the building of a hermeneutical bridge. However, caution and criticalness has to be strictly exercised as one engages in this construction venture.

MAINTENANCE OF SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE

6.4.D - DEALING WITH DEVIANTS

6.4.D.1 How do families deal with those who are disloyal and do not act within the set boundaries?

There are various ways in which families deal with their disloyal members. One of the ways is to call disloyal members to order and on admission of guilt, they are fined. If an offence is extremely heinous, initially they are called to a council of elders and given advice. In some cases, corporal punishment would be administered and if this and repeated advice fails, then they are expelled as members of the family.

Family set boundaries so that members know the parameters within which they may act. These boundaries protect the individual and the community from any repercussions due to the individual's moving beyond set boundaries,

which is equal to transgressing. Disloyalty was viewed in a very serious light; therefore members had to keep within set parameters.

Keeping within set boundaries in the context of 1 John would refer to walking in the light, keeping God's commandments, believing in the Son of God and loving one another. Any believer who breaks any of these cannot remain in the fellowship.

6.4.D.2 What word would you use to describe a 'disgusting action'?

The reason for asking this question is because the Zulu word 'isono' used for 'sin' is foreign hence the importance of finding the appropriate Zulu word.

The words that people sometime use to describe an action that has been committed tell one how serious that particular action is viewed by society. Participants used the following words to describe any action that is disgusting or deviates from the norm: 'ichilo, ihlazo, and amanyala'. The word 'isono' which is commonly used in the Zulu Bible or Zulu Christian literature to translate sin is foreign and difficult for Zulu people to understand. If sin - 'isono' were to be described by the Zulu word 'amanyala' it is possible that the seriousness of the act committed would be conveyed to traditional Zulu people. Reading in the Zulu context requires that there should be a re-examination and re-interpretation of such symbols.

6.4.D.3 What would be required of a member who wants to be restored into fellowship?

For any person who had been expelled from family, members of the focus group expressed the view that he or she would be required first, to confess the grievous act committed. This act of confession is followed by the slaughtering of a goat or beast and the notification as well as pleading with the ancestors to pardon as well as accept and re-admit the particular member who had been cut of from the family fellowship. The slaughtering and the spilling of blood is an important aspect of the admission or cleansing ceremony. Some families believe that without slaughtering and blood, there can be no real forgiveness and restoration. This view affirms the one already stated in chapter five above.

Participants also mentioned that some families especially those with a strong Christian orientation believe that there is no need to slaughter any animal once a confession of sin has been made, that the blood of Jesus is sufficient to cleanse the sinner and bring him or her into fellowship. This is also the view purported in 1 John even though the process there is not described, but blood is mentioned, which is an allusion to the centrality of blood in reconciliation. Whereas the mention of blood in 1 John was designed to activate the sacrificial ceremonies related to reconciliation, by pointing to the fact that it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses a sinner from sin, the author gives new meaning to this act of reconciliation. Even though there is a close correlation between the process of reconciliation mentioned in both 1 John and the Zulu contexts, it must be pointed out that the process in 1 John refers to a spiritual than human level.

6.4.D.4 Why would the confession of sin/deed be required of him or her?

Confession of sin is required to demonstrate that the individual is aware of the offence that he or she committed and to demonstrate that the offender is truly sorry for his/her offence. The whole idea of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration, requires this process, without which forgiveness and restoration is dubious. In Zulu society, no reconciliation can take place unless there is first an admission of guilt by the offending party. Then the whole process of mediating reconciliation would begin. 1 John states this fact in no uncertain terms. Sin must be confessed if there is to be forgiveness and reconciliation (1 Jn 1:8).

6.4.D.5 What is the value of confession?

Confession is a demonstration that the repenting party is truly sorry for his/her offence. As far as the process described above from D.1. up till now, there is obviously common ground between 1 John's understanding of sin and reconciliation and the Zulu understanding demonstrated by participants, as well as the manner in which sin is dealt with. The link in 1 John of the idea of confession with cleansing with blood is an allusion to the important sacrificial understanding of blood, which constitutes most ancient cultures, including the Hebrew culture as shown in the Old (Lev 16) and New Testament understanding of how sin was dealt with. Sin in society pollutes and destroys harmony. Below we want to explore the problem of sin a bit further.

6.4.D.5.1 The problem of sin

Here we want to explore in a broader sense the whole idea of sin and confession. As participants pointed out above, sin is something that disrupts relationships and sometimes leads to misfortunes and arouses the anger of the ancestors, if not dealt with. Confession is viewed as the remedy. Since sin is social in character, it therefore makes it expedient that reconciliation and the overcoming of sin in its social dimension be aimed at, at family and society levels.

In Zulu society where community is central, sin is more than individual disobedience or disorientation, it has a social character. Flikke (1994:99) describes sin as an attitude or act, which creates social heat within a particular social entity and destroys good relationships and causes disharmony between persons and society. Sin is viewed within the symbolic framework of Zulu people as any action that violates the traditions, values and norms of the family or community. Anything that tampers with these is viewed in a very serious and negative light because it causes pollution through the whole community and could release the negative reaction of the ancestors. Nxumalo (1979:29) points out that sin and its confession among Zulu people is still seen in terms of symbols of traditional religion. What this means is that traditional ways are followed when dealing with sin and its consequences.

1 John deals at great length with the problem of sin (see 1 Jn 1:7-10; 2:1, 2, 12; 3:4-9; 4:10; 5:16-18). In the context of 1 John, it would seem that forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Christ is possible only within the fellowship. Believers as children of God live in fellowship with God, his

Son and one another and as a result appropriate behaviour is a prerequisite for communion with God (Hutaff 1994:413), hence the indispensability of Jesus' blood.

The author reaches the conclusion that those who are born of God do not continue sinning because they are 'born of God' (1 Jn 3:9). Their identity acts as a restraint. They are obedient to his commands and live in him and he in them. And they know that he lives in them by the Holy Spirit he has given to them (1 Jn 3:24). If they fall into sin, they need to confess their sin so that they may be restored into fellowship with God and with one another. They are also promised the help of an advocate who is with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the expiation for their sins and those of the whole world (1 Jn 2:1-2).

Confession as Flikke (1994:98) emphasises is an admission of guilt and has a marked social integrative character as it revolves around relationships within the group. The ultimate goal of confession is the achievement of reconciliation, which denotes the acceptance of a person into the group (Malina et al. 1996:22). Forgiveness follows the admission of guilt and the expressed desire to be restored, which is comparable to the Christian concept of salvation. Salvation is seen in terms of satisfaction of social needs and demands, which is procured through a variety of rituals (Van der Watt 1999:145).

6.4.D.6 If an offence was of a very serious nature, what would be required of the offending party?

If the offence is very great, the offendant is required to approach the family elders, intimate his/her desire to be restored and the fact that s/he is aware of the seriousness of the offence and express his/her willingness to do reparation for the offence. It is in cases such as this that slaughtering is required because among some of the participants it is still believed that the blood of a goat or beast is the only way to bring true reconciliation between the living and the living dead.

Only the blood of a goat would avail for communication with the ancestors. Before it is slaughtered, it would be brought into the hut –*kwagogo*, where the family altar –I *Althare lasekhaya* was. The family priest would speak to the ancestors and notify them of what was happening and ask them to receive the offering – pointing to the goat, and then the goat would be slaughtered. The slaughtering of the beast is in order to provide meat for celebration. The biblical story that closely correlates with the Zulu one is the story of the prodigal son. In 1 John, the implication is that the lamb for slaughtering is the Son of God.

6.4.D.7 & 7.1 What is the significance of the blood of a slaughtered animal in the restoration and mending of broken relationships?

Regarding the significance of blood, it is believed that blood is the means through which forgiveness and cleansing is asked from the ancestors. Ancestors only understand the language of the living when that is enacted in blood. Views were diversified on this point. Apart from the view already stated above, others believed that only through Christ's blood can sins be truly forgiven and reconciliation achieved. Blood is central to many ancient cultures and connected with the whole phenomenon of life. Laubach (1992:220) says that it is the substance and seat of life. In both the Old and New Testaments there are numerous references to blood bearing almost the same meaning and significance as in other cultures.

Slaughtering and blood spilling are a central phenomenon and mark all the important phases of life. Tlhagale (1995:55) contends that blood is offered to the ancestors because it symbolises life, it is the most precious gift and symbolises in its fullest extent the life of the individual. According to Rees (1986:47) blood represents a place where life and death meet, and because it marks the frontier between life and death, it has often been a pathway of communication between people, the ancestors and God.

Congruency in the understanding of blood is demonstrated by the fact that in both 1 John and the Zulu context, communication, reconciliation and fellowship or community is effected through blood. People slaughter in order to communicate and to make reconciliation a reality within their world. In 1

John, blood makes living within a fellowship a possibility (1 Jn 1:7). Congruency here accounts for positiveness in our search for relevant symbols but it does not make our search any easier. It only provides possible clues towards the solution.

6.4.D.8 How do you understand salvation in your society?

Salvation among Zulus has to do with the well being of society. If there are threatening forces, the harnessing of them means the achievement of salvation. Briefly salvation among Zulus is to a large extent conceived to be this worldly. It is conceived in terms of realised eschatology, it has to do with solution to problems that the community experiences now, such as fear and anxiety.

6.4.D.8.1 Salvation in traditional Zulu society

In this section our intention is to explore further the whole idea of salvation and to compare it with the Biblical understanding of salvation especially in 1 John. Salvation among Zulus as already stated above is to a large extent conceived to be this worldly. It is conceived in terms of realised eschatology, which in the Johannine writings is expressed in terms of eternal life. Eternal life is possible to all believers here and now. As Warnecke (1994:132) rightly emphasises, salvation has to do with the concrete existence of individuals within a family, a clan, or a group of peoples. In 1 John it has to do also with the here and now. A murderer as the author states has no eternal life abiding in him (1 Jn 3:15), a reference to the here and now. There exists, we believe sufficient congruency in this particular area.

Salvation in Zulu culture means being free from anxiety and fear of threatening spiritual forces. It also means being reconciled and accepted by family members and living in a state of tranquillity with all members of society. This is never an individual affair but it includes the family and the community. 1 John locates the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus within the fellowship (1 Jn 1:7). Warnecke (1994:130) is right in pointing out that salvation is not a static or intellectual thing in people's minds but a process whereby a healing and regaining of power is involved. In concrete terms, salvation has to do with overcoming existential problems and bringing wholeness to the individual and community. Warnecke (1994:131) holds that salvation has to do with weakening and strengthening of life within the set up of a group.

Mbiti (1974:112) concurs with this view when he says that salvation in African Religion has to do with the physical and the immediate danger and fear (of the individual and more often of the community), ... Salvation therefore, is not an abstraction: it is concrete (Warnecke 1994:131).

God as attested in the scriptures followed the methods and ways of this world. He provided a lamb (Jn 1:29,36) for a sacrifice. The only difference being that the lamb for the sacrifice was his own dear Son (1 Jn 1:7; 2:2). If one were to follow the argumentation of the author of the letter to the Hebrews, it could be argued that by offering his Son, God rendered all sacrifices obsolete; that the only sacrifice acceptable to God is that of his only dear Son Jesus Christ. If Jesus is to constitute a viable hermeneutical bridge in this area, it must be in relation to a conventional symbol that meaningfully communicates his immensity, relevancy and indispensability.

6.4.E- AMADLOZI/ABAPHANSI/ABAXHUMANISI

6.4.E.1 Who are the ancestors?

Ancestors are dead members (asebelele i.e. those who have fallen asleep) of the family who, when there are problems in the family, are consulted. Consultation is done through slaughtering in order to appease them especially when it is believed that they are responsible for what is happening.

6.4.E.2 What was/is their role?

Their role is to be intermediaries/mediators between the living and God. They take messages to God because they are believed to be near Him. They protect the people from sickness and danger and bring luck to members of the family.

6.4.E.3 Some people call the ancestors gods -‘onkulunkulu bethu’: what do you think of this view?

Regarding the above view, participants were unanimous in their disagreement with it. To some participants, ancestors were just mediators and nothing more. Some pointed out that those who believe in the role played by ancestors do treat them as gods; they are much more feared by the living than God is. Moreover the living hardly talk about god but do talk about their ancestors.

6.4.E.4 What are they to you?

Responses to the above question were very diverse. Some because of their Christian standpoint believed that ancestors are and remain grandparents, or parents that passed away and they are not mediators because Jesus is mediator. They are deceased grandparents whom they respect and love but who are waiting judgement. Others held the view that they are members of the family who once lived but who since their passing away have nothing to do with their lives. Still others felt that these are deceased members of the family who now and again are remembered, but by remembering they do not mean that they are worshipped.

6.4.E.5 Are there special occasions when they get involved with the living or do they do that on a continuous basis?

Asked whether ancestors get involved with the living on special occasions or on a continuous basis, opposite views were expressed. Some members of the group held that ancestors are involved with the living all the time. Others felt that they only get involved on special occasions, i.e. in cases of prolonged sickness. Yet others were adamant that once people die they could never have any influence over the living.

6.4.E.6 Do ancestors play a mediatory role for the living?

Asked why people ascribe a mediatory role to ancestors, participants felt that it is because of their closeness to God/UMvelinqangi that they are believed to perform this role. It was also stated that God being the Supreme Being has an

aura of sacredness that attaches to him, requiring that he only be approached through mediators. Only the ancestors who are close to him can perform this mediatory role.

Ancestors are seen as a symbol representing continuity between this life and the life beyond the grave. They are also respected as legitimators of family traditions, values and norms. However, when we relate this to the role of Christ, we observed a diversity of views among participants. Some saw some correlation between the role performed by Christ and that of the ancestors. Others thought in different terms. We will deal with that in the discussion below.

Staples (1981) claims that there is much evidence to indicate that traditionally ancestors were not regarded as intermediaries between humans and deity, that Christianity has caused much reinterpretation. He further states that ancestors have since been elevated to the status of intermediaries to secure and convey the benefactions promised by the Bible. Tlhagale (1995:171) contends that faith in God as the all powerful father, as the all merciful mother, as the creator and foundation of all being, has dethroned the ancestors from the human-made pedestal...their god-like status has been reduced to the status of ordinary human beings. This means that ancestors are increasingly ceasing to be the cornerstone of the African religious consciousness though they remain an essential part of it.

Whether the diversity of opinions mentioned above could be attributed to the influence of Christianity or not, is not an issue at stake in this discussion.

What we want to recognise here is the existence of a diversity of opinions among Zulus regarding the symbol that closely represents Christ.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) living human being, who have concrete social locations and concrete social interests are responsible for legitimating institutions and symbolic universes. Therefore, the dynamics of the symbolic universe have the ability to integrate even the most precarious things like death. In order to understand why Zulu people see Christ in terms of an ancestor, we need to examine their understanding of death.

Within the traditional Zulu world-view, illness and death are never explained in terms of natural causes but in terms of negative forces, like witchcraft, in the community (Ukpong 1995:9). Death is feared as an incomprehensible force of destruction, which strikes at the very foundations of the family and, therefore, is viewed as a serious threat to the well being of the community. This eventuates at times in their going to diviners to find out what caused that person's death. Zulu people, in their social location faced with the threat and precariousness of death, had to find ways of making sense of, and providing solutions to the problem of death.

The result was that since their society was based on the unity of the family, they had to find ways of explaining the reason of death. Therefore death began to be seen as 'moving on' or 'status transformation'. Therefore sorrow and the resultant difficulties, which accompany death, especially the death of the head or of any member of the family were ameliorated to a degree in the belief that the deceased continues to form part of the family, but as a spiritual being. By claiming that the living dead are continually present and by

ascribing functions to the ancestors such as are mentioned above, they managed to integrate the threatening reality of death into their universe.

Processes of status transformation are always characterised by a cluster of ritual symbols. These symbols express deep truth, which cannot really be expressed easily in words. These ritual symbols express something of a mystery in human experience. As symbols they may be implicit or explicit: they may be enacted explicitly through the actions of the family priest. The ritualisation of death, is enacted through a variety of rituals functions in terms of status transformation (van Eck 1995:9) and serves a legitimation function for the living.

Through rituals and sacrifices, the living attempt to reach out and cross the demarcatory lines into the unseen world where God and the ancestors live, where human words cannot reach far enough. Such an attempt to have an audience with the living dead requires concretisation of the act through rituals. There are a variety of rituals for different events and occasions. Rituals stabilise and bring equilibrium in coping with life's challenges and critical stages (Warnecke 1994:77; see also, Sundermeier 1998:53). They express and implement the fundamental values of a community.

Rituals connected with death are performed where the power of death has become evident in the death of someone close. Their performance is geared to overcoming the threat and the crisis triggered by death (Warnecke 1994:77). These are composed of an elaborate series of manipulative rituals designed to harness and extract the good favours from the ancestors as well as to ward off the machinations of the evils spirits form part of the ritual system.

6.4.E.6.1 Christian participation in ritual sacrifices

Members of the focus group were divided on the question of participation and observance of some of the traditional rituals; especially those connected with the dead. Even though all participants were Christians, their views were divided among those who were for participation and those who were not. Those who did not favour participation based their objection on the fact that they are Christians and therefore have discarded some of the old practices.

The text of 1 John seems to exhibit a similar attitude as those who advocate non-participation. The attitude is not with reference to rituals pertaining to the ancestors, but participation in anything that does not fall within the scope of God's family. Believers as children God have a code of conduct. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit determine this code of conduct. Because believers participate in the fellowship, they walk as Christ walked (1 Jn 2:6).

The question that some members raised was: Is participation in rituals something that is forced upon each member? The answer provided was that in the Zulu society, participation in rituals and sacrifices is forced. Non-participation is not something the individual decides on his/her own and then implements. Permission has to be sought through negotiation with the head, who will notify the rest of the family if permission is granted. Here is a true story that exemplifies this:

A friend who a number of years earlier worked in the Melmoth district in KwaZulu Natal related this event in support of the view that no one is forced to participate. He says that in one homestead, two women got converted to

Christianity. They told their father-in-law who was head of the family. He in turn told his sons (whose wives these were) that they were asking permission to be allowed not to participate in sacrifices made for the ancestors. The sons even though they were reluctant eventually agreed. When they came back for the Easter holidays a big feast was held. This friend of mine was invited and he attended.

The aim of the feast was first to inform the ancestors that the two women had become Christians and that when the ancestors see them around the home without their traditional attire, they should not be perturbed. The ancestors were also informed that from now on these two would not be participating in any sacrifices. Officially these two were released and whenever there was ritual slaughtering, something different would be provided for them. Had they tried to force matters, they would not have been granted permission. What we are saying here is that permission is given if the person concerned goes through the right channels asking for this freedom to be different. On the whole setting yourself against family norms and values is still viewed seriously.

Participation in rituals is important within the symbolic universe of Zulu people in that it provides psychological reinforcement for members of that particular family in the face of the crisis caused by the death of a family member. Through the process of ritualisation the precariousness of death is removed. As Mbiti (1971:7) states, death is now seen as moving on to a higher and better state and entry into the community of the departed, whose world leans towards the world of God. It is therefore believed that the dead

are near the Creator God and function as messengers and mediators between God and the living.

What is obvious is that not only had the integration and legitimation of death been achieved, the vacuum which death created was explained in a meaningful way. Death is the process by which the status of the living dead is transformed and explained so that they are never seen as dead but having moved and remained connected with the living as spiritual beings. That the dead continue to be among their people provides a psychological reinforcement at the time of such heightened anxiety.

There is a sense in which the idea of death as ‘moving on’ or ‘status transformation’ could be likened to the biblical notion of eternal life. Those who have eternal life have already passed from death to life (1 Jn 3:14). What this really implies is that they continue to live on spiritually even after physical death. The only difference is that they do not live among the living but in the place God designed for them. The receiving of eternal life is on condition that they love and do all that love requires of them. In seeking to find areas of convergence, an analogy could be drawn between eternal life and idea of ‘moving on’. Eternal life belongs to the realm of God as the living dead are thought to be in a realm leaning against that of God.

Cosmologically, there exist for Zulu people three spheres representing their perception of reality. First, the spiritual (unseen) which can be divided into two spheres, that of God and that of the ancestors. The ancestors are not with God but in their own spiritual world near God. Second, the physical (seen) is inhabited by human being and a host of other spiritual forces. These realms

are viewed as being closely integrated (Van der Watt 1999:144) with a line demarcating each within the whole reality. That the spiritual, in terms of influence is given priority, is evident in the symbolic roles they attribute to ancestors. This cosmology could be represented as follows:

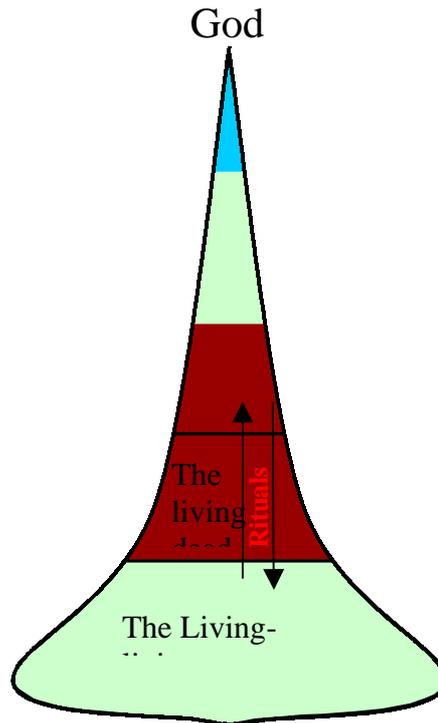


Diagram 2

The shape of the diagram does not in any way suggest that Zulu cosmology is shaped like that except to try to represent the perceived aloofness of God. The world of the living is symbolised by the green colour at both ends. It is also a world inhabited by a host of spiritual forces that made the world of the living a precarious one. The brownish colour attempts to represent the world of the dead or 'living dead', which is the underworld. All reality exist in the sphere of God and because the 'living dead' are in the spiritual world, even though

perceived as being under the world, they are said to be near uMvelinqangi (God).

It was stated above that there exists a demarcation line between each world. For the living to cross into the spiritual sphere, ritual sacrifices are needed. Likewise when the dead (who are seen as messengers of God) need to visit their living (either to bless or punish) the living have to sacrifice on their behalf. Blood therefore plays an important place in this whole process.

Mbiti's (1971:146) comment regarding 1 John is that God has been revealed there in such an absolute and intense reality, that our physical senses have made material contact with the invisible and eternal God. As a result our communion with God is so rich that the next life is conceived as a continuation of the present, with Jesus being the way to that fellowship (1 Jn 1:3). Continuation of life after death is central in both 1 John and Zulu understanding of life. This we believe is another area where thorough research needs to be conducted. Concepts in 1 John such as Fellowship, being born of God and eternal life, which have already been mentioned above, allude to continuity of life so this whole idea of the continuation of life is not foreign to both worlds.

6.4.E.7 What role do ancestors play in the forgiveness and restoration of one who had sinned?

Regarding the role ancestors play in the forgiveness and restoration of a member, it is believed that since they never cease to be part of the family, they know when a member is cut off from the family because he or she has

disobeyed family norms and values. Therefore when reparation is being made, they have to accept whatever sacrifice is made on behalf of the repenting party.

6.4.E.8 What kind of behaviour would be expected of those who are to become ancestors?

Some participants expressed the view that behaviour was very important for those who are to be ancestors. The belief still persists that if behaviour was not good while they were alive, they will make bad ancestors. However a very small number believed that any member could be an ancestor, that behaviour was not important at all. Both views represent and confirm the two positions that we dealt with in chapter five.

6.4.E.9 What is the place or role that the following play in your culture and to you as an individual: Mediums, Diviners (Izangoma) and Traditional doctors (Izinyanga)?

If the world of the Zulu people is to be penetrated and influenced in one way or another, the influential role played by the following in society needs to be understood. In the previous chapter we dealt at length with these. Our aim here is to ascertain how much of those beliefs are still prevalent today or whether a shift has occurred in certain aspects of these beliefs.

Mediums according to members of the focus group are diviners who specialise in contacting and communicating with the spirits. Izangoma also communicate with the ancestral spirits. Some use bones, which they read and

then interpret what the message is. Others possess a gift of seeing what is in the person's mind. Some of their duties include the following: to predict future events, to diagnose illness in his or her clients and prescribe methods to heal them, to warn clients/community about problems to come, to establish cause of misfortunes, to mediate between community members and their ancestors, to give counsel to the chief of the area, to intercede for the community to the ancestors. In matters affecting the tribe, they act as priests for the tribe. They officiate at official ceremonies and give direction as to how sacrifices are to be offered.

The traditional universe of Zulus is populated by a host of spiritual forces, which if not harnessed can be a source of a variety of disastrous events. The reality of this was not perceived in abstract but concrete terms. It is held that ancestors concretise their reality and presence among the living in a variety of ways. Barrenness, sickness and other natural phenomenon such as drought are seen as ways the ancestors demonstrate and concretise their feelings of anger and dissatisfaction towards the living. The implication of this as Van der Watt (1999:144) points out is that the activities of the ancestral spirits need to be regulated in a concrete way, a role performed by diviners (Izangoma). According to Mulemfo (1995:51-67), Crafford (1996:5-6), Mugambi (1989:57), one basic function of diviners is to regulate the interrelation between the spiritual and physical dimensions of reality (in Van der Watt 1999:144).

Izinyanga were defined as people who have the gift of knowing herbs and who also use these herbs to cure a variety of diseases. Traditional doctors also protect people against spiritual forces. Some have the ability to manipulate

natural forces like thunder. Because of their knowledge of traditional medicine, Izinyanga occupy a very important place in Zulu society, hence the importance of knowing about them and the influential position they hold in society. What Van der Watt states above is another reason why there is a need to know the role they play in Zulu society.

The belief in the existence of spirits finds a correlation with the view held in 1 John where the author exhorts his listeners not to believe every spirit but to test them to see whether they are of God or not (1 Jn 4:1). But the criterion by which this is done differs from the role played by Mediums, Izangoma and Izinyanga. In 1 John the test is whether they acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 Jn 4:2). There is another dimension in which the Spirit is mentioned. That the Spirit here is of God is distinguished by the fact that he is written in capital letter 'S'. God now stays with, and in the believer by means of the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 3:24).

How the reality of the Spirit becomes concretised in the world of reality of Zulu people becomes a challenge. We will attempt a solution to this problem when we deal with the Holy Spirit later on in the discussion. For now it suffice to voice our concurrence with Van der Watt (1999:150) who says that correspondence between the two symbolic narratives is found in the spiritual involvement in the lives of people while dissonance resides in the difference in the nature of the 'Spirit' and 'spirits'.

6.4.F GOD

6.4.F.1 Who is God to you?

Participants were asked who God is to each one of them. Opinions were somewhat united on the fact that God is creator of heaven and earth, the Almighty, the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent, the Protector and the Provider. God is also our Father and is love.

The attributes given to God by the present generation in the foregoing sentence were very important, for they confirm the traditional view as well as the extent to which the traditional Zulu understanding of God as dealt with in chapter five has been influenced by the Christian understanding of God.

The view that God is creator of everything has not changed. He is still called uMdali (creator), the one who broke off nations from uthlanga (Callaway 1868:2). The fact that He created nations suggests that he himself was not created. The Zulu name of God 'UMvelinqangi' brings this idea out very clearly that He appeared (wavela). Vilakazi (1964:87) has put it very eloquently when he says that God was not created but he emerged full-blown from the reeds. The Old Testament understanding of the One who has always been there is evident here. That God is uthlanga from which men broke off (Callaway 1868:7) also alludes to the Imago Dei in humanity that the first chapter of Genesis (1:27) refers to.

What this means is that humanity can only be defined in relation to uthlanga from which they originated or broke off. Humanity has no identity of its own.

Just as the Son has no identity of his own except that of his Father (1 Jn 2:23-25), so humanity shares an especial bond with the Father defined in terms of fellowship with. Sin is the only cancer that destroys this special bond of fellowship with God.

The understanding of God as creator even today bears testimony to the effect that the Zulu symbolic universe in spite of influences from other universes has succeeded in maintaining this important understanding, which has an enormous influence on the reality of the universe of Zulu people as a whole.

6.4.F.2 God's qualities, which are associated with a conventional symbol represented by the Father's role, in your cultural context.

Some of the qualities in God, which can be associated with the symbol father, are those related to the father's role in the family. That he is head of all the families of nations and as the father is head of his household. God like a human father also reprimands, admonishes, protects, supports, leads, loves and cares for his people. These functions and qualities related to God find correlation with those of human fathers mentioned above, something, which may enhance a better understanding in the Zulu context.

The view expressed by other authors who have done research in this area, of a God who was defined vaguely and who had to be approached through mediators, is challenged here. The understanding expressed by participants in this research that God is protector and sustainer of humanity poses a challenge to the view of a god who was vaguely understood. Obviously God is no

longer seen by some Zulu people as uninvolved. He is directly involved in their day-to-day living. This we believe should be seen as an area of convergence, which needs to be fully, and properly developed in order to facilitate a smooth transfer from the Zulu Symbolic universe to the Christian. Viewing God as Creator, Protector and Sustainer demands of humanity a reciprocal response expressed in terms of worship, love, respect, obedience and continuous praise.

Other attributes given by participants to God such as Father, Love and light underscore the shift in no uncertain terms. There is a strong correlation between God's attributes and the role of father in their worldview. This anthropomorphic view of God as Father is a symbolic expression of the manner in which people experienced God as loving, caring, protective and forgiving.

The 'Father' image in a society riddled by abuse of women, children and where rape seems to be the order of the day, causes almost as many problems as it solves. Because of the problems just enunciated, the very idea of equating God with human fathers as pointed out above is challenged today. The protagonists of the feminist viewpoint believe that the attributes accorded to God in fact are as well displayed in women as in man hence the attempt to describe God in female terms. This view may be true due to the failure of man to live up to the ideal expressed in the anthropomorphic attributes given to God.

There is a strong biblical view that sees God the Creator as head just as an earthly father is head of an earthly family. He is the Protector just as an

earthly father is expected to be protector of his own household. He is the Sustainer or provider just as an earthly father is expected to provide for his family.

6.4.F.3 What is the significance for all humanity of viewing God as Father?

The symbol, namely, Father, which is used of God has profound implications for the manner in which our understanding of the father and head of the family has on our understanding of God. Using such a conventional symbol to represent God helps us to be able to relate to God. We can all identify ourselves with him. In him humanity is not divided into races, sexes, classes. All are equal and the same.

Within Zulu society parents are greatly respected. Hexham (1987:21) argues that fathers were distant and feared so that a son did not address his father unless he was spoken to. The symbols the author of 1 John uses are closely intertwined not only in terms of the new reality he is defining, but every day life within the family shows these to be mutually inclusive. The description of God as 'father', as Van der Watt (1999:491) states triggers connotative meanings, which activate familial language.

In most cultures that are constituted along patriarchal lines the word 'father' apart from being associated with family, also describes the role expected of this figure in relation to his family and his relation to his children (Van der Watt 2000:191). The patriarchal constitution of families was not only peculiar

to the Mediterranean world; many nations in Africa including the Zulu nation were and still are hierarchically modelled.

Van der Watt (1999:491) also argues, without unpacking its meaning, that the association of God with 'the father symbol' suggests that not everything which the author of 1 John intends to communicate has been verbally articulated. He presumes the existence of knowledge of this symbol among his audience. As Lassen (1992:252) points out in the context of 1 John, 'the father symbol' is applied metaphorically for God and he is given the same characteristics as the ideal earthly father. Van der Watt (1999: 491) states that the social context within which the author uses this convention for God enables readers to supply the necessary 'social knowledge' which serves as interpretative context. 1 John supplies enough clues which when compared with information gleaned from surveys of ancient families structures, affirms the existence of this 'social knowledge' which he presumed present for his readers.

Father is also suggestive of the role and function associated with this symbol. Some variation can be observed in relation to the position and power of the Father (man) in most patriarchal societies. In most cases, fathers had absolute power over their families. In Zulu society the father's position as a man and as head of the family placed him in a dominant position (see also Masenya 1994 with regard to Northern Sotho context)

The role in 1 John attributed to God as Father and head of the family places him in a similar position. His authority cannot be questioned and his word is law. As father, God has complete control and authority over his household.

The findings of the focus group interview also revealed that the Father's position also meant providing leadership and exerting tremendous influence over his household. This is affirmed by Malina (1981:40) who contends that as head, he is responsible for maintaining the honour and good name of the family.

In 1 John, the Father as head of his family also symbolised unity of direction and purpose for his household. The Son is the embodiment of the father hence John's saying, 'no one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also' (1 Jn 2: 23-24). God's sons or children are expected to do their utmost in emulating God in all that they are and do. God as Father wants to reproduce his character in his children. They ought to walk in the same way in which (his Son) walked (1 Jn 2:6).

6.4.F.4 What does the word 'love' mean to you and why do you associate God with love?

Love means giving your heart and life for the one whom is loved. Being prepared to do that which appears impossible because you love. In a sense it describes the character of the one who loves than the one who is being loved. Participants felt that there is a close connection between love and light and that God's works show him to be utter light in whom there is no shade or darkness at all. Johnson (1999:567) states that by cultivating love in the community, the identity and borders of the group are strengthened.

In 1 John, love is in a sense derivative. 'We love, because God first loved us' (1 Jn 4:19). Love as Verryyn (1982:251) points out is a manifestation of God

himself, proceeding from God himself, a manifestation both clearer and profound than any other. The author of 1 John also uses it to draw polarity between those who belong to the family of God and those who do not. Those who love are born of God and have passed over from death to life but those who hate are still in the realm of death. The boundaries here are clearly set.

6.4.F.5 What are the implications of viewing God as love?

Viewing God in this manner makes it incumbent upon each human being to do well and to love. Love is not static but dynamic. It can only be seen in action. This fact is emphasised in 1 John (4:10) where it is stated, 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be an expiation for our sins'. What this means is that those who are of the family of God ought to love others and not only be prepared to lay down their life for them (1 John 3:16) but to open their hearts and help the brother in need (v.17) that is the essence of love.

6.4.F.6 Why do people associate God with light?

People describe God as light because Light describes the character of the giver. He gives light because he is light. It is out of what we have that we are able to give to others. God does not have light but is light himself. Where there is light, there is no darkness. An example that is so apt to this, is of the rising of the sun. That the sun is about to rise is shown by the darkness that quickly vanishes, giving way to light. The two never meet, they are like archenemies.

6.4.F.7 What are the implications for viewing God as light?

To describe God as light has similar connotations as stated above. God is all goodness and there is nothing ugly or evil in him. There is no shadow of darkness in him. Those who are his children have no option but to be light.

They ought to walk in the light (1 John 2:6). Walking in the light means doing those things that reveal the light aspect of God's nature. Such things include actions that would not bring shame to the individual, family, community, and God.

6.4.F.8 Who is Jesus to you?

The following answers were given in response to the above question. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Messiah, the Saviour and Master of our lives. He is God's answer to our sinfulness. He is the Mediator between God and the people. He is the intercessor for the people of God. He is the Shepherd of our souls and the champion of our salvation.

6.4.F.9 What conventional symbol do you think would best represent Christ within your culture?

Participants admitted that the question of finding a representative symbol for Christ within the Zulu culture was not an easy one. Having made the admission they came up with the following: the Black Messiah- the example of how members of the Nazareth Church view Shembe as their Christ as opposed to the white Christ was cited. Members however stated that that is not their view but a view held by a number of Zulu people hence their

mentioning it. The second example likened Christ to the Elder brother in the family. That he performs all the functions that would be performed by the elder brother-the heir apparent. That all the duties the Father performs, once he is dead are assumed by the elder brother. The only difficulty they pointed out with regard to this example is that the elder brother only assumes his duties after the death of his father whereas Christ according to the Bible is given central focus and is active concurrently with God.

The third example, which others felt conveyed something of Christ, is likening him to an ancestor. The fact that he stands between God and people as mediator correlates best with what they know to be the role of ancestors. In the case of these symbols we also consulted written sources to find out whether the participant's views had any documented support. In this discussion focus will be on those symbols identified by participants in the focus group, namely: the Black Messiah, the Elder Brother, and the Ancestor, we will also quote from these sources to support the viewpoints that are purported.

6.4.F.9.1 The Black Messiah

The Black Messiah issue was mentioned by some members of the focus group as another symbol, which some Zulu people believe represent or replaces that of a white Christ. There is a perception that Black people's loyalty to a White Christ is a betrayal of their own black heritage, black culture, and is a severe impediment of their freedom. The argument is taken further when the importance for black people to be able to see Jesus as one of them, as Black-skinned is underscored (Douglas 1993:47). This could have been the driving

force behind the formation of the so-called Messianic movement in South Africa. The reason could also have been that they were searching for a conventional symbol that correlates the Jesus of the Bible? Hinchliff (1968:104) asserts that the emergence of the Messianic movement is ascribed to the failure of white Christians to love black people, which led to their questioning whether it was possible for a white Christian God to love black people.

The questions of a black Christ were pertinent in a country where the colour of one's skin was a significant factor. Because of this obvious social dichotomy, it is claimed that for a black person to achieve psychological freedom, she or he must accept her or his blackness and be proud of it. This is where according to Douglas (1993:61), the question of Jesus as the Black Messiah comes in. The Black Messiah enables black people to stand up to life.

Some of the participants in the focus group raised the name of Shembe and pointed out that there is a perception among Zulu members of his church that he is their Black Messiah. Isaiah Shembe of the Nazareth Baptist Church seems in our view to be somehow a representative of this attempt to find a symbol that speaks meaningfully to his contemporary situation and that of the people.

Hinchliff's statement quoted above alluding to the contradictions within Christianity experienced by those from African culture that had become adherents of this religion, forms background to this attempt. However, for Shembe the search for a symbol unfortunately led him back to himself

(Kitshoff 1996:28). He found a conventional symbol in himself. If this is not a true reflection of how he viewed himself then this represents the perception among members of the Nazareth church. In Shembe they began to see someone who performed the role of mediator between God and the people.

His people speak of him in the language, which suggests that he is a kind of Melchizedek cum-Christ type. His birth was not normal and human. His origins are unknown. He was born of the Spirit. He was Spirit. He was not of the world but of heaven. He was a servant sent by God and through him we know that God is not beyond the ocean but here, among us (Hinchliff 1968:104).

The mediatory role of Christ is entirely assumed by a black Messianic figure (Daneel 1984:42). According to Kitshoff (1996:28) Jesus is not recognised by Isaiah Shembe as mediator between God and human beings, and the main message of the New Testament that Jesus Christ came to seek and save, found no echo in Shembe's ministry. The impression that Jesus is not recognised by Shembe can be deduced from hymn 154 of the *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, which reads thus:

Ngiyakholwa kuYise
Naku Moya oNgcwele
Nenhlango yabangcwele base Nazaretha

Translation: I believe in the father
And in the Holy Spirit
And in the communion of saints of the Nazarites.

(in Lwandle 1996:13).

An examination of some of the hymns written by Shembe reveals that even though the name of Christ is not mentioned in them the contrary is true. Shembe himself did believe in Christ. We would like to mention one of such hymns, which make one think that the contrary is true. In this hymn Jesus is clearly recognised as the Redeemer who never dies. Hymn 2 reads thus:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| 2. | <i>Ngincede Nkosi yami</i> | (Translation) | Help me, help my Lord |
| | <i>Ngincede ekufeni</i> | | Help me in death |
| | <i>Nkosi yami</i> | | My Lord |
| | <i>Amen, Amen Nkosi yami</i> | | Amen, Amen, my Lord |
| 3. | <i>Ngazise izizwe zonke</i> | | That I may make known |
| | | | To all nations |
| | <i>Ngoluthando lobuntwana</i> | | about your child-like love |
| | <i>Olungafiyo</i> | | which never dies. |
| 4. | <i>Namabandla namabandla</i> | | And the congregations, the |
| | | | congregations of heaven |
| | <i>Ngo Jesu uMkululi</i> | | through Jesus the |
| | | | redeemer |
| | <i>Ongafiyo</i> | | Who does not die |
| | <i>Amen, Amen, Nkosi yami.</i> | | Amen, Amen, my Lord. |

(in Lwandle 1996:87).

Hexham (1994: xxxvi) agrees with Kitshoff and states that in terms of the assertions made by some of the members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, often when asked about Jesus say: 'Jesus is your kind; Shembe is our kind' or 'Jesus is a *Mlungu*, a white man, He does not understand us'. Hence Daneel's contention that the black Christ is in the foreground and supplants the 'white

Christ of the Europeans'. He becomes the mediator of salvation who accomplishes the salvation of his people (Daneel 1984:43).

The intention of mentioning the Messianic movement, which is exemplified in Shembe, is not to offer a critique of him and his theology but to raise the question for a meaningful symbol. It is true that Christ is mentioned in only a few of the many hymns he wrote. The question that needs to be asked is: Why did he find it difficult to relate to Jesus the Son of God? This question would be answered in the next section, where we would be focusing on the 'Elder Brother' symbol suggested as another possible conventional representation for Christ. Why is the name of Jesus not emphasised in the doctrine and the lives of Shembe and his followers? What is obvious is that a transfer of the work of Christ to Shembe seems to have taken place. Sundkler puts it thus: just as Jesus once effected the salvation of the Jews, so now does Shembe for the Zulus (in Daneel 1984:44).

6.4.F.9.2 The Elder Brother

Whereas some of the focus group members stated that some Zulu people see the Black Messiah as a symbols representing Christ, other members of the group argued that the symbol that closely correlates Jesus is rather that of the elder brother since he is the very Son of God, our Father, and that in Him we are bothers and sisters. Kabasélé (1991:116) is one such theologian, who agrees with this view and further argued that the elder brother image as a symbol that could very well represent Christ in many African cultures. This prompted the researcher to dig further looking for more information regarding

the symbol. The discussion that follows seeks to explore further how closely this symbol relates to Jesus.

The image of the elder brother does bear some correlation even among Zulus as confirmed by focus group members. The difficulty arises when claims of the Son's equality with the Father are made. This claim, as Lwandle (1996:42) asserts, upsets Zulu social values by teaching that the son is equal to the father. The Zulu social system extols old age. Ngobese states that according to Zulu custom the son is not equal to the father but is an extension of the father's name (in Oosthuizen and Hexham 1992:96). As a son, he does not talk when his father is present unless he is addressed, nor may he be free in his speech in his father's presence (Lwandle 1996:xix).

According to the social system of the Zulus, if a person went to the king's royal residence with the intention of bringing a certain matter to the attention of the king and was met by an 'inceku' - messenger who went back and forth, taking messages and bringing back the answer from the king - when that individual got home he would never say that he did not see the king. But if the king's son met him that amounted to being met by the king himself. The son is from the very presence of the king and is the very extension of the king, himself whereas the inceku sits at the gate waiting for people who want to have an audience with the king so that he may alert the king. If the image is presented in the context of royalty, it poses little problems.

Generally, the symbol causes problems rather than drawing us closer to the solution. As Ngobese (1992:96) points out the designation Son (in the Bible) is unfortunate because it does not tally with the Zulu concept of a son, where

the question of equality is excluded. This can only be acceptable as a symbol if the Son is viewed in subordination to the Father. However, if this route is followed, it would lead to compromising the biblical conception where the Son is the full representation of the Father and does what the Father does.

What needs to be borne in mind is that the Bible uses quite a number of metaphors for Jesus Christ even though they are not always compatible with one another if they are taken to the level of their literal meaning. Some of them are: Son of God, Christ, Lord, Son of Man, Bridegroom, Shepherd, High priest, and our brother.

Metaphorical language does not operate in the same way as the unequivocal language of clear and straightforward ideas or concepts. It is not the literal meaning that is important in symbolic and metaphoric language but the symbolic and metaphoric one. Below we focus on the third symbols suggested by focus group members as closely representing Christ.

6.4.F.9.3 Christ as proto - ancestor.

In focussing on Zulu people's cosmology, we discussed the role of ancestors. Vilakazi (1996:23) asserts that the real, vital religion of the Zulus was based on the ancestral cult. As a result in seeking to find a conventional symbol that could represent Jesus in the Zulu culture we had to consider the ancestor symbol since some of the participants in the focus group suggested it as one conventional symbol that comes close to representing Christ in their culture. Ancestors in the Zulu symbolic universe represent a very powerful symbol. When people talk about ancestors, they are always referred to in the plural.

They are seen as a collective. J and J Comaroff (1991:154) point out that once the proper burial rites or rites of incorporation (*ukubuyiswa*) have been performed, the deceased becomes a member of the collective. They are never singled out for veneration except when praises are sung to them during family ceremonies. As is obvious, this belief is at odds with the Christian belief that maintains the personal identities of individuals after death.

Can Christ therefore be considered as an ancestor and be worshipped as such? Some African theologians do not hesitate to speak about Christ as ancestor. Nyamiti (1991:5) is the best-known representative of this kind of Christology. However, what we want to point out here is in regard to the role played by ancestors (if they are considered active as Zulus believe), which we think shows some close correlation to the role of Christ. Having discussed all three possible symbols, we are still left with a problem. Which of these could be singled out as closely representing Christ within Zulu cosmology?

6.4.F.9.3.1 A Need for a strong alternate symbol

It must be stated that until a strong alternate symbol is provided, those who adhere to the belief in ancestors will find it difficult to divorce themselves from this symbol, which is at the core of their beliefs and life. Attempts by some Christian pastors to integrate some aspects of their world-view with Christian practices are becoming evident by the day. Mngadi witnessed such an attempt in a Roman Catholic service in Soweto where the *Ukubuyiswa* Ceremony was being done in the context of the Eucharist (Mngadi 1982:182).

Others try to locate the symbol of Christ in the role of ancestors. As the ancestors are believed to give and safeguard the life of their descendants, so does Christ continually nourish the believer Kabasélé (1991:120). According to Suggit (1997:128-9) the view of Jesus as proto-ancestor – the unique ancestor, the source of life and the highest model of ancestor-ship – is a way of expressing the importance of Jesus and the gospel in terms of African culture. Christ, it is asserted, performs the role of ancestor by the mediation he provides. He is the exemplar- ancestor, who fulfils in him the words and deeds of the mediation of our Ancestors (Suggit 1997:124). As an ancestor, Christ abolishes the role of human ancestors.

Kabasélé (1991:123) further claims that Christ fits the category of ancestor because, finally, he is the synthesis of all mediations. These attempts show that there is a need to find ways of incarnating the message of John in this particular area in order to enable Zulu people to make the necessary connections.

We want to suggest that if a strong alternate view is to be brought to bear on the ancestor question, it will be on the mediatory role they are deemed to perform. The dilemma here is presented by the fact that ancestors and all rituals connected to them provide the concreteness that Zulu people want whereas the same is lacking with regard to Christ's presence with them. If for instance it is claimed that Christ is present at the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, the question is how is he represented there? Which symbols are used to represent this mystery? The idea of blood commends itself to Zulu people but its representation with wine is preposterous. It is the kind of symbolism that is linked with this great mystery that loses people altogether. Had blood been

used, even though not consumed, one is inclined to think this would have a much greater impact.

Blood in 1 John is mentioned in the context of fellowship and cleansing from sin. In most Christian churches whose services embody a time of penitence and confession of sin, sprinkling members of the congregation with some blood would have a much greater impact. This argument is offered in the spirit of exploring the appropriateness of the symbols we use to communicate great divine truths.

The viewpoint postulated in 1 John, however, is that Christ is the mediator between God and human beings. This is embodied in the paracletory and expiatory roles assigned to Christ (1 Jn 2:1-2). This role is also closely linked with the idea of sacrifice and blood spilling, which is also central in the ritualisation process in Zulu cosmology. It is his blood that cleanses from sin, hence our assertion that if 'blood proper' were to be used, it would have much more meaning. The absence of blood in any of the afore mentioned situation would render the process dysfunctional.

6.4.F.10 Who is the Holy Spirit to you?

In response to this question, members of the focus group gave the following answers: The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is the same Spirit who indwelt the prophets of old and spoke through them. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter promised by Jesus who was to come into the world to be with believers forever, even the Spirit of truth. He dwells in us and through us continues Christ's work of salvation. Through us he continues to perform

mighty acts, which help us to recognise God's presence with us. He leads and guides believers into all truth.

In chapter four we discussed how 1 John treats the subject of the Holy Spirit. To reiterate a few points that were covered, it was stated that the Spirit guides the believer into the truth (1 Jn 2:20); that he teaches the believer all things (1 Jn 2:27); that God lives in the believer through the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 3:24). And the Spirit is a witness because the Spirit is the truth (1 Jn 5:6-7). All these statements have a strong ethical influence on the life of the believer.

As stated above, the African world including the Zulu world is a world dominated by a host of spiritual forces, which affect people's lives in one way or another causing them to live in fear. People resort to a series of rituals designed to manipulate and ward off these forces. What is so striking is the fact that Zulu people find it more difficult to relate to Jesus than to the Spirit. This is corroborated by Daneel (1987:260) who with reference to the Black messiah, mentions that by superseding Christ and accentuating uMoya (the Spirit) he manages to lead his followers back to the ancestors, and 'blood and soil' of the tribe.

Oosthuizen noted what he called a conceptual fallacy, which is the syncretist distortion of the personal Spirit of God to an impersonal, manipulated force. This he claims leads to the depersonalisation of God and changes the sovereign Spirit to an impersonal force – an It – which man can control (in Daneel 1987:260). Obviously such a transformation of the Holy Spirit into a manipulable force that can be used by people in their own and their group's

interest must render the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit unrecognisable (Daneel 1987:261).

Having given this background, the researcher is concerned to identify a conventional symbol or symbols that correlates the Holy Spirit. Apart from the fact that Zulu people relate easily to the Spirit, is there a symbol that could be used to represent the Holy Spirit in the manner he is portrayed in the Bible. Why do Zulu people find it easy to relate to the Holy Spirit? What do they associate the Spirit with?

6.4.F.11 What conventional symbol do you think would best represent the Holy Spirit within your culture?

Participants pointed out that the symbol that preachers often use is that of likening the coming of the Holy Spirit into a person's life to someone being possessed by an idlozi (ancestral) spirit. Similar changes that occur and become obvious in a person filled with the Spirit of God can be observed in someone possessed by idlozi spirit. This is not to say that they exhibit similar characteristics but the similarity is in terms of the radicalness of these changes. The person can no longer act according to his/her old ways. After possession the person becomes a new being with a new master.

6.4.F.10.1 Symbolic representation of the Holy Spirit in Zulu society

Many Zulu preachers especially those of the Independent church's orientation, believe that the Holy Spirit is the author of visions, and ancestors the source of influential dreams (Kiernan 1990:89). Nyamiti (1991:14) calls

the Holy Spirit the ancestral ritual Offer (Oblation) and Eucharist between the Father and the Son in the Trinity. We note here the association with the ancestral spirit.

Seeking an appropriate symbol, Zulu people, like the rest of African people, tend to follow models of their own time and tradition. They use models and symbols that contemporaries can understand. Here, as Oosthuizen (1979:4) argues there are no efforts to express theological ideas but to make Christianity concrete and effective.

The symbolic associations that are made are not perfect but are an attempt to make sense of the new reality presented by the Christian message. Therefore, when Zulus speak of the mighty power of the Spirit of God taking hold of a person's life, they associate this power with the 'spirit possession' by idlozi (ancestor). The possession phenomenon is a cultural way of explaining how contact takes place between the supernatural and natural worlds. Possession refers to those individuals who have been entered by the ancestral spirit. A person possessed by the ancestral spirit becomes a diviner.

Zulu society recognises a type of possession which begins as an illness and various cures are tried to no avail. Illness would continue until the person shows willingness to accept the idlozi spirit that wants to indwell him or her. A person would then be taken to an experienced diviner, who if he/she confirms this to be the work of the ancestral spirit, would then begin the person's initiation to becoming a true diviner – serving as a channel of communication between the human and divine or spirit world.

Once the initiation rites have been completed, the phenomenal changes in that person's life are obvious. The physical outlook of the person who is possessed changes. The person no longer has freedom to do what he or she likes but only that which is directed by the idlozi spirit in him or her. These changes would encompass even things like the food a true diviner eats. The Sangoma would only eat food that is prescribed by the spirit dwelling in him or her. The indwelling spirit becomes therefore the master of that person's life.

The symbol that has just been discussed above provides a useful analogy for explaining and discussing the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life. A person who has been indwelt by the Holy Spirit leads a different life. The life of the person is radically changed so that the person no longer does all the things he/she used to do. The person's whole lifestyle changes.

This comes out explicitly in 1 John. The children of God do not continue sinning because they are born of God (1 Jn 3:9) and the Holy Spirit assures them of their belonging and their being in Christ (1 Jn 3:24). The Holy Spirit enables them to distinguish right from wrong (1 Jn 4:2). A Person in whom the Spirit of God dwells cannot be the same as before. The person now lives in obedience to God's commands and imitates Jesus in his/her actions (1 Jn 2:6).

All that for now we want to point out is the usefulness of the analogy that people draw. It must however be noted that drawing an analogy is not the same as saying that being possessed by an idlozi spirit is equal to being possessed by the Spirit of God. We are aware that in some Independent churches, it is not a question of making an analogy but little differentiation is

made between the two spirits. Beyerhaus pointing out the confusion between the Spirit of God and the ancestral spirits, proclaimed without hesitation that the so-called 'Messianic movements' use of Christian symbols have little to do with Christianity because the manner of receiving the Holy Spirit is a direct continuation of the old idlozi possession (in Daneel 1984:46).

Sundkler, Beyerhaus and Martin also bemoaned as confusion the association of the Holy Spirit with the ancestral spirits (in Daneel 1987:260). Oosthuizen maintains that it is the prominence given to ancestral worship which has led to the transfer of ancestral functions to the Holy Spirit. He further contends that this has not only led to the usurpation of Christ's role, but also to the total exclusion of the connection between the Spirit and Scripture (in Daneel 1987:260).

Convergence in the two universes is found in the fact that both emphasise the role of the Spirit IN the life of the one possessed. The Spirit is not just a static force but a dynamic presence in the life of the believer. In the day-to-day harsh realities of life, how does the Zulu believer concretise the Spirit's presence and working so that the abstractness of his presence in them is totally removed? This is the most fundamental hermeneutical and theological dilemma Christianity faces in the process of incarnating itself in the Zulu world.

The analogy between possession by an idlozi spirit and by the Spirit of God is a useful analogy. It does in many ways convey the essence of the truth that the communicators seek to communicate. The fact that there is confusion to such an extent that others fail to differentiate is evidence enough that critical

dialogue needs to continue until (if possible) consensus is reached. If consensus cannot be reached we will need to accept that this is the tension we will have to live with. It also means we will have failed to make Christianity truly African and indigenous.

Van der Watt (1999:150) introduces another dimension when he says that the fact that the Spirit is in a person will most probably create tension with the role of the diviners within the symbolic narrative of ATR (African Traditional Religions). Our understanding is that the diviner's domain is over the other 'spirits' not the 'Spirit'. The presence of this 'Spirit' in people's lives does not only create tension for the diviner, it poses a serious challenge. Can the spirit possessing the diviner be a match for the Spirit who indwells believers?

The tension cannot only be located in the role of diviners. If the Holy Spirit's working is understood in the biblical way, it cuts across the role performed by the black Messiah and some Spiritual leaders especially in the Independent Churches as mentioned by (Oosthuizen, Beyerhaus, Martin, and Daneel), who appear to think that they have a monopoly on the Spirit. The Holy Spirit's work according to John's Gospel is to guide us into all truth.

As theologians deliberate on this issue in the quest for a true symbol and a true understanding of the Holy Spirit, one hopes that there will be openness to this promised guidance. In fact this is not only a hermeneutical crisis facing Zulu people, Africa is crying out for a break through concerning the presentation, interpretation and integration of Christianity in this continent so that in the end all of us who live in it can truly say that we have met God in

Trinity walking in our continent, meeting our needs in the various contexts that obtain in Africa.

One is not undermining the enormous work that has been undertaken by many African theologians but the fact that the vigorous debate is still taking place over issues that formed the agenda of the 1950's is indicative of the arduous task facing African theologians. Similar calls to those made in previous decades for indigenisation and inculturation are still being made today, hence the claim that Africa is crying for the presentation, interpretation and integration of the message of the Bible so that we can say that the God the bible proclaims is truly the God who has always walked in Africa, however remote He may have been perceived.

Cross-cultural reading of the Bible makes it incumbent upon the readers to take cognisance of all these factors and to really grapple with these issues in pursuit of a viable hermeneutical bridge. The question of an appropriate symbol for the Holy Spirit remains an open one, and we believe that the positive disposition demonstrated by Zulu people towards the Holy Spirit provides sufficient material congruency for the erection of a hermeneutical bridge.

If there is to be a breakthrough, one should call for 'risky theologising', that is, being prepared to take the risk to explore the various symbolic contours available within our cultural contexts. The appropriateness of symbols would be judged by the amount of criticalness, openness, and interaction with which theologians would be willing to exert themselves to the task. This is possible in view of what Maluleke (1997:15) says that African Christians are far more

innovative and subversive in their appropriation of the Bible. All that is necessary is identifying and defining the parameters to enable creative theologising.

6.5 A nagging question

An important hermeneutical question that should be posed here is: Where in our search for an appropriate symbol should we locate the problem? Is the problem one of a conceptual nature or does the answer lie somewhere else? Suppose consensus is reached on appropriate conventional symbols, would this facilitate a better understanding of Christianity by traditionalist Zulu people and enhance their understanding of 1 John?

Where exactly should the problem be located? Is the problem in our inability to produce systematically worked out answers and providing appropriate symbols for Zulu (African) people? The West prides itself for having the ability in their philosophy and theology to produce systematically worked out answers. But this as pointed out by Robinson in 'Honest to God' has led to Westerners losing their sense of God. Western theology has not been able to salvage itself from that quandary because it has become too theoretical, to such an extent that God, according to it, has become largely an intellectual concept (Dickson and Ellingworth 1969:21).

Theoretical formulas leading to systematic answers are necessary but should not be an end in themselves. There is a need to develop a transformative kind of theology, that is, a theology that is able to address people's day-to-day experiences and enable them to experience God in a real way. This is a

theology that takes cognisance of the total situation of people. Christ's incarnation did not take place in a vacuum; it took place within a specific cultural context. In the same way, the gospel message as we have it in the four-gospels bears witness to the same. Each gospel as well as each letter was written in order to meet specific existential needs.

It is only when people have experienced the transformative presence of God in their lives, within their situation and in such a way that they can truly say that God is truly their God, that the question of right symbols would recede into the background and occupy a secondary place in their lives. This does in no way mean that the quest for appropriate symbols is not important. In fact, in the process of reading or communication, finding appropriate symbols remains an important hermeneutical requirement.

The early church was in a hostile situation. It found itself in a position to confront a variety of symbolic worlds because something dynamic had happened to her members. We believe that even today, a true encounter with Christ is so dynamic and transforming that his presence in any person's life, and within whatever cultural setting, becomes so dynamic that old symbols are transformed and a new symbology, a new language, and a new manner of life is determined by their relationship with Christ. Our contention is that all this should be achievable in concrete and experienceable historical events, interpreted and enunciated in the language of faith (Schillebeeckx 1974:635). The definitive and decisive saving action of God in Christ occurs only within a relationship of love and a life of faith, and only in fellowship with the Father and his Son (1 Jn 1:5).

6.6 Some preliminary observations on the two symbolic universes

At this point we are in a position to make some observations with regard to the two symbolic universes;

- 1) Both symbolic universes show a strong orientation towards group or family and this should be followed-up since, as we observe in 1 John, it underlies the basic organization and interrelatedness of the symbols the author employed. We note 1 John communicates on a higher level thus giving new meaning to each and every symbol or concept he employs. We think that the existence of commonalities is important for the purpose of this dissertation in that it will promote a dialectical or interactive discussion between the two universes.
- 2) For instance, during the reading process, certain conventions relating to family and family structure within the Mediterranean as well as the Zulu world are activated. This made it necessary that in our discussion above these be tackled in relation to each other. The notion that in order 'to belong' one has to be born into that family applies in both universes. In 1 John however it is used with reference to the divine family - the family of God thus defining their identity and orientation.
- 3) Within each symbolic universe the important role accorded to the father is recognised. The influence they bring to bear on members of their families is almost similar. Children or members of the

family are expected to be obedient, loving toward one another, and imitating Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is the example *par excellence*. They are also expected to remain within the group, i.e. within family boundaries. The fact that they belong means that they possess life and knowledge, knowledge as it relates to something or some truth commonly held.

- 4) The emphasis placed on fellowship in 1 John activated in our reading the whole notion of a group. Everything we mentioned above with regard to families in both symbolic universes, apply here as well, something which provides for a dialectical interaction.
- 5) The idea of remaining within the fellowship as we pointed out suggests the existence of boundaries. Members have to keep within the boundaries, i.e. observing and obeying family conventions. Any violation of family conventions is a serious matter within both worlds. Violation in the context of 1 John is cast in terms of sin. A dialectical interaction in this area could lead to a better understanding and much sought after transition.
- 6) The existence of life beyond the grave is a notion commonly held in both universes. In Zulu symbolic universe it is represented by the ancestor-symbol whereas in 1 John it is expressed in terms of eternal life. The idea of life that never ends provides congruency and a platform for a dialectical interaction between the two universes.

- 7) Common ground exists with regard to the role of the son in both symbolic universes. As noted above the difference arises with regard to applying this symbol to Jesus Christ who is said to be equal to the Father. Zulu social structure is thus upset because it knows no such thing as equality of the father and son. The son rather is the extension of the father and only assumes the dominant role after the death of the father. Other symbols discussed in relation to the Jesus were The Black Messiah, and the Ancestor symbol. There exist both commonalities as well as differences in this area. In our discussion it constitutes the most critical area hence the urgency to pursue the dialectical interactive discussion. As long as discussion continues, we are convinced that a solution can be arrived at.

- 8) The mention of spirits in 1 John coincides with the notion of spirits that in Zulu cosmology made the world a precarious place to live in. Traditional diviners are important in this area because they are responsible for regulating reality and keeping especially bad spirits under control. Their role in some cases extends to making contact with the ancestors. This however is not their normal function since it is the prerogative of heads of families. The existence of common ground with regard to spirits provides for a dialectical interactive discussion.

- 9) A difference between spirits and Spirit or Holy Spirit was noted. The difficulty of finding a symbol that closely correlates the Holy Spirit in Zulu culture was a major one. The only connection we could find

lies in the fact that the Spirit resides in a person. The obvious case in point in Zulu culture is of the spirit residing in a person is that of izangoma. The ancestral spirit dwells in this person. With regard to what happens after possession, we noted the similarity of functions. Correspondence with regard to possession and functions provides for dialectical interaction.

- 10) Constant reference was made to the fact that inhabitant of the Zulu world sees the universe in concrete terms. Rituals therefore play a significant role in concretising reality for them. How do we concretise the reality cast in abstract terms for Zulu people to relate to? The symbol of the ancestors, blood proper in the Eucharist, and other rituals connected to birth could be explored in our search for concretising reality.
- 11) Finally, we noted, that the symbols we discussed relate to two different families, the earthly and heavenly. With regard to 1 John these symbols are reinterpreted and imbued with new meaning thus defining the new spiritual world and new reality as perceived by the author. The difference between the two families means that great caution has to be exercised in the reading process. The purpose of our reading is to engenderer maximal acceptance of the message of 1 John by Zulu people. As common threads are pulled together and a merging of worlds takes place, a process we have been referring to as the building of a hermeneutical bridge, a transition from one symbolic world to another will be enhanced.

6.7 Summary

The search for authentic symbols to represent biblical symbols in the Zulu context could be characterised as one for concreteness as opposed to abstractness. God in Trinity needs to be concretised within Zulu cosmology without seeking to domesticate him. In fact, as Robinson (1973:13) states, he cannot be domesticated without being destroyed. The demand that the incarnated Christ be truly 'our man' is asking not that there be a mere reflection (of our cultural symbols) but that there be a correlation (Robinson 1973:15). The search therefore is seen as one for a symbol that concretely correlates with Christ. Condon (1984:76) contends that some of the roots of syncretism among Zulus lie in the failure of missionary communication as well as to the mindset of the Zulus and to their life situation. Congdon's location of part of the problem at missionary communication affirms what was stated in the introduction regarding the failure of Zulus or African people to embrace the gospel wholeheartedly.

In 1 John, the author, embedded in his context, was able to manipulate a lot of conventional images and symbols to express new ideas and new realities. Familial language became a useful vehicle for expressing, constructing and defining the new reality, which had come about as a result of their relationship with God. The same could be achieved in the Zulu context. By employing widely accepted conventions from ordinary every day life, it is possible to explain and expound the meaning and significance of the new reality, that is, 'being members of the family of God'. Agreement as to the appropriateness of symbols is viewed as a process that should embrace the reaching of consensus among theologians and ordinary readers.

To express the reality of the Gospel in any culture is a new thing, hence the urgency to find conventional symbols that will enhance the incarnation of the message of 1 John in a Zulu context. Some scholars have expressed this concern to find conventional symbols that will enhance the incarnation of the Gospel in terms of 'contextualisation'. Contextualisation as Kraft (1979:144) explains it is a concern that scriptural meanings get all the way across what might be pictured as a 'hermeneutical bridge' into the real-life contexts of ordinary people.

Why this urgency? In spite of the three centuries of Christianity's arrival in this country, there still exists a problem in finding appropriate symbols for representing the Christ event. There has been a failure as well to deal with worldview (Congdon 1984:77). Various theologians have made attempts but most have been marked by an element of uncriticalness as far as African symbols are concerned. In order for authentic answers to be found to questions raised above, there is a need for a meaningful engagement with the bearers of the culture.