

CHAPTER 5

NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES OF FAMILY

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters (3 and 4), the realities of African, Roman and Jewish families were stated and discussed. It was also sufficiently indicated in these chapters that the comprehension of the manner in which the family operate in African cultures as well as in the first century Mediterranean world, enables us to understand the Christian message which is enshrined in the New Testament. The current chapter endeavours to make an assessment of the “Ecclesia” as family in the New Testament. In the previous chapters the central position of family in both the African and ancient Mediterranean world was stressed. Clearly in cultures of this nature, where the family forms the basic social institution one could expect that the family would also be used metaphorically to enhance basic values to give sanction to existing institutions and ideologies and to legitimise new groups or formations. This is exactly what takes place in the New Testament documents. Here the church is primarily identified in terms of fictive familial concepts and imagery. This is to a greater extent characterised by loyalty and commitment of a transcendental kind to Jesus and God. This relationship took priority over the closest mundane ties, even that of the natural or earthly family. Harrisville (1996:425) calls this scenario a duality, or rather a contradiction. He maintains that this new family was rooted in the rejection of the legality of the blood family life. In spelling out the

distinctiveness of this family, Kee & Young (1960:47) maintain that during the first century Mediterranean world:

"there was no group... that stood apart from all the rest [like the Christians]. Like many others their chief concern was with the coming of the Messiah, but unlike the others they were convinced that the time had already come. They admitted freely that He had recently died, but far from spelling defeat for the movement, they felt that his death was essential to His messianic role."

Jesus is the central figure in the New Testament, and the authors concerned themselves with interpreting his utterances, actions and significance. The second important theme throughout the pages of the New Testament is the idea of the church. This community understood and defined itself in a variety of ways. Schweizer (1961:31) maintains that:

"One image which is not stated explicitly in the Bible and which does not seem to be in common use, but which has its roots in a variety of early Christian statements and which continues to have a clarifying and guiding force for us today, is the image of the church as the family of God."

Lassen (1997:103) maintains that in identifying and describing itself, these groups employed family metaphors. She observes that the familial language played an important role in the formation of the early Christian church and its theology. God was commonly regarded and called Father, Jesus the Son and the believers, the brethren.

This phenomenon, was however, not peculiar to the Jesus Movement. In the Old Testament for instance, Israel is referred to in familial language: "When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called him" (Hs 11:1). The Pharisees called their disciples "sons" and a rabbi occasionally was described as a "father". The Greeks also sporadically referred to members of the same political formation or friends as "brothers" (cf Banks 1980:59; Du Plessis 1988:208f). The discussion which follows, approaches the church as a family from the perspective of the synoptic gospels and John.

5.2 The synoptic gospels

Hamerton-Kelly (1979:82) says that the realisation by biblical scholars that the synoptic Evangelists (Matthew, Mark and Luke) were also interpreters of Jesus, as John and Paul, dawned relatively late. This therefore means that their gospels should be viewed as products of the activities within their communities. Traditional material was gathered by each Evangelist and presented in a particular situation to the community within its own theological and symbolic interpretation in such a way that the early readers would understand Jesus from a particular perspective. Expressing the same idea about Matthew, Van Aarde (1994:97) maintains that in writing his Gospel, the Evangelist used many traditions but formulated his own structure and gave his own interpretation (see also Crossan 1978:53; Peterson 1978:118; Lombard 1987:395; Du Rand 1990:52).

Jesus is the central figure in the synoptic gospels, and the authors are convinced to re-present Him to their readers in such a way that it

becomes significant to their life experiences. In their portrayal of Jesus they consistently employed familial language. This reality has two dimensions. Firstly it is the fact that the early Christians perceived and understood themselves as a new family. This is true in that Osiek (1997:800) observed that a prominent feature in the synoptics is the estrangement between Jesus and his own family, and his encouragement of his disciples to break family ties in favour of the surrogate family of the circle of the disciples. The second dimension is that in articulating their faith, the Christians used family language such as, inter alia, calling God the Father, Jesus the Son of God and themselves brothers and sisters. The researcher attempts to briefly focus on these aspects in each of the synoptic gospels.

5.2.1 Mark

No fruitful discussion of Mark's gospel can be conducted without due consideration of what the Markan community was going through. Matera (1987:53) correctly contends that any study of Mark's theology, requires a deep understanding of the experiences of the community. [The family perspective in Mark's gospel will be discussed under the following sub-headings: Mark's christology, Jesus as Son of Man, the composition of the new family, discipleship, Jesus and new family].

5.2.1.1 Mark's christology as interpretative framework

The beginning of Mark's Gospel states: "Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ" [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God." Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992:174) say that the contents of such a proclamation in the context of the Graeco-Roman culture included

amnesty on the accession of a new ruler. Over the years scholars differed on the meaning of the expression “θεος ἄνθρωπος” in Mark's christology. Kingsbury (1981:243f) and the others, such as Betz (1986:116), Achtemeier (1972:186f) and Wrede (1971:76) maintain that the clue to the christology of Mark is found in the story itself, not in the tradition Mark used nor in the community for which he wrote. The evangelist, being aware of the divine man as a Hellenistic concept, draped Jesus in the cloak of the divine man.

Arguments in this regard advanced by Tannehill (1976:386ff), Combrink (1988:38), Martin (1975:140) and Perrin (1970:161f) are persuasive. They say that Mark was engaged in correcting a false christology simmering amongst his parishioners. He was proclaiming the theology of the cross as against that of glory. Due to the delay of the "parousia", an idea began to circulate that Jesus was a divine man who performed miracles. His followers, were also divine men. This problem could have been experienced in the Hellenistic churches which had not been influenced to any great extent by Paul. There were probably a number of "divine persons", the miracle workers who travelled from one city to another. They aroused enthusiasm amongst many people through magical tricks and partly through the miraculous deeds produced and influenced by their own personalities and reputations. Matera (1987:24) says that the proponents of this divine man christology emphasised the miraculous aspect of Jesus' ministry, thus minimising and even neglecting the humiliating death upon the cross. They stressed the present salvation found in Jesus the Son of God, the divine man, that is the "theologia gloria". In addressing this situation the evangelist's task was not to play off the two christologies one against the other. Rather he depicts the Jesus of the miracle stories and that of the passion narratives

as the same (Combrink 1988:140). It is therefore against this background that we will be in the position of understanding Mark's view of discipleship.

5.2.1.2 Son of Man

Mark uses another familial expression, υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου that also deserves attention. Kingsbury (1983:159f) maintains that one of the striking features in Mark's Gospel is the title "Son of Man". He contends that its usage is unlike other christological titles such as, Son of David, King of the Jews (Israel) or even Son of God. The latter titles set forth the identity of Jesus, they specify who Jesus is. In the fullest measure, they provide a description of Jesus to his disciples and his foes alike. The "Son of Man" title in Mark is therefore without content as far as the identity of Jesus is concerned, for through it the reader is not informed about who Jesus is. The title, however, constitutes a title of majesty, for it is applied exclusively to Jesus in conformity with the unique contours of his life and ministry, earthly activity, suffering, death and rising and return for judgement and vindication (see Moule 1977:65; Kealy 1982:77; Kim 1983:1; Bornkamm 1995:177ff).

5.2.1.3 The composition of the new family (Mk 2:13-17)

“Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν πάλιν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν· καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἦρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς. καὶ παράγων εἶδεν Λευὶν τὸν τοῦ Ἀλφαίου καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ Ἀκολούθει μοι. Καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ. Καὶ γίνεται κατακεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ

ἀμαρτωλοὶ συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ἦσαν γὰρ πολλοὶ καὶ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ. Καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων ἰδόντες ὅτι ἐσθίει μετὰ τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν καὶ τελωνῶν ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, Ὅτι μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἀμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει; καὶ ἀκούσας ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς [ὅτι] Οὐ χρειάν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἰατροῦ ἀλλ' οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες· οὐκ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἀμαρτωλοὺς”

In the preceding pericope (2:1-12), in the healing of the paralytic, Jesus has undoubtedly already made himself unpopular with the Jewish leaders: “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God” (:7). The controversy is set to continue. The calling of another disciple presents yet another family metaphor in the theology of the Second Evangelist of the church. Levi is invited to the inner circle, “akolouthei mou”. In the calling of a tax-collector to be one of his disciples, a statement is made. Hurtado (1983:28) maintains that the tax-collectors were unpopular with the Jews because they raised taxes for Herod and the Romans. In some instances they were accused of greed because they obtained their jobs by bidding how much money they would raise, and their own reward was determined by their diligence in squeezing the utmost from the tax-paying Jewish public. Cole (1973:69) adds that the tax-collectors were often, if not always rapacious and immoral, apart altogether from the nationalistic prejudice against them, especially if they were directly working for the Romans, they were classified as outcasts. The Gospels elsewhere couple them with sinners: “... a friend of tax- collectors and sinners” (Lk 7:34; see also Mt 18:17; 21:31).

Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992:190) caution against exaggeration and naivety in an assessment of the tax-collectors. Firstly, they say such an assessment depends on the evaluator. In most cases those who regarded the tax-collectors as dishonest and regarded them with contempt were tradesmen and the rich. The poor and the day labourers had little or nothing from which such duties could be levied. It is therefore not expected from them to be amongst those who despised tax-collectors. Secondly, the statement by the authors of the Mishna: "If tax-gatherers enter a house the house becomes unclean" (M. Toharot 7:6) should be correctly interpreted and understood. A house referred to would belong to a Pharisee that was dedicated to ritual purity in table fellowship. This is therefore a special case. Another assumption is that if a tax-collector entered a house, he would handle everything in order to assess the wealth of the owner. But it is not that the tax-collector who was per se unclean. Any member of the out-group entering a house would be regarded ritually unclean according to the standards of the host and thus would defile the objects.

Through the calling of Levi, the Markan Jesus makes his intentions and acts even more clearer. In Mark 1:16-20 Jesus called Simon, Andrew and John. His calling detached them from their family and attached them to a new fictive family. It was abnormal behaviour, if not traumatic in anticipation for one to leave his own job, folks and father. In calling a controversial person (2:14), the evangelist indicates the new network of relationship, which Jesus came to establish.

After the calling of Levi, the sitting in the house of a new-comer, joined by the sinners and other collectors serves to drive the point home. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992:141) maintain that meals in antiquity were what

anthropologists call “ceremonies”. Unlike “rituals,” which confirm a change of status, ceremonies are regular, predictable events in which roles and statuses in a community are affirmed or legitimated. In other words, the microcosm of the meal is parallel to the macrocosm of everyday social relations. Though meals could include people of varying social ranks, normally that did not occur except under special circumstances, for example, in some Roman burial clubs. Because eating together implied sharing a common set of ideas and values, and frequently a common social position as well (see Luke 13:26), it is important to ask: Who eats with whom? Who sits where? What does one eat? Where does one eat? How is the food prepared? What utensils are used? When does one eat? What talk is appropriate? Who does what? When does one eat what course? Answering such questions tells us much about the social relations a meal affirms.

This therefore means that the Markan church, the new family that Jesus came to establish is implied in this pericope. Jesus came to establish, a new community unheard and unseen in the Jewish, Roman and Greek culture. The rich, the sinners, the rabbis and everyone else who has heeded his call can sit together having fellowship and be regarded as brother and sister.

5.2.1.4 Discipleship

Barton (1994:57) maintains that one of the best ways of identifying the ethos and self-understanding of a religious movement or community is to analyse its attitudes to natural affinities. Such ties may be economic, geographical, racial or familial. Attitudes towards the natural family may function as a test of allegiance to the charismatic leader. The

subordination to the family may come to represent itself in familial terms, as a kind of alternative family or brotherhood whose role, norms and authority patterns are modelled to the same extent as those of the natural family (cf Harder 1976:155ff; Wallis 1979: 41ff).

Donahue (1983:4f) states that from the onset the author summons the reader to think about discipleship as an enterprise of utmost seriousness which has to do with an understanding of what it is to be involved with Him. Discipleship is therefore an important concern in Mark's Gospel. This is underpinned by a visible absence of the infancy narrative at the beginning of the Gospel and the fact the Jesus' mother and father are not given any place of prominence in the Gospel. The manner in which the disciples are portrayed, presupposes a new family. There is a substantial number of references which points in this particular direction. It is however practically impossible given the spatial constraint in this research to discuss them all. The pericope (Mk 3:20-21;31-35) shall be used to demonstrate this fact:

5.2.1.5 Jesus' new family (3:20-21; 31-35)

“Καὶ ἐρχεται εἰς οἶκον· καὶ συνέρχεται πάλιν [ὁ] ὄχλος, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι οὐτοὺς μηδὲ ἄρτον φαγεῖν. Καὶ ἀκόσαντες οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐξῆλθον κρατῆσαι αὐτόν, ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη.” (20-21)

“Και ἔρχονται ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἔξω στήκοντες ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτόν καλοῦντες αὐτόν. Καὶ ἐκάθητο περὶ αὐτόν ὄχλος, καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Ἰδοὺ ἡ μήτηρ σου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί σου [καὶ αἱ ἀδελφοί

σου] ἔξω ζητοῦσίν σε. καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτοῖς λέγει, Τίς ἐστὶν ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί [μου] ; καὶ περιβλεψάμενος τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν κύκλῳ καθημένους λέγει, Ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί μου. Ὁ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί μου. Ὃς [γὰρ] ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀδελφὴ καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν.” (31-35).

In the structure of Mark's Gospel, this section falls within the third part - Jesus teaching and the performing of miracles. This text is also permeated with the idea of the new family. The first aspect to be observed is that the setting of the episode is in a house. Malbon (1986:113) has done some research concerning the significance of the εἰς οἶκον as an architectural space in Mark's Gospel. It is one of a number of such spaces, which function symbolically in the narrative to convey the transformation and overturning of one order by another, which the ministry of Jesus represents.

“Jesus in a house ” expression represents a new realm of Jesus activities as against the temple and the synagogue. This new family no longer meets in the temple or synagogue because it is no longer welcomed. It is also possible that the trauma of the destruction of the temple was still fresh in the minds of the Jews. The house is used to separate the disciples, the new family, from the crowd and the Jewish authorities. Trochme (1975:12) maintains that "house" in Mark has another significance. Taking into consideration that Paul's ministry was already impacting on communities at this time, there is a certain link between the frequent reference in Mark to house and house churches of the early

Christianity (Rm 16:5; Col 4:15). For a more thorough discussion on the significance of the οἴκοι in Mark, see Malbon (1985:282-292).

Secondly, to underline the fact of the disciples as a separate group (new family) in this episode, the teachers of the law who came from Jerusalem are placed in the same category with Jesus' relatives who also make their way to the house. Both groups have something against Jesus. The Jewish authorities lay a charge against Him, Βεελζεβοὺλ ἔχει (:22). His family, came to take Him home for they said that He was out of his mind. The response of Jesus: "whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" is significant. He clearly separates the disciples from his family and the crowd (cf Schweitzer 1970:82ff; Best 1981; 22-27).

This interpretation although widely embraced by many scholars, leaves one or two questions in obscurity. What is the meaning of "those doing the will of God"? There is nothing in the episode itself suggesting that they were an active group, "doing the will of God". Words are put in the mouths of a passive audience. In order to answer this question, it suffices to observe that this passage is ridden with redactional activity. The three-dimensional emphasis of withdrawal, separation and instruction denotes what functions the house churches would have fulfilled in the early church.

Another question which is unclear, is the position of his mother and brothers (and sisters?). What is it in the pericope suggesting that they were not doing the will of God? This episode should, be understood in the light of Mark's portrayal of the disciples as the new family of God. For instance in Mk 1:16-20, Jesus called Simon and Andrew. They

immediately left their occupation and their father and followed Jesus. In Mark 6:1-6 Jesus is also rejected in his own hometown of Nazareth.

In the other family metaphors found in Mark, God is called Father. Jacobs- Malina (1993:1) says that this should be understood against the background that Jesus lived in a patriarchal social system where the father/husband was designated as the head of the family (cf Grindal 1984:78ff) Jesus is also called Son of God (cf Kim 1983:1ff). This new family of God is also called a flock (14:27) and a boat (4:1).

5.2.1.6 Summary

Some concluding remarks on the church as a family in Mark will be appropriate. The author of the Second Gospel presents a reconstruction of how the Markan church envisaged itself. In the Graeco-Roman period belonging to a particular family was of great importance. Becoming a follower of Jesus resulted in the subordination of natural family ties. Thus, Mark's Gospel evinces a contra and counter-cultural ethos. Jesus called people to become his disciples. In their response, they left their families and occupations. It is granted that the church is nowhere identified in Mark's Gospel as the family of God, but the idea permeates the entire Gospel. Why should people forsake their family ties? Why should they be prepared to sacrifice belonging to a secured establishment – their families? It is simply because that they have joined and became members of a new family which according to its ethos and self-understanding is different from the previous one. They are a new people of God. They are the real family of God through Jesus and God is their Father.

5.2.2 Matthew

Bornkamm, (1963:38f) maintains that there is no Gospel which is shaped by the consciousness of the existence of the church as Matthew's Gospel. Statements which depict the self-consciousness of the primitive church permeates the entire Gospel. It is for instance only in this Gospel where the word church is used (Mt 16:18). The disciples are the free sons of God (13:11), they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, the city which is on the hill (5:13).

In Matthew's Gospel, we find that the evangelist has marshalled the data he used in such a way that the picture of the church as it was known to his community is graphically presented. His fundamental intuition, however, is that by his words and actions during his public ministry, Jesus was already engaged in founding the church. What picture of the church did the author and the community have about themselves? Pelser (1995:4) maintains that Matthew portrays a picture of a suffering church. The manner in which the disciples should live is clearly spelt-out. They should imitate Christ. Following Christ implies the sole and continuous personal bonding with Him, which is expressed in accomplishing his teachings and doing his will. [In our discussion of family imagery in Matthew, the following aspects will briefly be given attention: the life of the new people of God, Matthew's discipleship (a new brotherhood), the theological significance of ἀκολουθέω, and the Kingdom of God].

5.2.2.1 The real/new people of God

Matthew's Gospel attempts to show that the historical Jesus came to fulfil God's promises for his people, Israel (Roloff 1993:143). Although the



universal nature of the gospel in Matthew's Gospel cannot be questioned, the ministry of Jesus is more directed towards the Jews. But when Jesus came to his own, they rejected Him. Does this therefore mean that because of this rejection, God's mercy and grace are given to those who responded positively to the message of Jesus? Is the church God's new people/nation meant to substitute the historical Israel? Many Matthew researchers agree with these notions (see also Pelsner 1995:664).

Schnackenburg (1974:70) maintains that it is important to realise the type of community Matthew was writing to. It is a widely accepted fact that the Matthean community was predominantly Jewish. This, however, does not mean that they perceived salvation as the sole possession of the Jews. They had probably, around the last twenty years of the first century outgrown any narrowly nationalistic mode of thought and regarded themselves as a universal redeemed community of Jesus Christ. The Jewishness of the Gospel should therefore be understood against the background of the unbelieving Jews who boasted about the Torah and its legalistic accomplishments, its pride in achievement and striving after merit. This created a particular consciousness in the Matthean church which is perceptible in Matthew's Gospel and also which contributed to its position as the "Ecclesiastical Gospel".

The starting point of understanding the church as a new people of God is found in the parable of the wicked husbandman (21:41ff) with particular reference to v.43. "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and be given to a people who will produce fruit." This verse is omitted from Mark and Luke, but this is not necessarily an indication that it is a later interpolation. Matthew was probably anxious to show his readers that Jesus was concerned with the problem of his

rejection by the Jews and consequently the emergence of a new Israel (Tasker 1961:205). Gundry (1994:429) maintains that characteristically, Matthew composed this (verse 43) after the pattern of certain Old Testament passages (e.g. 1 Sm 15:28; Dn 2:44; 7:27) - and as a verdict against the chief priests and elders of the people in favour of the church.

Although Jesus in this parable addresses the Jewish leaders, the whole Jewish people share the responsibility for the rejection and the crucifixion of Jesus (27:25 πᾶς ὁ λαός; Schnackenburg [1974:70]; Beare [1981:431]; Filson [1960:229]). Commenting on the church as the new people, Kingsbury (1977:78) maintains that because Israel had repudiated Jesus, the Messiah, God has withdrawn his Kingdom from it and given it to the church. The church therefore, as the central thought of the Gospel is the community in which God in the person of Jesus chooses to dwell to the end to the age (1:23; 18:19-20; 28:20).

Schnackenburg (1974:70f) says that the author of Matthew must have seen the withdrawal of God's divine providence and grace in quite a concrete form in the judgement and condemnation that had already taken place over Judea (destruction of the temple) and in the loss of national independence, (12:7). Who are "the people" then to whom the kingdom of God is given? It is no longer an ethnic, national reality but a spiritual people, a fellowship of people who "yield fruits of divine rule". This image of fruit reflects Matthew's views of the church. It also presupposes the existing set of beliefs already espoused by this new community. Followers of Jesus are the true people of God who are being formed on a new foundation comprising of members who are Jews as well as Gentiles. (12:21; 24:14; 25:32; 28:19).

Taking the above mentioned remarks into consideration, the church in Matthew is presented as a new family (a post-Easter community made possible by the salvation of Jesus 26:28). They are a fulfillment of the true Israel. Combrink (1988:95) in this regard for instance says that Matthew emphasises the continuing validity of the law. For example after healing a man, Jesus sends him to the priest to fulfil the law's demands (8:4). It is such features in Matthew which lead some commentators to accommodate the idea that Matthew could have perceived the church as the continuation of Israel. Roloff (1993:51), however, says that great caution should be exercised in hastily regarding the Matthean church as the new Israel of God. He says that nowhere in the Gospel the author expressly refers to the church as the new nation of God.

The warning of Roloff, is however, less convincing. Matthew does not necessarily have to use the word "new nation" and ascribe it to Israel for us to interpret and understand his community as a new family of God. For instance, some New Testament exegetes agree that even in the Gospel of John, where the word church does not appear, the idea of ecclesiology permeates throughout the entire Gospel. Therefore, Matthew's portrayal of the church is clearly that of a the family of God. The Jewishness of Matthew and the prominence of the law does not imply that the church was a renewed old Israel. The "Law" which was leading in this community is a "Lex Christi" surpassing the old Torah which Jesus, the eschatological envoy of God (5:17,12:41f) has authoritatively promulgated (see Matthew 5-7).

5.2.2.2 Discipleship in Matthew

The picture of discipleship in Matthew (as in Mark), has ecclesiological connotations. However, a distinctive feature of Matthew's portrait of the disciples is the unique relationship they have with Jesus Christ. There is widespread consensus about the general features of the disciples in Matthew (Luz 1971:159; Kingsbury 1977:78; Sand 1991:105; Roloff 1993:154). Some researchers such as Kingsbury (1981:8) see the idea of discipleship in Matthew as more developed than Mark and Luke. Jesus is "with them" and they are "with him." Jesus and his disciples form a "family" that stand apart from the rest of Israel. In relation to himself, Jesus declares that his disciples are his true relatives (12:19) and his brothers (28:10). In comparison to disciples in Mark, Sheridan (1973:243ff) says that Matthew's disciples, unlike those in Mark, understand virtually everything which Jesus teaches (Mt 13:10-17; Mk 4:10-12). For instance the Markan disciples did not understand about the bread (6:52). Matthew's account omits this ignorance of the disciples.

The discourse on Matthew's Gospel cannot be concluded without referring to the relation between family ties and discipleship. Matthew 10:16-23 could be cited as an example in this regard. Here for the first time the Twelve are identified as "apostles". However, the author does not use this concept in a technical sense. It merely refers to the fact that they are commissioned. But it is unlikely that Matthew 10:16-23 records an event which took place during the earthly ministry of Jesus. Matthew rather speaks of hardships within his own community. The words "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues."(v.17), seems to be reporting some of the

experiences of the Matthews church at a much later stage than this sending of the Twelve.

To elaborate this point: The fact that the Twelve were prohibited to take the gospel to the Gentiles and Samaritans shows the author's redactional activity. The Christians only began to preach the Good News to the Gentiles after the death of Christ. Even then the first preaching to the Gentiles was not done by the Twelve, but by unknown Hellenistic believers who were driven from Jerusalem by the persecutions which broke out after the martyrdom of Stephen (Ac 8:1,4, 11:19-21; Beare [1981:242]).

Matthew makes it clear in Matthew 10:16-23 that family life will be disrupted and division within a family will occur within his community. Brother will hand over brother. The only situation which could cause normal family ties to be broken, is to form allignments with other families. This means, therefore that by virtue of their relationship with Jesus, the Matthean church will forfeit family certain relationships. At the same time members of this community hears in this pericope: "Be on guard against men"...(v.17), "(They) will flog you in their synagogues" (v.17), "All men will hate you" v.22, "When you are persecuted in one place flee to another..."(v.22). These statements indicate that the evangelist is not warning his community against faceless people. He is addressing them against unbelieving Jews in their surroundings. Matthew's church is to be separate from the Jews who are still to be converted, the latter belong to ...the lost sheep of Israel. They should be invited to come into the family... the Kingdom of God.

5.2.2.3 Theological and metaphoric significance of ἀκολουθεῖν. (Matthew 20:29-34)

“Καὶ ἐκπορευομένων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ Ἰεριχῶ ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολὺς. καὶ ἰδοὺ δύο τυφλοὶ καθήμενοι παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν, ἀκούσαντες ὅτι Ἰησοῦς παράγει, ἔκραξαν λέγοντες· κύριε, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς, υἱὸς Δαυίδ. ὁ δὲ ὄχλος ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα σιωπήσωσιν· οἱ δὲ μείζον ἔκραξαν λέγοντες· κύριε, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς, υἱὸς Δαυίδ. καὶ στάς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐφώνησεν αὐτοὺς καὶ εἶπεν· τί θέλετε ποιήσω ὑμῖν; λέουσιν αὐτῷ· κύριε, ἵνα ἀνοιγῶσιν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν. σπλαγχνισθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἥψατο τῶν ὀμμάτων αὐτῶν, καὶ εὐθέως ἀνέβλεψαν καὶ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ” (Mt 20:29-34).

Matthew employs the verb ἀκολουθέω (to follow) more than the other synoptic gospels. The Second Evangelist uses it eighteen times and Luke only seven times (Morgenthaler 1958:70). Matthean scholars are divided on the use of ἀκολουθέω in Matthew. The majority of commentators seem to indicate that the verb has ecclesiastical undertones. For instance, concerning the two blind men of Jericho in Matthew 20 these scholars would interpret the words they received their sight and followed him” (20:34), to mean that after receiving their sight they became Jesus’ disciples and followed him. Hill (1972:290), for instance maintains that the fact that in this healing story Jesus is followed by a great crowd suggests that messianic interest and enthusiasm were mounting as Jesus neared Jerusalem. Furthermore, the presence of two blind men, rather than one (as it is in Mark 10:46ff) may be due to the fact that two persons was the minimum number of witnesses required to authenticate an incident or fact. The restoration of sight to the blind men was to be a sign

of the messianic era (see also Trilling 1969:5f; Albright and Mann 1971:249).

Other commentators insist that not much can be and should be read into this verb in Matthew 20:34. It simply means that after they received their sight, the two men were in the company of Jesus and his disciples. Filson (1960:219) acknowledgeably, attaches spiritual significance in the two men following Jesus, but not to the extent that they became his disciples. For instance he says that, the fact that they identified Him as “Son of David” was based on a rumour that He was going to Jerusalem to restore the kingdom of Israel. The men were, thus more concerned about their physical healing than any other thing (see also Bonnard [1963:29]; Benoit [1961:128]).

A careful scrutiny of ἀκολουθεῖν in the healing of the blind men in Matthew 20, indicates that it has theological and metaphorical significance. Although there might be little or nothing in the context itself which suggests that the expression is used to indicate discipleship, there is enough evidence in the rest of the Gospel that this is a miracle coupled with a “call story”. Gundry (1994:406) maintains that Matthew modified the Markan equivalent of this miracle. As it is characteristic of the First Evangelist at the beginning of v.34 he replaces the “καὶ” of Mark to “δέ”. Furthermore, “σπλαγχνισθεῖς” is added in order to make the healing an act of service in line with v.22-28 (cf 18:27) for another distinctive occurrence of this form). “Jesus touched their eyes” replaces the Markan and the Lukan “Jesus said to him”. Therefore, the switch from speaking to “touching” causes the expression “go, your faith has saved you” to drop out. The blind men received their sight and followed Him. The aorist tense of the verb (v. 34) replaces Mark’s and Luke’s

imperfect. The avoidance of the words “on the road” further serves to make the climatic statement a general description of discipleship rather than a particular reference to the journey towards Jerusalem.

The general meaning of the verb “to follow” suggests that the two blind men did not only follow Jesus “on the road” but they also actually became his disciples. It is granted in the context that the men did follow Jesus “on the road to Jerusalem”. But the meaning of the verb does not only mean physically following a person. It also means to go behind a person, to accompany one, or to go after, or to be a disciple. The verb ἀκολουθῆν was frequently used for slaves following soldiers, or them (slaves) following the orders of the masters. These men were therefore convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and they followed Him. The First Evangelist, thus, uses the verb ἀκολουθῆν metaphorically. This means that those whom Jesus had freed from the kingdom of darkness or sickness no longer are without direction. They were following Him. They became his disciples and were guided by Him. They became part of a new family, the Matthean community.

5.2.2.4. The Kingdom of God

The expression or phrase “Kingdom of God” does not occur in the Old Testament but the concept or idea of God as the king is embedded there (Beasley-Murray 1986:20; Wolthuis 1987: 293). In the New Testament “the Kingdom of God” or “the Kingdom of Heaven”, signifying God’s sovereign rule, lay at the heart of Jesus’ preaching and teaching. As proclaimed by Jesus, the Kingdom of God had continuity with the Old Testament promise, as well as the Jewish apocalyptic thinking, but differed from them in some respects. For instance, God’s Kingdom in the New Testament denoted God’s eternal rule rather than an earthly

Kingdom. Its scope was universal rather than limited to the Jewish nation (Marshall 1992: 417).

Now, turning to Matthew's Gospel, the author probably offers a richer and more explicit picture of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God than the other synoptics. At the very onset of his Gospel, the author provides a description of the preaching of John the Baptist. Wolthuis (1987:294f) maintains that in Matthew's Gospel the symbol of the Kingdom of God is given specific meaning by the narrative, and the reader is brought into the experience of that Kingdom by participation in the reading process itself. It is therefore the symbol of the Kingdom which unifies the theological concepts of the thematic aspects of the narrative.

The usual phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" occurs 32 times and it's never found elsewhere in the New Testament. Four times we find "Kingdom of God", an expression which is also found in the other New Testament books. The essential meaning of "Kingdom" is the actual kingship and effective rule of God, established by the work of Jesus Christ. The Kingdom has present and future aspects. Through Jesus Christ God was acting to defeat the power of Satan. However, God's reign was not yet fully realised and effective. It will be finally and completely established at the end of the age and the Son of Man will act on behalf of the Father in establishing it.

βασιλεία (Hebrew: Malkuth) means sovereign kingship, rather than a specific Kingdom. It means the authority of God is acknowledged everywhere. The First Evangelist therefore, uses the expression Kingdom of God to express what it means to be the people of God in the light of the coming of Jesus as the Son of God. For Matthew, God is the

heavenly Father who is “with us”, who also graciously, in the person of Jesus, calls people to repentance because the Kingdom of God is near. Matthew uses various means to illustrate the concept of the Kingdom of God. He uses for instance parables to achieve this purpose. In chapter 13, seven parables are related.

The parable of the sower, 13:1-9

The purpose of the parables, 13:10-17

The meaning of the parable of the sower, 13:18-23

The parable of the weeds, 13:24-30

More parables of growth, 13:31-33

Parables in prophecy, 13:34-35

The meaning of the parable of the weeds, 13:36-43

Three short parables, 13:44-50

The householder, 13:51-52

The parable of the weeds needs attention. This parable is found only in Matthew and also the first of a series of parables specifically said to refer to the Kingdom of Heaven. It has strong eschatological undertones, even though it also applies to the contemporary time of Matthew’s church. In this parable Jesus likewise uses the figure of the sower, but this time, deals with the character of the seed rather than the receptial, as it is the case in the previous parable. In Matthew 13:36-43, when the disciples later privately ask Jesus concerning the meaning of the parable, He identifies the field as the world, the sower as the Son of Man who sowed good seed, the enemy as the devil who sowed the weeds. The good seed is represented as the children of God and the weed as the children of the wicked one, the devil (Walvoord 1974: 100).

Beare (1981:303) maintains that the interpretation of this parable is undoubtedly the author's own creation. It, however, seems likely that he received this parable from the earlier source and reshaped it to achieve his own goal. Through this parable the author clearly indicates that his community members are the good seed. They are distinct from the weeds, the tares. They will operate in this manner until the end of time where clear separation between them and those who did not belong to the church will take place. Once more in this pericope we thus have the family metaphor of those who belong to the Kingdom. The Father is the head of the Kingdom. Those who become part of this Kingdom are now called the children of God, (Mt 5:9). They may call God Father when they address Him in prayer, (6:9). The relationship between God and his children is very intimate, but mostly goes hand in hand with respect (Mt 10:28).

This Kingdom of God (as a new fictive family) has new values or principles (Matthew 5-7). For instance, Matthew structures Jesus' teaching about the ethics of the Kingdom of heaven in Chapter 5 in three: the Beatitudes 5:3-12, salt and light 5: 12-16, antitheses contrast to the law 5: 17-48. Another three-fold series is found in chapter 6. And the first colon of chapter 7: Almsgiving, prayer and fasting is contrasted, with that of Jewish leaders (6:1-18) and trust in God than riches (6:19-33).

The purpose of the evangelist in presenting these teachings in series of threes is not hard to find. The principles, ethics and values of this new family are unique. Though some of them seem to be impossible to attain, it is possible once one is part of the Kingdom. These moral principles are actually designed to counteract the earthly views of the people of Israel (see Walvoord 1974:43).

5.2.2.5 Summary

In the foregone discussion the following aspects of the Matthean church were highlighted: The church as the real/new people, discipleship, the theological significance of following Jesus and the church as manifestation of the Kingdom of God. The believers in Matthew's Gospel are seen as having entered the Kingdom of God. The church is the result of those who have responded to the call of the coming king. It is a call to become the disciples of Jesus. The church, even on earth is certain of the presence of God. As it was observed in Mark, there is nowhere in the First Gospel where the church is referred to or identified as the family but the idea is implied throughout the Gospel. In the Old Testament, God (the Father) established a people (the Israelites) for Himself through Abraham. In Matthew's Gospel, God has called and established children for Himself through Jesus Christ. The Matthean community, thus, regarded itself as the family which was distinct from the "old family", the unbelieving Jews.

5.2.3 Luke-Acts

The portrayal of the church in Luke-Acts is different from what we have already observed in Mark and Matthew. Pelsner (1995:652) maintains that it appears that the Lukan church is the result of salvation-history. The time of the church is the third phase in the process of salvation-history. The first is the history of Israel, and the second the actions of John the Baptist and Jesus. Conzelmann (1977:195) calls this the tripartite scheme (cf also Giles 1981:121). Schnackenburg (1974:64) states that the Third Evangelist as a theologian is concerned about the place of the church in

the context of redemptive history and the tasks which, according to the will of God, it has to fulfil in its time. The church as a family in Luke-Acts shall therefore be discussed, giving attention to discipleship, the church and the Spirit, and the contrast between the temple and household and the ethics of the new family.

5.2.3.1 Discipleship

Like in Mark and Matthew, the word "church" is not found in Luke. But the manner in which Luke presents Jesus' work in the Third Gospel, presupposes that He was establishing a community which would later form an eschatological community, referred to as the church (Du Plessis 1995:58). Giles (1981:121) says that, whereas the church is commonly thought as coming into existence after Easter, in Luke it comes into existence during the ministry of Jesus. Luke's (narrative) creation of his disciples is intended to set before his readers a model Christian community. They are meant not to prefigure the church nor to represent the church in embryo: they are actually the church, all be it, in idealised form. This is based, amongst others, on the manner in which the author used and adopted the traditions about the disciples. Sheridan (1973:252) observes that in Acts, the term disciple is never applied to the Twelve or the Eleven. Although of course, the term is used frequently, it always designates the believers or Christians as a distinct group from the Twelve (cf Barrett 1956: 138ff).

Like in all the other Gospels, in Luke, the term "disciples" refer to those following Jesus. Du Plessis (1995:58-9) maintains that Luke's special way of referring to discipleship is not so much to "follow" but "to be with Jesus". To be a disciple transcended possessing a number of truths, but

rather the recognition, the search and the following of Jesus into new situations. Fitzmyer (1979:235) says that Luke's shift of emphasis from the ἔσχατον to the σημερον eliminated the need to focus on the imminent coming of the Kingdom and enabled him to present in his own way the important role of Christian discipleship. This is evident in Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and its effect on those who followed Him (Lk 9:51 - 19:28). In this journey, as constructed by the Third Evangelist, people who wanted to become disciples of Jesus, were required to follow Him along the road to Jerusalem - where He was to die, but also to triumph over death. This central section has few miracles. The main focus is on the parables and the other pronouncements of Jesus. The narrator, dealing mainly with Jesus' instructions to his disciples and conflict with his opponents (cf McFadyen 1993:444f) elaborately presents the journey.

Another most significant aspect of Luke discipleship is inferred in Luke 8:4-10, the parable of the seed and the sower. On completion of this parable, the disciples asked Him about the meaning of the parable. Before answering them Jesus makes a statement which, Du Plessis (1995:3) calls the "insiders" and "outsiders", or the "you" and "them" expression: "the knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables"(v.10). A similar thought surfaces elsewhere in Luke 9:37-43. There the disciples are surprised why they could not exorcise the spirit from the child. What He could do, they thought they too could do. Another incident is found in 9:49-50. The disciples were indignant because they saw another man using Jesus' name to drive out demons: "...we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." Jesus answer imply that they are not the only members of this family, "for whoever is not against you is for you..." The same redactional activity of the Evangelist in defining and identifying his

community, which is also found in Mark (see paragraph 3.2.1.2), reflects the nature of discipleship as being part of a new "family" into new knowledge and new members.

5.2.3.2 The Spirit

Pelser (1995:53) says that one of the dominant features of the Lukan narrative is the presence of the Holy Spirit. Brown (1984:56) calls this the distinguishing feature of the Lukan ecclesiology. The Spirit is mentioned seventy times in Acts alone (almost one-fifth of the total New Testament usage's). Another fact worth noting is that Luke omits in Acts all further reference to Peter after the "church Council" in Acts 15. Even more disconcerting is that Acts ends abruptly when Paul gets to Rome without any reference to his subsequent career and death. This indicates that the author is not interested in people, per se, but in them as vehicles of the Spirit, bearing witness to Christ in Jerusalem, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Ac 1:8). Schnackenburg (1974:66) correctly maintains that the conferring of the Spirit upon the disciples is significant. It means that period of Jesus continues in the period of the church. He continues to be with them by the Spirit.

Two factors, which are important though seldom mentioned by commentators of Luke-Acts, deserve to be observed. Firstly, the second volume of Luke-Acts opens with the portrayal of the disciples after the departure of Jesus. In their expectancy of the Heavenly Gift which was promised to them, they remained together. During this time they replaced one of them who earlier betrayed Jesus. They felt the necessity of preserving the full compliment of the Twelve. No adequate explanation of this phenomenon can be found except that the disciples were

convinced (even after the departure of their master) that they were "a community" a family who was to carry on the will of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit descended during the time the Jewish feast of Pentecost. There were many Jews "from every nation under heaven" (2:5). However, the Holy Spirit descended only on the disciples who were engaged in prayer. This is phenomenal. It underscores what has been observed throughout this chapter that the disciples, the followers of Christ, the "insiders", etc., were indeed portrayed explicitly or implicitly by the three evangelists as the new family of God. The Holy Spirit did not go where He was rejected. He did not endue the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes or the crowd which gathered on pilgrimage in Jerusalem. He (the Holy Spirit) fell upon His own family, the disciples.

5.2.3.3 The household of God

Recently Elliott (1982 & 1991) and Esler (1987) made a significant contribution in the on-going debate on the ecclesiology in Luke-Acts. Throughout the years a lot of data has been generated on the subject, (Baltzer 1965; Bachmann 1980; Weinert 1981; Cassidy 1983; Casalengo 1984; Koenig 1985). Most of these researchers agree that the third Evangelist views the temple in a favourable light:

"Throughout Luke-Acts the main expression which emerges is Luke's positive regard for the temple. In his eyes it is an outstanding and genuine religious sanctuary, the prominent place of public worship and religious teaching in Israel" (Weinert 1981: 89).

"The overarching geographical perspective in Luke-Acts can be seen in the author's preoccupation with Jerusalem as the city of destiny for Jesus and the pivot for the salvation of mankind... Unlike the compositions of the other Evangelists, the Lukan Gospel begins and ends in Jerusalem..." (Fitzmyer 1992:164f).

Elliott (1991:211ff) added a new dimension in this research scenario. Influenced by the work of Mottu (1974:201ff), he maintains that the two, the temple and household, are two contrasting social institutions in Luke-Acts. Elliott (1991:214) cites Mottu's justification of this position based on the parable of the Pharisees and the tax-collector:

"...as long as the two antagonists look at the temple as their locus of reference, they stay in an alienated organisation of space that makes human reality inhuman. The skopos (goal) of the story seems to me to be located in an invitation to change the rules of the common spatial game, to transform collectives into groups and to give a "house" to displaced persons. No conversion, no morals, no opposition of two "characters" is the skopos; but a shift of space, a structural change, a transformation of where people live is what we are invited to accomplish. The opposition between the Pharisee and tax-collector is only the secondary aspect of the dominant contradiction which is the spatial contradiction between temple and house, collective and group, alienated and human space" (Mottu 1974:201-2).

Elliott (1991:213ff) says that the parable (Luke 18:9-14) is about the two groups in the Gospel. On the one hand, are those at the centre (the

Pharisee) and on the other side those on the periphery of Judaism's social and religious life (the tax-collectors). The story begins in the temple "the holy place" which is the conventional place for demarcating social and religious differences; but it concludes in the house, where it is stated "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other (18:14)." The parable functions to contrast the two locales: on the one hand, the temple (epitomised by Judaism) is indifferent to Jesus. On the other hand the household embraces the message of Jesus.

Elliott (1991:215) also observes this idea in the general structure of Luke-Acts. In the first volume, besides incidences such as the one mentioned above, the temple features prominently. Commencing with the story of Zechariah's priestly service (1:5-23), the Gospel concludes with the Risen Lord and return to Jerusalem where the disciples were continually in the temple blessing God (24:50 - 53). The temple scenes, thus, provide a grand framework or inclusion for the first half of Luke-Acts (cf Esler 1987:13ff Fitzmyer 1981:15). However the progressively negative attitude towards the temple becomes more and more evident towards the end of Luke.

In Acts, the second volume, the temple is both the scene and subject of conflict:

- (a) the healing of a man crippled from birth at the temple gates develops into conflict (3:1ff)
- (b) The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees in their jealousy oppose the apostles (4:1ff).
- (c) Stephen is charged for speaking against "the holy place" and "the Law" (6:13-14).

For Luke, therefore, "the temple is the object of critique and the arena of rejection", "Satan inspired", "conflict and death" (Elliott 1991:230). The household however, plays a paramount role in the ministry teaching and mission of Jesus and his followers. It serves as a historical and a metaphorical reality where people are taught by Jesus and where the new family of God could meet. The church which grows through household conversions, at the same time becomes a world-wide household of faith as illustrated in the missionary endeavours of Paul in Acts.

5.2.3.4 The ethics of the new household

We conclude Luke's portrayal of the church as God's family by referring to the ethics of the new Community. Luke 14:1-14 in this regard spells out the author's vantage point of a new social structure. This passage is important to Luke because it represents an excellent starting point for a study of Luke's view of the Christian Community. In this story a Pharisee acts as a host at a meal to which Jesus and a number of people from the village are invited. It is obvious that the host is a prominent and rich man in the village. The first striking feature in this scenario is that a man of such status has invited the non-elite sector of the city as well, thus he has broken ranks with family and elite friends. This reference to the break with the biological family and social networks reflects something of the author's view of his idea that the fictive family (the Lukan church) is to take the place of one's original family, is implied here. This thought is further taken up by the words of Jesus. He (Jesus) draws-up a new guest list. He starts with the negative one:

“Ἐλεγεν δὲ καὶ τῷ κεκληκότι αὐόν, Ὅταν ποιῆς ἄριστον ἢ δεῖπνον, μὴ φώνει τοὺς φίλους σου μηδὲ τοὺς ἀδελφούς σου μηδὲ τοὺς συγγενεῖς σου μηδὲ γείτονας πλουσίους, μήποτε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀντικαλέσωσίν σε καὶ γένηται ἀνταπόδομά σοι” (Lk 14:12)

Then follows the new guest list which reflects the author's own "ecclesiological" agenda:

“ἀλλ' ὅταν δοχὴν ποιῆς, κάλει πτωχοὺς, ἀναπίρους, χωλοὺς τυφλοὺς· καὶ μακάριος ἔσῃ, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνταποδοῦναί σοι, ἀνταποδοθήσεται γάρ σοι ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῶν δικαίων” (Lk 14:13-14).

The above pericope mirrors the ethics of this new community - hospitality. At the same time the new community is called to perseverance. “πειρασμός” (Luke 8:13) in this regard does not only refer to the persecutions which the author's church is exposed to, but all trials associated to the Christian life. To persevere, therefore signifies to be on the side of the Lord and shows commitment to the Christian kerygma.

The position of the poor in the Gospel of Luke also receives particular emphasis. Although the Lukan community had wealthy and influential members, the social outcasts in society, (the beggars and the maimed) were viewed as honourable. Luke, thus, accords priority to the utterly destitute in the scheme of salvation, as well as in the ethnical matters. Tuckett (1996:95) maintains that the poor in Luke are clearly stated as the



πτωχοῖς...” (Lk 4:18). This  with a powerful critique of the rich:

“Πλὴν οὐαὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς πλουσίοις, ὅτι ἀπέχετε τὴν παράκλησιν ὑμῶν” (Lk 6:24).

The Third Evangelist does not imply that the gospel is for the poor only. What he implies is that, the poor are also legitimately part of this new family of believers. The maimed, the poor, the blind, etc. are also invited to the messianic supper. It is the new ethic of the new community.

5.2.3.5 Summary

From the foregoing discussion, like in the other synoptic gospels, Luke does not expressly state that the church is a new family of God. But to this believing community which was in the process of forming an own identity, the author implicitly states that they form part of a formation which should be distinguished from the other institutions in the Ancient Mediterranean World. In doing that he employs family imagery. They are the disciples, who are endued by the Spirit, a household of God with a new ethic. The church according to the author of Luke-Acts is therefore a new institution which was inaugurated by the new covenant which for Luke has eschatological overtones (see 5.2.3.4 above). They are the disciples of Jesus endued by his Spirit, household of God and here a new set of ethics. In identifying his church the author employs family imagery.

5.3 The church in the Fourth Gospel

Our discussion on the church and the Johannine community as the family of God will be slightly more elaborate than the other Gospels already discussed. This is largely due to two reasons. Firstly, the church in the Johannine writings remains a much debated subject. Secondly, it is because recent years have witnessed an increased interest in the theological and exegetical study of the "ecclesia" in John. The meaning of the church, discipleship metaphors, the implicit nature of the church, etc. will all come under the spot-light.

A number of the Johannine scholars maintain that the Fourth Gospel is more concerned with the church than the synoptic gospels. Schnackenburg (1965:102) maintains that on first sight John's Gospel does not seem to focus on the church as such. It rather seems as if the Fourth Gospel was considered as evidence of an individual, spiritualised, even "mystical" Christianity (cf 3:16, 36, 4:23, 5:24, 6:56, 15:5, etc). Kysar (1993:112) also argues against individualism by stating the collective nature of the church. He maintains that the dismissal of the concept church in John because the Evangelist does not mention the word "church" is premature. The Gospel articulates a view of the church without ever resorting to the use of the word.

On the opposite side stand some scholars who maintain that the Fourth Gospel reflects no visible signs of the church. These scholars claim that the church plays a minor role in the Fourth Gospel. Such negative claims stem from the fact that the word "church" is never used. Dunn (1977:118) maintains that:

“The individual Gospel is one of the features of this it. Certainly there is a sense of both in the Gospel and in the First Epistle. And the horizontal responsibility is laid on each to love the brethren, in both as in Paul, this is the real of Christian believer.”

For further discussion on individualism in John, Bultmann (1971:8-9, 91) and Brown (1984:84) are valuable sources. The diversity of opinions concerning Johannine ecclesiology might seem to be so strong that these seemingly conflicting views are irreconcilable. The contrary is actually true. However, the differences among scholars is not so much about the fact of the church in the Fourth Gospel but it is more a question of emphasis. There is agreement among researchers that at least there are signs of the church (although implicit) in the Gospel of John. The exegetes also admit to the reference to the sacraments in the Gospel.

From this vantage point we now examine and analyse the various references to the Johannine community in the text, and also ask why the Fourth Evangelist presents the church in this fashion? (see O’Grady 1978:240; Roux 1981:33; Kysar 1993:112; Roloff 1993:291). Admittedly, John’s Gospel does not present the church as explicitly as we might expect to find in a document that comes to us from the end of the first century, at a time when Christianity was well on the way to firm establishment. Perhaps the author wished to concentrate on the meaning of the church and its practices. (The temptation to settle for the formal structure and forget the presupposition of the structure was as strong in the first century as it is today). The Fourth Gospel is basically christological and truly individualistic in its emphasis. The personal response of the believer in faith to Jesus Christ is stated in no uncertain

terms. This is the cent
understanding of the Gospel.



is such necessary for

Pelser (1995:7) maintains that the traditional metaphors of the church are absent in the Gospel (see also Kysar 1993:112; Roloff 1993:291). Dunn (1977:118) further articulates this:

“The individualism of the fourth Gospel is one of the most striking features of this remarkable document.”

“Die Johannes-evangelie het ‘n fundamentele/individualistiese karakter. Die verhouding van die individu teenoor Jesus as Verlosser en teenoor die Vader, staan vir die skrywer voorop” (Roux 1981:33).

“The ecclesiology of this heritage is distinguished by its emphasis on the relation of the individual Christian to Jesus Christ” (Brown 1984:84)

The reason for this is not obscure. The Fourth Gospel was presumably written at the time when church organisation was rapidly developing. The Gospel shows little concern for this development. At a time when there was high interest among the early Christians in the development of distinctive officers in the church organisation, John seems to have moved in the opposite direction. Even if many scholars agree on this individualistic nature of John’s ecclesiology, there are concepts, metaphors and expressions which indicate that the church was perceived corporately (Roux 1981:33; Pelser 1995:667). The discussion which follows, gives attention to the church as a family under the following:

- the church as a family, distinct from the synagogue
- the Johannine community locked in conflict
- the church as a flock
- the church/family metaphors in the farewell discourses

5.3.1. The church (as family) stands distinct from the synagogue (3:1-8)

5.3.2 The church in conversation with the synagogue

Firstly we turn our attention to the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus. One of the distinguishing features in the discourse is the fact that Nicodemus appears not to have a personal agenda. He is made not to approach Jesus in his personal capacity, i.e. seeking personal spiritual aggrandisement. The verb οἶδαμεν (3:2) may refer to the Pharisees or the ἄρχοντες or both. It is possible that it is reference to the πολλοὶ of 2:23, because they saw the signs performed by Jesus. The discourse is therefore about the fact that Judaism cannot simply move forward over a level plain to achieve its goal in the Kingdom of God. This goal cannot be reached by either learned discussions between its distinguished teachers (such as Jesus and Nicodemus).

Meeks (1972:54) says that the primary message of this dialogue is that Jesus is incomprehensible to Nicodemus. The two belong to two different worlds, in spite of Nicodemus' good intentions (3:2). Jesus' world seems rather opaque to him. It therefore becomes significant to discover what or whom Nicodemus represents. Furthermore, his title, as depicted by the Evangelist, "ruler of the Jews" (3:1 and 7:50) further

betray him. Thus, Nicodemus according to Meeks (:55) is an envoy of these Jews probably mentioned in 2:23f “who believed in him”.

Bultmann (1971:134) maintains that Nicodemus comes with a question which Judaism must put to Jesus. It is the question of salvation. Summers (1979:65) in turn states that the Jews were proud that they were the descendants and children of Abraham by physical birth. To them to be a child of Abraham meant an exalted privilege and status. Jesus had to categorically state that to be a true son of Abraham is a spiritual matter and not a physical matter, but to be a son of God requires something more than that.

5.3.2.1. The family imagery of birth and rebirth

The discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus (the expression of faith through the symbol of the new birth) contains some of the most significant metaphors in the Johannine corpus. Hence Van der Watt (1997b:1) maintains that one of the most important “family imageries” and ethically powerful statements in the Johannine writings is the fact that “no one who is born of God will continue in sin...” (1 John 2:29, 3:10; 4:7 and 5:1-2 18). Malina, Joubert and Van der Walt (1996:21) in this regard state that birth was in the first century Mediterranean world the most important way of becoming a member of a family. The New Testament uses this image to say how a believer becomes part of God’s family. The Holy Spirit is responsible for this experience of a person being made a believer- a child of God, to be part of the divine family of God. This family metaphor of being born in the family of the Father permeates throughout the discourse, even beyond.

5.3.2.2. “...you must be born again..(3:3)

Jesus ignores Nicodemus’ confession or flattery, “...Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (3:2). Jesus confronts Nicodemus with a stunning statement, “... I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (3:3). Right from the onset Jesus uncompromisingly states that man, as he/she is, is excluded from salvation, i.e. from the sphere of God. Yet, he states that salvation may be possible for him to become another man - a new man.

The terms "born from above"; “born of the Spirit” appear to be used interchangeably and are virtually synonymous. The dualistic framework of John’s Gospel is also encountered in this pericope. The Spirit and flesh are mutually exclusive; since flesh begets only flesh and only Spirit can beget spirit (3:6; 6:63). The flesh is in this context not necessarily regarded as evil but it is incapable of effecting salvation (6:63; Miller [1976:44f]). Lindars (1972:153) also says that :

“The Spirit is not a component part of man, but the influence which directs the *whole* man once he has been reborn. This influence is analogous to the wind (verse 8). The man born from the flesh is a man as he is by nature, impelled by the forces of his own natural endowment. The man born from the spirit is man as he is when open to the influence of God, with all his natural forces brought under the control of the Spirit.”

The most important expression in this dialogue is γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν. The word γεννάω appears some ninety times in the New Testament, forty-five times in Matthew's Gospel and twenty-eight in the Johannine corpus. This word and the related concepts such as "beget", "bear", "become", etc. are used literally and metaphorically (Brown 1975:176ff). The expression "born again" can be understood as meaning "being born from above", "born new" (Hendriksen 1961:132-3; Earle 1986:84). Here Jesus explains the origin of the believer. The believer's true origin and existence does not belong to this world - his/her beginning and end are in God through Jesus Christ. The references of being born from above mean that man must receive a new origin. He must exchange his old nature for a new and be born again. This is an act of God (Brown 1975:179). Jesus meant to impress upon Nicodemus that he descended from God's presence to raise man to God. Jesus, therefore transposes the topic to a higher level. Whereas Nicodemus is on the level of the sensible, he must be raised to the level of the spiritual.

The Fourth Evangelist uses the family metaphor of the birth to express a spiritual reality of faith. The word ἄνωθεν implies that another birth has already taken place. Van der Watt (1997a:4) maintains that the family in the Mediterranean world was generally regarded as the basic social structure. Birth into a family therefore meant to become part of the family with everything that it involved especially on a social level. Pursuant of this notion, Blasi (1997: 259f) says that in the first century Mediterranean world to be a child of someone meant to participate in an identity and in a particular nexus of the parents' social networks. Just as one acquires family, friends, relatives, neighbours and a name from the parents, the Johannine church acquired these by being born in God's family. Birth was therefore an important way of determining one's

identity. This birth metaphor suggests the social orientation of the Johannine community. Blasi (1997:257) states that the evangelist's discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus is meant to describe the separation of the Johannine Christians from the community of the local synagogue (see also Baltz & Schneider 1978-80:243).

Still on the question of the social features of the Jesus-Nicodemus dialogue, Rensberger (1989:25) maintains that the determinative factor in the milieu of the Johannine church was a conflict with the synagogue. He says that in visualising the Johannine community, one must think of a group of Christians still entirely within the fold of the Jewish community. Its confession of Jesus as the Messiah, however brought them into growing tension with the authorities of the Jewish community. Unlike Paul, who describes the experience of being children of God in legalistic terms such as adoption, the Fourth Evangelist employs a simplistic metaphor, "to be born (begotten) by the Father". Also noting the simplistic nature of the Johannine rendering of the spiritual reality of rebirth, Brown (1966:138) observes that according to this community, man takes on flesh and enters the kingdom of this world because his earthly father begets him. In the same way man can enter the Kingdom of God only when the Heavenly Father begets him. Whereas life can come to a man from his father, eternal life comes from the Heavenly Father.

The Johannine church therefore appears to have affirmed their identity in terms of their election by the Father: "... whoever received him, he gave them power to become children of God" (1:12), "...from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace" (1:16).

Blasi (1997:258) acknowledges that even if the notion Christians “being born of God” did not necessarily start with the Fourth Gospel, but was perhaps grounded in the Pauline corpus, (G1 4:4-6), the Johannine church took this imagery and made it their own. Howard-Brook (1994:87) maintains that the Johannine community’s heart-felt desire was to bring the synagogue and its religious leaders to a commitment to Jesus. The Jesus-Nicodemus dialogue is actually a reflection of this ideal.

An attempt has thus far been made to investigate John 3:1-8 by way of raising questions pertaining to the cultural, social and religious location of the Johannine community. In this process, it has been illustrated that there is a connection between the Johannine ecclesiology and the first historical readers of the Gospel. In other words, the text of John’s Gospel contains an “ecclesiology” and christological ideology, which has encoded and replicated the community’s cosmology. Jerome Neyrey (1988:115-150) illustrates this assertion in his applications of a theoretical model of a cultural anthropologist, Mary Douglas (1984:34-41) to the Gospel of John. Mary Douglas has developed a model whereby she maintains that in a community the interaction between a sub-group and its larger social matrix is measured. She plots such an interaction as a graph with horizontal and vertical axes. In the horizontal axis, group positions range from strong to weak groups. The vertical axis is used to illustrate the correlation between the community’s experience and expectations of the surrounding social group ranging from low to high grid.

Neyrey (1988:118ff.) endeavours to show that the cultural and social cues of the Johannine community are embedded in the text. He maintains that during the time of Jesus, the overall system of ideology, values, structures

and classification was characterised by purity. Furthermore, Judaism was characterised by factionalism which manifested in different social configurations such as priests, Qumran volunteers, Scribes, Sanhedrin, etc. Each of these groups claimed to legitimately adhere to the system of Judaism. Thus the grid was low or failing as shown by the emergence of these competing sects and parties.

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus regarded Himself as a member of the Jewish covenant community (1:45; 5:39; 7:40-44;52). He, however, challenged the manner in which the Jewish faith and Scriptures were interpreted particularly by the Pharisees, as for instance the Sabbath (9:21-24, 5:16, 9:16). Thus the controversy between Jesus and the Jewish leaders further indicates that the grid was low and failing (see Neyrey 1988:128).

Malina, Joubert and Van der Watt (1996:12) maintain that one of the distinctive features of the ancient Mediterranean world was the distinction between group and outsiders. The “Jesus group”, though initially operated within Judaism, gradually was establishing itself as a separate group. It developed its own rituals, which were to serve as boundary lines to strengthen the structure or system of group. Neyrey (:128) claims that unlike Matthew’s “inheriting life”, the Fourth Evangelist’s language suggests grouping, “crossing” and “entering” (3:4-5; 4:38; 10:1-2). The ritual of water baptism, (born of water and the spirit – 3:5) makes one to be part of a group. Jesus makes Nicodemus feel that he belongs to another group, an outside group, “that which is born of flesh is flesh” that which is born of the spirit is spirit” (3:6).

5.3.3 The Johannine church in conflict (John 9)

The purpose of the Fourth Evangelist is skillfully articulated in John 20:30-31. Van der Loos (1965:6) maintains that the historicity of Jesus' miracles has been the subject of investigation and deliberations and of cause investigation in this regard is proceeding. Richardson (1942:1) contends that miracles in John are significant and the real climax in this regard is the resurrection of Jesus (see also Kegley 1966:xxiv; Gundry 1976:15ff; Rumscheidt 1981: 65ff; Jaspert 1984: 44ff; Mahlangu 1991: 15f)

Kysar (1993:19) refers to miracles in John as the explicit aim of the evangelist. In other words, the signs recorded in the Gospel are intended to engender faith in the part of his readers:

“To convince readers that this Jesus is the Messiah of Jewish expectation (the Christ) and a uniquely divine revealer (Son of God) is what it is all about. According to the reading of these verses, the Evangelist hoped to win new believers to the faith. The goal was to produce a document for the use in the missionary enterprise, one that would inspire belief among those who did not yet embrace the faith. The Fourth Evangelist was, then an evangelist in the modern sense of the word, one who proclaims the Christian faith in order to win converts.”

Commentators have debated that John's purpose was to awaken faith for the first time or to maintain and strengthen faith already espoused. This discourse is invoked by the variation of reading between the aorist “that

you come to believe” and the present “that you may hold the faith”. It is generally assumed that the evangelist wrote to encourage his community to continue in the faith. The explicit purpose is first an appendix which the author copied from the traditions he used (see Bruce 1983:395; Kysar 1993:19; Ridderbos 1997:650f).

Kysar (1993:20) maintains that beyond the explicit purpose of John’s Gospel, as stated above, the evangelist has an implicit purpose. He cites the healing of the man born blind in chapter 9 as an example. The theme of the physical healing of the man (9:1-7) gradually moves from physical blindness to the more serious matter of the spiritual sight, and the blindness involved, is the human response to God’s revelation. After the healing the neighbours are divided. Others are almost sure that it was the man who was born blind, while others saw close resemblance. The man puts an end to the speculation: “ἐκείνος ἔλεγεν ὅτι Ἐγώ εἰμι.” He is interrogated by the Jews, and when he, with an ill-concealed humour, asked whether the Pharisees possibly wished to become his disciples, he is expelled from the synagogue. The man encounters Jesus, who reveals himself to him and he makes a full confession, “ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, Πιστεύω, κύριε· καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ” (9:38 - Tasker [1960:122-126]; Kysar [1986: 48-158]).

Kysar (1993:21) contends that this story gives a good insight into the situation and the purpose of the evangelist. For instance, the term “the Jews” is used in John’s Gospel not as an ethnic reference but as an illusion to the primary opponents of the Johannine church at that time (cf 1:16-17; 5:18; 2:23-25; 3:1-2). Brown (1979:66ff) says in this regard that one of the key words or expressions found in the Fourth Gospel is “the Jews”. The synoptic gospels refer to the Jews only six times, while

John has more than seventy references. The manner in which John refers to the Jews has some tragic consequences. Kysar (1993: 67ff) states that the expulsion from the synagogues had taken place some time before the Gospel was written. Even after their physical and theological separation from the synagogue, they were still persecuted. They still lived in a place where there were synagogues.

The author of John's Gospel was living and working in a community which was locked in a crucial dispute with the local synagogue. The Jewish opposition was threatening the Christian community as much as the Christians' evangelistic efforts were threatening the stability of the Jewish synagogue. The result was that both communities were defending themselves. The narrative of the healing of the man born blind is yet another John's device of identifying his church. It is clear that the two communities are distinct. The reluctance of the man's parents to commit themselves by refusing to affirm the healing, serves to elucidate this distinction (9:22).

"The Jews" are blind and they fail to see the revelation of God. They call themselves the disciples of Moses (9:28) as against this man who became the disciple of Jesus. This pericope thus distinguishes the Johannine community as a family of God, a distinct community which was blind but now has seen the revelation of God. They no longer have Moses as their father. They are the disciples of Jesus and God is their heavenly Father.

5.3.4 The Johannine church as flock (10:1-21)

The imagery or allegory of the shepherd and the sheep and /or the flock is presented elsewhere in John (6:37-39; 17:6,8,11, 21:15-17), but in this



chapter it is well developed. The pericope has signs of individualism, in that the believers have a personal response and relationship to faith. Another reality is that the sheep in this discourse can be corporately approached (O'Grady 1978:242). In vv.1-3 the shepherd is contrasted with the thief and the robber. The shepherd goes to the sheepfold by lawful means διὰ τῆς θύρας. The αὐλήν in this case might be referring to a yard attached to the house and surrounded by a stone wall and topped with barriers (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:179), or an enclosed space where the sheep were kept at night under the watchful eye of the gatekeeper (Ridderbos 1997:354), or even part of a family courtyard. In view of v.3, it is better to think of a larger independent enclosure, where several families kept their sheep, leaving an undershepherd (the watchman of v.2 - Carson 1991:381). This describes the shepherd's relationship to them and the right of ownership. For him the way to them is not closed.

The good shepherd is contrasted to the thief and the robber. Some commentators see a continuation of the shepherd and sheep discourse with the previous healing of the man born blind (Ch 9) and the subsequent discourse (Barrett 1978: 367; Bruce 1983:223). The religious leaders, who were hostile to Jesus, were trying to illegitimately gain mastery over the people of Israel (v.16). They tried to gain the people through intimidation (9:22) and through expelling heretics, such as the Johannine Christians, from the synagogue (Hendriksen 1961:104).

The sheep know the voice of the shepherd (3:4b); they do not follow a stranger because they do not know his voice (3:5-9). This denotes an intimate relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. They are his own and they recognise the Shepherd with an unfailing certainty. This



means that those who have heard the authentic Word of God, and have obeyed it, have become members of God's flock, his elect people. They will listen to no other Shepherd, however much they claim to be speaking with divine authority (v.5; Tasker [1960:128f]).

In (verses 11-16) the parable is interpreted. The intimate knowledge is once more expressed, "... καὶ γινώσκω τὰ ἐμὰ καὶ γινώσκουσί με τὰ ἐμὰ, (10:14). The Old Testament notion that God has intimate knowledge of his people (Nah 1:7), is in this allegory exemplified in Jesus through whom God addresses his people (Bultmann 1971:382). In verse 16 the purpose of this knowledge is stated, to bring all into a unity (see Brown 1966:396). This relationship is designed as mutual knowledge: γινώσκειν. Such a relationship, whether it be man's knowledge directed towards God or God's knowledge directed towards man, expresses a union between the partners in a relationship. It is possible to speak of man's knowledge of God and of his representative, Jesus.

Another feature in this discourse is that the relationship between Jesus and the flock is modelled by the unity between Jesus and the Father (10:38 see also 14:11; 17:21). Van der Merwe (1997:339ff) in this regard summarises the theological understanding of Johannine discipleship. He says:

"Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel indicates a personal relationship between Jesus and his disciples. This relationship is modelled in the Father/Son relationship, which is elucidated, by agency model. A descent-ascent schema forms the setting for this concept, with the Johannine



dualism as the determining factor for this schema. The “agency” motif constitutes the conceptual framework which discipleship flows.”

In this allegory, as the unity between Father and Son (10:30) can be referred to as the Son being in the Father and the Father also being in the Son. It is also described by saying that the Son knows his disciples and they know Him. This implies a similar union, which is modelled by the relationship between the Son and the Father. As the Son knows the Father and receives life, so those who know the Son, know the Father and receive eternal life. This relationship also applies to the stringent bond that exists between the individual believer and Jesus.

Commentators interpret the flock in different ways. Firstly, it appears that some of the sheep in the sheepfold do not belong to Jesus- only those who hear his voice belong to him. The image may possibly be of many flocks in the sheepfold, each belonging to a different shepherd. In the morning the different shepherds enter the fold and the sheep that belong to each will follow him out. Such an interpretation could imply that the larger flock is an image of the Jews at the time of Jesus. Such an interpretation is consonant with Johannine ecclesiology. Careful scrutiny of implicit and explicit references to the evangelists community in the Gospel distinguishes his community members from the Jews - the synagogue (cf the episodes of Nicodemus and the man born blind). Jesus is said to call himself the door (10:7). The context of the allegory alludes to the fact that those in the sheepfold entered through the door. How could they have entered through Him if they do not belong to Him. The expression, “καὶ ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τῆς αὐλῆς ταύτης...” (10:16a) cannot imply that the sheep are in the fold already.

It could be the Gentiles who are still outside, who are due to come to his fold (see Bultmann 1971:374).

The good shepherd allegory inevitably separates the people who belong to God and those who are not His. The author employs the family imagery to achieve this end. He uses household terminology, father, son, shepherd, sheep, hireling, etc. The evangelist once more employs the family metaphor to communicate his ideas about the true identity of the church.

5.3.5 The church as family in the farewell discourses (13-17)

The study of the farewell discourses might be approached from different vantage points. One of the themes developed by Johannine scholars in this regard is discipleship. It has been argued that a thorough understanding of Johannine discipleship goes hand in hand with perspectives in the Johannine community (Du Rand 1990:367ff, 1991:322). The discussion which follows, presents a selection from the farewell discourses of those sections which has ecclesiological undertones. The selection of these aspects does not suggest that they are only focal points in the farewell discourses. The purpose is to indicate how the members of the Johannine community regarded themselves as a family, separated from the world. The washing of the feet of the disciples (13:1-38), the vine and the branches metaphor (15:1-17) and the farewell prayer (17:1-26) will hereafter receive attention.

5.3.5.1 Jesus washes the feet of his own (13:1-38)

What emerges from this pericope is that Jesus has withdrawn from public and now talks to his disciples. The setting is that of the Passover meal. The opening words of verse 1 need no interpretation.

“...ἀγαπήσας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ...”

“His own” reminds us of the discourse on the good shepherd in chapter 10. It refers to those who belong to Him, who hear his voice and for whom He cares (10:3, 4,12,27 - Schnackenburg 1982:16). At the very onset of the farewell discourse, familial language is employed. Jesus had always loved those whom His Father had given Him.

Miller (1976:49) maintains that the language employed in 13:1 emphasises the intimate nature of the relationship between Jesus and those who belong to him. The footwashing episode which follows dramatises the inexpressible depth of the love of Jesus for “his own”, revealed in his death for them on the cross. Who are his own in this context? It is the twelve disciples (even though the Fourth Gospel does not use this expression). Within the context of the farewell discourse and the entire Gospel, the circle of “his own” is clearly bigger than those who are sitting with Him at the table. “His own” refers to all believers in the Johannine church. The language: “Father”, “Son”, and “his own” has strong family metaphorical undertones.

The other aspect to ponder upon in this pericope is the ethical dimension embedded in the discourse. Firstly, it is the symbolic meaning of the footwashing itself. Brown (1966:568) states that:

“The simplest explanation of the footwashing then, remains that Jesus performed this servile task to prophesy symbolically that he was about to be humiliated in death. Peter’s questioning, provoked by the action, enabled Jesus to explain the salvific necessity of his death: It would bring men their heritage with Him and it would cleanse them of sin.”

The first few verses (1-3) relate therefore to the salvific work of Jesus. The Father has handed over everything to the Son who will bring salvation through dying on the cross. In this sense Jesus is the servant of the Father who becomes the servant of humility. The action, which Jesus performs in washing the feet of his disciples, is on the superficial level an act of hospitality, but in this action the relationships are reversed. Whereas it was the task of the servant to wash the feet of the master as a sign of welcoming him/her home, Jesus, the master, is the one who performs this action for the disciples. When Peter objects “... Κύριε, σύ μου νίπτεις τοὺς πόδας;” (v.6b), Jesus' response is that they will only understand the significance of what He has done much later. All this is in line with other incidents in John’s Gospel such as the “cleansing of the temple” (2:22) and the entry into Jerusalem (12:16). The narrator comments that his disciples did not understand this at first, but when Jesus had been glorified, they remembered that these things were written about Him that they had done this for Him (12:16). This

incomprehension indicates a depth in action that is only understandable after the resurrection (Hartin 1991:344f).

The words of Jesus to Peter “...Ἐὰν μὴ νίψω σε, οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος μετ’ ἐμοῦ (v.8) are significant. The notion of one having part in something or someone refers to inheritance and in the Jewish thought can refer to participation in the eschatological blessings (Mt 24:31; Rv 20:6). “Having part in Jesus” is given some context in John 14:1-3 and 17:24 Carson (1991:464). Being washed by Jesus is necessary to being counted one of his company. This is evidently symbolic of a cleansing action, which allows entrance into the new community of believers (Lindars 1972:450).

What follows is the ethical role of believer towards other believers:

“ὑπόδειγμα γὰρ ἔδωκα ὑμῖν ἵνα καθὼς ἐγὼ ἐποίησα ὑμῖν καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιῆτε.” (:15).

Now that the believer has been baptised into the death of Christ, he/she must follow his (Christ's) role. The action of Jesus comes as an example, a model, and an analogy for the way the believer ought to act. The service to others in humility, to which this action testifies, must become the hallmark of a follower of Jesus. Even more than this, on the deeper level, just as Jesus gave his life as a life of service to the ultimate extent of dying on the cross, so too the Christian is called upon to be willing to participate in this trial of Jesus and to sacrifice his/her life if necessary (Hartin 1991:345f).



Another ethical consequence in the foot-washing discourse is the gift of the new commandment, “ἐντολήν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους·” (v.34a). The events of the passion have been set in motion by the departure of Judas. The “νῦν” in v.31 is an important indicator of the transition. Therefore, the new commandment of love which Jesus gives his disciples as a provision in his testament and as a sign of their discipleship (v.35) immediately follows the statement about separation. In that context, it can be easily understood and interpreted as a recommendation to the disciples to preserve their relationship with Jesus after his departure by doing as He does and directing their care to each other (Bultmann 1971:403f; Schnackenburg 1982:53; Perkins 1990:974; Hartin 1991:346).

The author of the Fourth Gospel focuses on love amongst believers in a familial sense. Love is thus recommended to be a common attitude between the members of God’s family. Love indicates affection and an intimate relation between them. The Son commands the believers to love each other according to the example He has set (13:34; 15:12, 17). This will identify them as his disciples (13:15). Their identity will be determined by their love. In 13:1-17 therefore, Jesus sets an example of love (13:15) by washing his disciples feet, and in 15:13 he uses the example of death for (on behalf of) a friend as an indication of what the nature of this love is. This is commanded to be the nature of their love for one another. A member of the family should thus act according to the pattern which identifies that family (Van der Watt 1997b:24).

5.3.5.2 The Vine and the branches (15:1-17)

Johannine commentators generally agree that there are some inconsistencies or rather lack of continuity, in this pericope. The farewell context, which dominated the preceding chapter, is no longer present. There is no longer mention of the departure of Jesus nor the promise of the disciples' union with Jesus in the future time. Brown (1966:666f) contends for instance that vv. 1-6 appears to be a misfit in this context. Besides that it does not follow the sequence of chapter 14, it bears little resemblance to the succeeding section, 7-17. These verses (1-6) might have originally belonged to another context.

Barrett (1978:393) says that this discourse has its rightful place in the Eucharistic associations of the vine symbolism. Though John's Gospel does not explicitly portray the institution of the Lord's Supper, it is unlikely that John was ignorant of this tradition. Nevertheless, while this passage would be an appropriate communion meditation, it does not require such a context. There is no reason to suppose that the union of Christ with the believers envisaged herein, is seen only, or even primarily, in the sacrament. It could even be argued that the thought that Jesus alone is the true vine, excludes the idea of any other vine (see Bultmann 1971:529ff; Lindars 1972:287).

The metaphor of the vine and branches repeats the theme running throughout the series of the discourses of Jesus. It serves to further elucidate Jesus' relationship with his disciples and amongst themselves. The relationship portrays the four aspects of Johannine "ecclesiology" already alluded to. Firstly, the idea of individuality is encountered, maybe even more than in the shepherd metaphor. Secondly, the

corporate relationship between the believers and Christ is implied in the discourse, and thirdly, the fellowship amongst themselves is a reality. Fourthly, the relationship of the believers with the Father is highlighted.

a. Jesus' relationship with his disciples (μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί 1-6)

The essence of the first part of the allegory (15:1-6) is the phrase μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί (:4). The fact that the verb μένω occurs eighteen times in this section shows its importance as a theme. This reality is stated by some Johannine scholars. Commenting on the metaphor, Kysar (1984:71) says that this is a simple allegory, which has to do with the idea of residing in Jesus. It is like a branch acquiring its life from the body of the vine. Carson (1991:516) contends that this pericope expresses the dependency of the branch for life and its fruitfulness on the vine to which it is attached. Ridderbos (1997:517) states that the motif of "remaining" is characteristic in the Fourth Gospel and recurs in all sorts of expressions, but in this context it occurs more often and with greater emphasis than elsewhere.

The above citations elucidate the assertion implied in this part of the allegory (15:1-6), that remaining in Jesus, and also Jesus remaining in his disciples, are two sides of the same coin, for this is an attempt to describe the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. O'Grady (1978:40) maintains that in the parable of the vine and the branches the point of interest is that Jesus is the source of life and He alone can give life to the branches themselves should remain in Him. Hartin (1991:350) says that the expression "menein en" focuses on the fact that the disciples presently possess eternal life, which is the central feature in John's Gospel. Bearing fruit is symbolic of their possession of eternal life, which

ultimately expresses itself in the communication of that life to others. Kysar (1984:71) says that residing in Jesus is like a branch acquiring its life from the body of the vine. In other words, faithfulness is like a vine branch bearing fruit. On the other hand unfaithfulness results in being sheared off the vine and cast in the fire to burn.

There is no doubt that the expression *μενεῖν ἐν*, which is a popular aspect in this pericope, has some individuality. The expression is used by the Evangelist to denote the permanence of a condition or state between Jesus and the individual believer. A branch is useless and lifeless unless it remains attached to the vine. The disciples have to remain in union with Him and derive life from Him in order for it to produce fruit. This individual commitment to Jesus forms the basis of the Johannine corporate relation between Jesus and the church.

b. Jesus' corporate relationship with the branches.

When reading the text on the surface, the parable of the vine and the branches appears not to be having any thought of the relationship between the branches. However, thought of the presence of the idea of the church is not absent in this discourse. The vine and the branches make up a single unified reality and the Fourth Evangelist seems to insist that there can be no communal life apart from the personal adherence to Jesus as saviour and only then can there be a movement towards community in the church (O'Grady 1978:40).

Scott (1974:422f) maintains that in this metaphor the vine is not only a stem. The branches are part of the vine and are in the vine. It is through them that the vine sends forth its fruit. Both are mutually dependent,

although of course the branches are far more dependent on the stem. Still the one needs the other. This implies the corporate relationship between Christ and his church. It is a oneness of the believers with Him, their organic unity with Him, the centre and source of life.

The church-consciousness of this pericope is further underpinned by the insistent repetition of the command “...ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς” (15:12b). This indicates that one cannot be a disciple of Jesus in isolation from others. In this sense, therefore, the discourse has a genuine interest in the relationship of believers to one another, and thus assumes, and even demands, some kind of community. The fact that the scope of love is restricted to those abiding in the True Vine, presupposes the church; the existence of a closely-knit group acutely conscious of its alienation from the world. There is no command to love the outsider, whether he/she be a neighbour or enemy; it is love within the Christian circle that is stressed.

In the light of this interest in the relationship of the members of the church with one another, abiding in Christ comes to be seen as abiding in a community of love. To be outside the community, is to remain in the world, which means to remain in death. If φίλοι (friends) was one of the terms used in the Johannine circle to designate believers, this expresses the nature of the relationship between the friends of Jesus.

The expression “friends” expresses the esoteric orientation of the community. The “filioi” with reference to the Johannine church are those whom the Master takes within his confidence; to them He teaches all that he has heard from the Father. The Johannine believer is not like the household slave who must obey his master’s commands without

understanding the purpose behind them. Thus "filos" is used in this context as a technical term for Christians- the Johannine church (Miller 1976:50-51; Barrett 1978:399)

The corporate reality of the church in John 15 is also observed by Schweizer (1961:118). He contends that when Jesus refers to himself as the vine, He includes all the branches in itself, on which they all live. Tasker (1960:173) says that with this allegory has to do not only with a collection of individuals, but a corporate society, the new Israel of God. In the Old Testament Israel had often been pictured under the figure of the vine (e.g. Jer 2:21). Jesus description of Himself as the vine or genuine vine, implies that Israel had been an imperfect foreshadow of what was found to perfection in Himself. He is what God had called Israel to be, but what Israel in fact had never become. With Jesus, a new Israel emerges, the members of which draw their spiritual sustenance from Him above.

The idea of the corporate identity of the church in the metaphor of the vine is enhanced by the hatred of the world (15:18-27). The first part (15:1-17) focuses on the disciples' life in community with Christ and each other. It appears that in the previous section the thought was concentrated upon the small group of the friends of Jesus their union in love with each other and with Him, their obedience and their prayers. In the later part the author looks outwardly – to the relationship with the world.

Brown (1979:64f) says:

“That the Johannine community would be detested by non-believers who encountered it we may well suspect. Later records show the extent to which pagans were infuriated by the inner intimacy of the Christians with their “brother” and “sister” language and the Johannine community particularly valuable in that score”.

The love that the community ought to practise among each other in accordance with the example of Christ (15:12-17) is sharply contrasted with the backlash of hatred that they experience on the part of the world for sake of Christ. This is a reflection of how the Johannine community conceived and understood itself. This view is summarised in I John 13:13.

The Johannine community is bound to experience hatred and rejection because they belong to Him. This thought can be understood in the light of distinctive character of Johannine dualism. The dualistic thought in John’s Gospel comes to expression primarily in the Gospel’s representation of the relationship between Jesus and the “kosmos”. He does not belong to the world, because he descends from above (8:23). He is the light shining in the dark world (1:5; 8:12); He is the truth (14:6); Jesus has God as his Father while his opponents who epitomise the world in its rejection of Jesus, belong to their father, the devil - 8:44, (Kümmel 1965: 58; Miller 1979:31ff; Hartin 1991: 351).

5.3.5.3 Jesus' farewell prayer (17:1-26)

In this pericope Jesus prays to the Father and recalls His obedience to the work entrusted on him in the incarnation, and prays that the imminent hour (the passion) may prove to be the decisive means by which He glorifies the Father and the Father glorifies Him, the act at once of divine grace and of human obedience whereby He ascends to that state of glory which was his own in the beginning with the Father. In the second part of the prayer (6-19) Jesus prays for his disciples who at that time were gathered around Him. They have been drawn together out of the world and they are to be one. We shall endeavour to submit that in this prayer the symbolism of the family metaphor is present. We shall only refer to two aspects; the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the manner in which the Johannine church understood itself.

a. The Father/ Son relationship

Jesus lifts his eyes up to pray. In his prayer He addresses his Father in heaven and the focus in the first five verses shows the unique relationship between Jesus and the Father. In the first century Mediterranean world, the relationship between the father and the sons was very important. It has already been indicated that in a marriage there had to be children (sons and daughters). But sons were even more important than daughters were. The son was the pride of his father. He was the heir of the inheritance and also was to perpetrate the family name. One of the most important family ethics also related to the relationship between Jesus the Son of God, and his Father, was obedience. In 17:4 this ethic is echoed: The Son had to do the will of the Father. In his argument with the Jews, Jesus states that the Jews do the will of their father, the devil (8:38).



This relationship of obedience between the Father and the Son is put in an even bigger perspective in John's Gospel. In 10:37-38, Jesus earnestly appeals to his audience to believe in Him. In view of the fact that they do not believe what He says, He offers an alternative. They are told to believe his credentials, his works. These works are placed in perspective. These are the works of the Father. In other words Jesus is obedient to his Father. Because of the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son their works correspond (10:28-30). Jesus' actions are thus the works of the Father, because the Father is in Him and He is in the Father (14:10-11; see Van der Watt 1997a:15).

Van der Merwe (1997:338f) also refers to this unique Father/Son relationship. He contends that this close relationship between the Father and the Son is illustrated by means of both the content and nature of Jesus' words to the Father. Jesus says He has glorified his Father by completing the work entrusted upon Him. This is done on the basis of the relationship (functional unity) between them (17:20-23). The Father has sent the Son. Now that He has completed his work, He will return to the Father.

Van der Merwe (1997:340f) says that the sending motif is dominant in John's Gospel. The Father sends his Son with a mission, to reveal the Father (1:18; 5:37) in the world "below". This concept of the Father sending the Son is also discernible from some of the direct statements (8:42; 11:42). Kysar (1993:41) also says that the idea that the Son has been sent by the Father is associated with his heavenly origin and destination. The passages that express this idea are too numerous to examine, but suffice be it for now to mention 3:34; 4:34; 8:26; 9:4; 17:3.

Like a kind of cosmic prophet, the Son is sent forth into the world of humans. As one sent by God, He represents the Father and speaks for God. Typical of the emissary thought of the time, the one sent also carries the authority of the sender.

b. The Johannine church as the family

The second aspect of the family imagery implied in Jesus' prayer is the disciples. They can be categorised into two, namely the current disciples and the anticipated believers:

(a) “Ἐφάνέρωσά σου τὸ ὄνομα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὓς ἔδωκάς μου ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου...” (:6a)

(b) “...ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ,” (:20b)

The two categories of the believers have relations both with the Father and the Son. They are a family. As much as the Son has obeyed the Father, they are also obedient to Him (the Son). Furthermore this pericope is clouded by familial language. They are distinguished from the world. They came out of the world. Jesus protected them from the world and he now prays that the Father should continue protecting them (v1-12&15). They are supposed to be one (v21).

5.3.6. The family of the Father in the Fourth Gospel

The concept “Father” is prominent in the Fourth Gospel. In John 5:1ff Jesus is reported to have cured a hopeless case at the pool of Bethesda on

the Sabbath. The man walked away carrying his bed. When "the Jews" discovered that it was Jesus who was responsible for this action, they confronted Him. To their remonstrance Jesus replied, "My Father is working still, I am working". In the Fourth Gospel, God is called "Father" more after than anywhere else in the New Testament is. It is the main title used for God (118 times). The words "θεός" (God) and "πατήρ" (father) are used interchangeably. In John, God is called the Father in relation to his relationship with Jesus "the Son" Although the Fourth Gospel states the essential identity of the Son with the Father, he at no time loses sight of the distinction between them. The Son has been sent by the Father, He obeys the Father (15:10), He can do nothing without the Father (5:19-20), He speaks the Father's words (14:10), and has made everything to his disposal (cf 3:35, 5:20 - O'Grady [1978:233]; Lee [1995:145f]; Van der Watt [1997a:12]).

Those who respond in faith to the Father are now called the children of God. The fatherhood of God is also seen in relation to the believers. Childhood is the result of Jesus' mission, that is, his revelation of the Father (1:12). The disciples are therefore, called the sons of God. They are members of this new family/community. The children of God now have a voluntary association of the believers transcending cultural boundaries. The universal nature of this relationship is stated in 11:52, (cf Barrett 1970:407; Minear 1977:168; Brown 1978:443).

One of the familial terms occurring throughout the whole Gospel is love. It is the focus point in the ethic of John. Houlden (1973:36f) says that the fact that the believers should love one another, is the only moral rule given by John. Furnish (1972:135) maintains that the "Johannine commandment to love one another is at the very centre of the moral and

spiritual legacy..." In this relationship of love the Father has set an example. The Father loves the Son, He has given the Son everything (3:35: 10:17 -18). It is also demonstrated and displayed in the continuous disclosure of all the Father does to the Son (5:20), but the Son also loves the Father. The love of the Son towards the Father is shown in his obedience to the Father. Furthermore the Father loves the believers, his children. Even before they came in the fold, He loved them (3:16). In John 17:21-23, the same measure of unity in the disciples is assumed in Jesus' prayer. Jesus prays that they may be brought to complete unity sharing richly in the love of the Father and the Son together.

The purpose of the prayer of Jesus is to let the world know that the Father has sent the Son, and "that you (the Father) loved them as you loved me." (17:23). The believers are said to reciprocate the love to the Father. If they love the Son, it also implies that they love the Father. "If God were your Father you would love me" (5:42). That the believers' love of the Father is expressed by their obediently following the commands of the Father and the Son. At the same time the Son has always loved his own who were in the world, and He loved them to the end (13:15). "His own" strongly implies the existence of a group/family which is very close to Him. The believers are also to love one another. They are commanded by Jesus to love one another (13:34; 15:12,17). The believer has no duties towards "the world", but towards the fellow believer. This is not just ordinary human love but brotherly love with divine content, (see also Brown 1966:497; Carson 1991:503).



5.3.7 Summary

The images of the family in relation to John's ecclesiology have been discussed above. The Fourth Gospel was most probably written in the last decade of the first century AD. The author was chiefly interested in christology. That appears to be the impelling motive for the composition of the Fourth Gospel. Yet it is surprising to observe how the Johannine scholars have, besides christology, identified the idea of the church, which is enshrined in the pages of John's Gospel. Besides the explicit familial language in the Gospel, - Father, Son, birth, begat, love, etc., the Johannine portrayal of the church is enriched by family metaphors. One of the most outstanding of these imageries is the image of the flock (15:1-8). This metaphor exercises a persuasive theological influence on the entire Gospel. What is implied in this metaphor, is the very nature of the church - the living union of the believer with Christ. The faithful are those the Father has "given" to the Son and brings to Him, and whom Jesus does not "cast out" but rather accepts and keeps and does not "loose" them. The Father is the real owner of the flock, but He has entrusted them to the great shepherd who in contrast to the hirelings (the Jewish authorities) loves and cares for them. Upon his (Jesus) going back to the Father, Jesus prays that the Father should preserve them in unity. The Johannine church, thus, conceived themselves as a new family, which is in conflict with the synagogue. The ethics of this new brotherhood are also spelt out.



5.4 Excursion: Paul and the church as family of God

In order to elucidate it that the rest the New Testament also emphasises the central role of the family, as an image for the people of God, the letters of Paul will be briefly dealt with in this excursion.

Roberts (1985:265) maintains that the numerous metaphors in Paul's corpus is indicative of the importance of "ecclesiology" in his theology.

- Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27, Eph 1:23; 4:12)
- Israel (Gl 6:16; Rm 9:6)
- People (Rm 9:25f)
- Olive tree (Rm 9:25f)
- The Elect (Rm 9:25f)
- A building (Eph 2:19f)
- A temple (Eph 2 21)
- A Dwelling Place (Eph 2:22)
- God's planting (1 Cor 3:6-9)
- Light (Eph 5:22ff)
- A letter (2 Cor 3:2f)
- A Bride (Eph. 1:23)
- Mature manhood (Eph. 4:13)
- One new man (Eph. 2:15)

Some New Testament scholars also attempted to identify the portrayal of the church in Paul's theology:



“In view of our imperfect knowledge of Hellenistic Christianity before and contemporary with Paul, it will not be possible to say with certainty to what extent he had assimilated the ideas of other missionaries and theologians, nevertheless his originality (body of Christ) is incontestable and his deeper penetration with the idea of the church is evident” (Schnackenburg 1974:77).

“All the old things that observers in the first century might have seen in it: a Jewish sect, a club meeting in a household, an initiatory cult, and a school. Yet it was more than the sum of these things, and different from the mere synthesis of their contradictory tendencies” (Meeks 1986:120).

“There is no single scholarly perception of the organisation of the Pauline communities to other groups which have family resembles; the second is to use some of these models (comparable groups) to describe the nature of the Pauline communities. The theoretical assumptions that govern these comparative activities should be carefully noted” (Craffert 1992:178).

5.4.1 The Pauline church as the people of God

Pelser (1995:647) maintains that one of the main designations of the church in Paul’s ecclesiology is “Godsvolk” (people of God). Paul’s use of the expression “the people of God” appears to be influenced by the Septuagint (LXX). The word “laos” is there used to denote a particular

people or group, whereas all other peoples or nations are designated by the term “ethnos”. Therefore the term “laos” signifies what brings people together – God’s election of them as his people. It appears that Paul throughout his letters remains faithful to the LXX usage when expressing his conviction about the people of God (1Cor 10:7; Rm 9:25-26).

In the title “people of God”, the themes of continuity and history exercise predominantly influences in Pauline ecclesiology. “The people of God” suggests a dynamic vision of God’s people, which is fundamentally on a historical pilgrimage. The people of God are thus a dependant people continually needing reform. The church is not perfect. It exists and struggles in history in an attempt to discern God’s action and call, and to find ways on answering that call (Schnackenburg 1974:79; Fung 1981:89, Worgul 1982:24, 27). One of the family imagery by Paul is found in Galatians 5:13-6:10.

Paul in this letter spells out the identity of the Galatian Christians. (5:13, 6:10) Throughout the letter, Paul employs the familial metaphors to establish their identity. The church members experience God as their Father (1:1-3); through Jesus they have become the adopted sons of God (3:26); in the experience of baptism they have “clothed” themselves with Christ (3:27); through Christ the seed of Abraham (3:16) they are sons of God (4:1-7). What Paul succeeds in doing is to illustrate to the church in Galatia that they ought to conceive themselves in terms of social patterns analogous to those expected among family members as understood in the first century Mediterranean world



5.4.2. The church consists of those adopted by God

Paul uses a family term of adoption to explain the idea of belonging or becoming part of the family. Lyall (1984:8) maintains that Paul is the only New Testament writer to use the metaphor of adoption. The term is used in three ways:

(1) In Romans 9:4 Israel the people of God are said to be adopted as sons. Their place as the chosen people is underlined.

(2) In Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:5 and Galatians 4:5 the apostle uses the term adoption in its legal sense. The metaphor points to the selection of the believers as sons, their justification is their entry into sonship and from the point of conversion, they are members of God's family.

(3) Lastly adoption in Romans 8:23 has eschatological connotations. The believers are "eagerly awaiting for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies..." this refers to the final transformation at the second resurrection. They will have totally passed from their former state into something wholly new.

Thus, Paul employs the metaphor of adoption to describe the conversion of a person both Jew and Gentile, as God's new child into a new family who has responded to God's call. This therefore means that the natural family or kinship structure into which the person has been born and which previously defined his/her place and relationships with the society are here changed by a new of relationships (see Meeks 1983:87f).



Paul's use of the familial terminology of adoption can be furthermore understood when we take into consideration Paul's description of the inclusion of the Gentiles as part of God's family. Bossman (1996:163) says that Paul opens his fictive family to Gentiles more than it was advocated in the Gospels. Worgul (1982:24) refers to this scenario as a tension between a "particularism" and "universalism" with respect to Israel being the people of God - especially in the late prophetic literature. For instance Hoseah 1:9-10, records the divine command that Hoseah should name his child "not my people and to look forward to a new covenant with Israel. What is even significant is that Zechariah 2:11 goes further to envision the heathens eventually becoming part of the people of God.

These two texts display universalism as against particularism, which dominated most of Israel's history in the Old Testament (see McKenzie 1974: 316ff). Therefore, in Romans 9:30ff; 10:9-13; 11:11-12, 11:25 Paul alters the theological content of the Hebrew Scriptures to pursue his own theological purpose. His reworking of and expansion of the theological content was to a certain extent necessitated in his shift from and exclusively Hebrew horizon to a Judeo-Christian horizon. The most significant alteration Paul executed was his inclusion of non-Jewish Christians as a legitimate element in the people of God. To achieve this shift, Paul introduced his "original" distinction between Israel by birth and Israel by God's choice (Minear (1977:71-84 and Worgul 1982:24-25).

5.4.3 God as Father

The term "Father" is another frequent familial imagery in the Pauline corpus. According to Bossman (1996:164) it is used the second most after brother/s. The word is mainly used in two ways referring to God as the Father of the believers/household and the apostle as the father/mother figure to his churches:

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul states:

“...τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ
Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ...” (1:1)

In the mention of “Thessalonians”, attention is drawn to members of the church rather than the church's geographic place. Paul also described the church as "... in God the Father" - in the dative. This expression means that this church belongs to the Father. They are therefore redeemed from their previous existence due to the Father's action. God is thus viewed as the Father, the progenitor and the creator. The Thessalonians, being a Gentile community, are reminded of their calling into a new relationship with God (the Father) and they are his beloved children.

5.4.4 Paul as father/mother

Paul also designates himself as father to the communities with whom he corresponds. He describes his relationship and role with and to them. In 1 Corinthians 4:15.



“ἐὰν γὰρ μυρίους παιδαγωγούς ἔχητε ἐν Χριστοῦ, ἀλλ’ οὐ πολλοὺς πατέρας, ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα”.

This father metaphor indicates that the relationship between Paul and his churches is not a relationship of power or status. It is an image of a caring parent who is both instructive and gentle. It implies encouragement and reinforcement (see Bossman 1996:164f).

5.4.5 Brotherhood/Sisterhood

The term ἀδελφός, appears in Paul's letters. It is his favourite manner to refer to the members of the communities to whom he is writing. He also uses it with reference to those he perceived as colleagues in the work of the ministry (Gl 1:2; I Cor 16: 20 2 Cor 9: 3; Col 1 : 2). Paul applies this familial language to the Christians to show that they are a new family, the people of God. They are the children of God, and also that of the apostle. They are brothers and sisters bound together in the relationship of love. (Ellis 1971:53; Koester 1979:33ff)

5.5 Summary

The foregone discussion is an attempt to show that family was an important topic in early Christianity. It was indicated in the Gospels and an excursion of Paul's view of the church that the early believers regarded themselves on a κοινωνία. Christianity, therefore, entailed an invitation to enter into fellowship with God's new family. This implies that Jesus came and altered the existing religious conceptions and socio-religious structures of his day. Those He called, his disciples, the propagators of



the post-Easter faith subordinated their natural family ties in order for them to be with Him and to be engaged in his mission for the sake of the gospel. They obeyed Jesus, even at the cost of household based security and identity. This new family was a spiritual family, which co-existed, but superceded existentially and ethically the physical family to which a person belonged. The highest loyalty was owed to this spiritual family.

The disciples and the believers, therefore regarded themselves as the new people - the family of God. They became the true Israel. They articulated their being, activities, identity and experiences in familial language. As a result of this in their attempt to articulate the story of Jesus, the Gospel writers chose to use familial imagery. Familial language, actually permeates throughout the New Testament. God is the Father of Jesus and the believers. The Christian faith is a brotherhood, found together by the common faith and identity.

CHAPTER 6

EPILOGUE: THE AFRICAN FAMILY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT FAMILY

The foregone discussion largely focused on the submission that the family during the Graeco-Roman era and as it is portrayed in the New Testament is a paradigm, an approach, an exegetical procedure through which the New Testament text could be interpreted. The researcher introduced another perspective to this discourse. He postulated an approach, which he calls the African social-descriptive approach. Through this approach, he endeavoured to indicate how this vantage point could make a meaningful contribution in interpreting New Testament. It is therefore appropriate to finally compare the New Testament perspective of family with the African view of family from the perspective of the African social-descriptive approach.

The New Testament church conceived itself as distinct from the world. The first believers were a peculiar people, a holy nation and a chosen generation. They regarded themselves as foreigners and aliens in that present world. This conception is depicted in various family metaphors. God is their Father, Jesus is the Son of God, they are brothers and sisters, they are bound together by love, etc.

The view of Africans of themselves corresponds with that of the New Testament church. On a macro level, as a Continent, Africans view themselves distinct from the West. This feeling is manifested in processes such as African nationalism, black theology, liberation theology, African renaissance, etc. The symbol of this feeling of oneness,



harmony or belonging to an "African family" is a circle. For instance the traditional hut, the cattle-kraal, the grave and the village are round. It is within this circle where a person experiences life, unity, strength, harmony, fellowship, protection, etc. Outside this circle (which is also understood metaphorically) one encounters danger, death, illness, chaos, misery, etc. (see Van Deventer [1991:38]; Crafford [1996:10]). Van Niekerk (1987:625) maintains that it is in the traditional family context where a person will experience fellowship and prosperity. Everything, which is outside of this, is considered as evil.

The idea that the New Testament believers regarded themselves as one - a new family, goes beyond themselves to include the God-head. It is the family of the Father who is always with them through his Spirit. This concept was discussed in the Johannine view of the church. Analogous idea is encountered in the Africans cult of ancestor veneration. The departed spirits are called the living-dead. They are regarded as mediators between people and the supreme being. They also remain part of the social community and unify the community. They take care of the daily needs of people; they protect the morals and traditions of the family, clan, tribe and nation.

Although in principle both the New Testament church and the African community experience God or/and ancestors as one with them, there are some differences. The believers have an intimate relationship with the Father who is involved in their daily lives. The Africans on the other hand experience or view God as a concealed being who is not involved in the lives of the people. Another point of difference is that African cosmology consists of a unity and harmony, which also includes spirits,

powers, animals and inanimate objects. This leads to the sacralisation of nature.

The ethics of God's family in the New Testament has also much in common with ethics in traditional Africa. The African ethic can be summarised in the much-quoted concept in the New South Africa - Ubuntu. The most common manner of expressing the ethic of Ubuntu is the South African proverb, "umtu ngumuntu ngabantu" (a person depends on others to be a person). In the Sotho languages, "motho ke motho ka batho" (man is a man through others). Besides family solidarity, which is the essence of the Ubuntu ethic, some family values are also enshrined in this concept. Respect of each other and the elderly, compassion of those who are suffering, commitment to the ideals of Africanism, self-sacrifice and love for your fellow man are part of Ubuntu. Some of the slogans in the New South Africa such as Masakhane (let us build) and Simunye (we are one) should be understood in the context of Ubuntu. Analogous ways of viewing reality are found in the New Testament. The believers are born in the family of the Father. They are encouraged to love, have compassion, and care for each other. Some exceptions, though, exist in the New Testament family and the African view of neighbour. Whereas an African only finds security in the "circle", and everyone outside is an enemy, the New Testament family is encouraged to love and bless their enemies (Mt 5:44).

Besides making a contribution in biblical criticism - reading the New Testament from the African social-descriptive approach, this thesis endeavours to contribute to the reconstruction of the disintegrating family structure. At the threshold of the new millennium, the social stresses on the family are gaining prominence in the discourses around the family. In



a widely quoted article, now more than forty-one years old, Hill (1958:139ff), refers to the stress or crisis-provoking events. These are the sources of stress and situations for which families have little preparation. Stress events are never the source for different families but vary in the power with which they strike and the hardships that accompany them. Another social scientist, also writing around that time, Roney (1958:150), articulates the plight plaguing the family establishment. His description, though written some time ago, adequately chronicles the family at the threshold of the twenty-first century:

"Never before in the history of mankind has family life been under such stress and strain as today. Economic and social forces are at work which, while putting in the hands of the family more material sources than at any time in history, are exerting such influences that parents have difficulty providing children with protection, counsel and support, they need to reach their highest, potentialities. Specialists from many fields - sociologists, economists, psychiatrists and social workers - have analysed these forces and have described them in terms of their own special interests."

The family values and ethics suggested in this thesis as a paradigm for interpreting the New Testament text can also serve as a means of reviving family values in South Africa and Africa. Western individualism had a major impact in establishing a human rights culture in Africa. But teaching people about their moral duties as marriage partners, fathers, mothers, children, workers, politicians, citizens, civil servants, etc. is of fundamental importance. Some of the provisions in the New Constitution (8 May 1996) and the Bill of Rights are viewed by many Africans as an attack to the fabric of social morality. For instance in terms of the new

laws in the termination of pregnancy provisions, the consent of the woman's partner or husband should not be mandatory. In the case of a minor, she is advised to consult parents or responsible family members or friends, but abortion should not be denied if she does not choose to consult.

Furthermore, the Centre for International and Comparative Politics at the University of Stellenbosch has conducted a public opinion poll. Its conclusion is a strong support for conservative social values. Among the African National Congress (ANC) supporters 65,3% support capital punishment while 32,4% are against. Among the opinion formers in the party only 27,7% want to reinstate capital punishment with 58,3% against. 90,9% of National Party (NP) and 83,8% of Democratic Party (DP) supporters are for reinstating capital punishment. Interesting enough, supporters of the ANC and NP are equally negative about liberalising abortion legislation: 73,9%. Only 50% of ANC opinion formers support liberalisation of abortion legislation. The opposition among opinion formers in the NP is 56,6%.

Explicit sex in films is rejected by 80,5% of NP supporters, 67,5% of DP and 74,9% of ANC supporters. Among opinion formers 73,9% of NP, 40,4% of DP and 58,3% of ANC are against (Editorial, *Sterk steun vir galg in peiling*, Die Volksblad, 8 February 1996:1). These statistics are indicative of the fact that an overwhelming number of South Africans reject Western liberalism in favour of conservative social values.

The revival of African family values can also come to the rescue of some of African's major problems. Sub-Saharan Africa is at present faced with the crisis of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic. For instance 75% of the World's



HIV/AIDS is in Sub-Saharan Africa. By the year 2000 it is projected that between 15-20 million African children will be orphaned (see Purris 1996:34). Besides the HIV/AIDS problem, Africa is also ravaged by diseases and wars. The extended family system, the Ubuntu ethic, care for each other, etc. are an answer to these African problems.

In conclusion whether in the Western or Third world, the current or present reader of the New Testament has/is experiencing in one form or another a family. He/she has/had probably a father/mother, brother/s and/or sister/s. Within the family, tribe, clan, community or nation, a sense of belonging or identity is an obvious phenomenon. One is bound by allegiance, love or solitary to a group of people. The family as reality and the related components such as language, imagery, metaphor and symbolism is stark reality. The wrapping of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the familial language is therefore, a negotiating factor in any culture. The New Testament message of God's love, grace and mercy to all humanity is not communicated in a language from space, unknown to man. Anyone can understand the invitation of God through Jesus Christ to be part of the macro family of God. Hence the new family will be understood in the light of the old - the experience of family.