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**READING 1 JOHN IN A ZULU CONTEXT:
HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES**

by

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to read 1 John, a document which was conceptualised almost two thousand years ago in a particularly different context from that of Zulu people into which this venture is undertaken. A number of hermeneutical problems are raised by this kind of reading. Chapter eight of this thesis addresses itself to these problems.

The present dissertation utilises the sociology of knowledge especially Berger and Luckmann's theory of the symbolic universe to investigate the possible social scenario of 1 John into which the conceptualisation and crystallisation of the text of 1 John first took place. The investigation has led the researcher into discovering the abundance of family language and common social conventions relating to family, which the author of 1 John found to be useful vehicles for conveying his understanding of the new situation that had come about as a result of the fellowship eventuating from the acceptance of the gospel.

The same theory of Berger and Luckmann was used to investigate the African (Zulu) scenario with the view to ascertaining whether some form of congruency could be established between the social symbols identified in 1 John and those obtaining in the Zulu context. To ensure that the results of this investigation applied to Zulu people of this day and age, the researcher conducted field research. In doing this, a qualitative approach was followed as it was deemed appropriate for this kind of study. Within the qualitative framework, the focus group interview method was employed. The results were therefore subjected to a process of comparison and synthesis with the views obtaining in 1 John and the Zulu world.

This investigation confirmed our hypothesis that there exists a major of congruency between both universes, that is, 1 John and that of Zulu people, which if properly identified, investigated and exploited, could enhance a smooth construction of a hermeneutical bridge of understanding between the two worlds and enhance a heightened relevance and significance of 1 John's message within the Zulu context. The investigation also revealed some difficulties regarding certain symbols especially those that seek to express the divine reality. The bankruptcy of language to capture and express the divine reality as people perceive it was noted. Our conclusion therefore, was this: inadequate though these symbols might be to express divine reality, at the moments they are a given. For instance, within the

Zulu context, a number of symbols could be used to express the reality of the Christ-event. For instance, to mention just a few, the First born son, as well as the Ancestor symbols, both convey something of the reality of Christ but they do not go far enough to express the fullness embodied in the person of Christ.

For that reason it is suggested that we do not shy away from these symbols because of attendant difficulties, but that an informed and critical discussion seeking to reach consensus among all stake-holders be conducted.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

The biblical writers were persons of their own times. They wrote in particular settings and addressed their writings to specific problems and to a particular people who lived in a definite historical context. Their attitudes, outlooks and beliefs were those appropriate to people of their time (Cook 1983:47).

In the words of scripture we are offered great insights into the problems facing the people of God in Old and New Testament times and into the minds of the leaders responding to the issues of their day. There is a sense in which these words are time bound. Only through interpretation can these words have meaning for modern people. Since biblical writers wrote to address problems prevalent at the time, there is a need for modern interpreters to take cognisance of new situations, that is, the (African) Zulu context in which they seek to apply the message of the Bible. Recognition of the importance of the context of the people to which the message is being transmitted is a hermeneutical requirement. An important hermeneutical question is: Is it really possible to speak in general terms of an African context or perspective?

Pato (1997:54) is right in raising a question whether it makes scientific sense to speak of 'a perspective from the African culture and spirituality' when the African continent is so vast and diversified. While one can no longer speak

of 'Africans' in general, or of 'African tradition' in a pure state because of its evident diversity and complexity, and in the face of profound current mutations, black Africa does exhibit certain data and represents a more and more precise cultural and historical entity (Penoukou 1991:29).

Pato (1997:54) on the one hand contends that the African continent consists of such a variety of ethnic groups, each with its own customs, history and ways of life, that sweeping generalisations about things African are always risky. Only at the level of abstraction as Weber (1949) puts it, can one use generalisations to refer to African people. Zahan (1979:2) on the other hand argues rightly that the diversity of African ethnic groups should not be an obstacle to such an undertaking since the variation in religion has less to do with the ideas themselves than with their expression by means of dissimilar elements linked to the occupations and the flora and fauna of the area.

In the Bible we encounter a variety of cultural contexts within which texts were conceived. Therefore to say that biblical writers were people of their times, is to allude to the fact that they belonged to particular peoples and cultures; that it was within the treasury provided by their cultural context that they drew concepts and ideas which they used in addressing their audiences. Culture is the matrix within which human beings exist and in terms of which we (they) interact with each other and God (Kraft 1979:45).

Man (human beings) himself is a cultural being (Burki 1978:297). What this means is that culture is the field into which he is born, a field that plays a vital role in the socialisation of every person. Certain values and norms that act as guiding principles are developed within the cultural field. Kraft

(1979:47-48) argues that culture shapes both our acting and our thinking...it provides models of reality that govern our perceptions.

Mbiti (1978:273) dealing with the background to the Gospel emphasises the fact that it was revealed to the world, in the context and language of the culture of Palestine. It was within this cultural context that everything that is real, actual, probable and even improbable, as far as Christianity is concerned, was first conceptualised. This process of conceptualisation culminated in what is called 'the world-view', that is, 'the Christian world-view'. Kraft (1979:53) referring to the powerful influence of the world-view, says that it lies at the very heart of culture, touching, interacting with and strongly influencing every other aspect of the culture.

During the period of colonialism, African culture came under tremendous attack. Much of African culture in all its forms, was altered or supplanted by the more vigorous and technically advanced forms of colonising western culture, backed by the political power dominant at that time, in any particular area (Baffa 1978:294). Zulu culture could not in any way have escaped the same onslaught.

In this study, the focus of attention will be on the Zulu-speaking people of Empangeni. It is necessary to limit the field because there are so many local peculiarities in the African Traditional Religions (ATR) of South Africa that it would be impossible to discuss, within the compass of this study, the whole range of these peculiarities in some detail and with any degree of accuracy. Obviously constant mention of African culture in general will be made in order to verify the generality of what obtains within Zulu culture.

1.2 Motivation and background

When the missionaries and colonialists brought the Bible to Africa, it was part of ‘a package deal’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991). By saying that it was part of ‘a package deal’, the implication is that the missionaries, who were responsible for the proclamation of the biblical message, were also instruments at the hands of colonisers. Takatso Mofokeng (1988:34) expresses succinctly the view held by many black Africans that when the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us ‘let us pray’. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible. This statement does not only express the dilemma that faces black South Africans in their relationship with the Bible (Mofokeng 1988:34) but embodies also the scepticism with which missionary enterprise is presently viewed.

Missionaries did not only bring with them various European and American cultural values but also identifiable ideologies characteristic of their age (Kalu 1979:17). Their endeavours at evangelisation were constantly hampered by their inadequate understanding of the dynamics of the local situation (Kalu 1979:17), so that second and third generation Christians are rebelling against the illegitimate and unchristian violence done to their traditional customs (Gatu 1979:525). It is against this background that missionaries are blamed for the apparent failure of black South Africans (including Zulu people) to embrace the gospel wholeheartedly.

Reasons for this failure are attributed to the fact that they neglected the traditional religions they found in place and condemned them as the work of Satan without any salvific value (Maimela 1985:64). Another reason lies in the cultural superiority and great condescension that they showed towards indigenous people (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:xiv). They saw themselves as agent sent to bring true faith to the heathens and to save their souls from darkness and eternal death (Maimela 1985:64). Most of them dismissed what they observed of the religious ideas and observances, with abhorrence and derision (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:xiv). In doing so they created the impression that people of other faiths were enemies of God while Christians, as the new Israel, were God's privileged people (Maimela 1979:65).

As children of their time, their reading of the scriptures was far from being neutral, they approached the Bible with presuppositions, shaped and informed by their culture and class (Maimela 1985:65). Bishop Colenso among early missionaries is one of a few exceptions. He refused to accept that every custom (of Zulu people) must be evil, just because it was their custom (Hinchliff 1968:65). However, the notion of the pre-eminence of what is Christian and European still lingers on (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:xiv).

Since the democratisation of South Africa in 1994, the complex religious and cultural scenarios that obtain within the South African context, have been brought to the fore. This has resulted in a spirit of openness and a willingness among Christian churches to engage in debates regarding the role and influence culture exerts on people. Calls for inculturation are growing all the time (Anglican Update, Nov 1994, Vol.1 No 10). References are made to liturgy, music, marriage, church law and clerical garments that

they should be adapted to local realities (Lapointe 1995:166). Inculturation implies not only borrowing a few symbols or some ways of doing things, but the penetration of the whole system of symbols and ways of relating to the world and to the transcendent, the assuming and the transformation of the human thought as a whole inherent in a culture (Lapointe 1995:166). This is much deeper than meets the eye.

The conference on Christianity, African culture and development held in 1996 also saw as urgent the integration of African culture and Christianity as an enriching possibility (Ecunews 1996:17). The process envisaged here is a much deeper and complex exercise. If Jesus Christ as the focal point of Christianity and culture is taken seriously then inculturation is not a matter of dealing with externals only (Lapointe 1995:166).

The researcher's own experience in working in a Zulu context has provoked his interest in an analytic investigation of the Zulu symbolic universe (See Berger and Luckmann 1966). This interest does only emanate from the literature he has read on the subject, but from statements made by Zulu people regarding the way their own world-view was radically replaced by the western ethno-centric world-view.

An abundance of literature exists dealing with Zulu cultural and religious realities. This include the following: G C Oosthuizen, who has conducted and written extensively on the Independent and Messianic churches among Zulus; (For further reference to Oosthuizen's research and collections, we refer you to the Nermic library in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Zululand); K C Fleming's article on 'The Gospel to the urban Zulu: three

cultures in conflict'; I Hexham, on 'Zulu traditional religion and belief in the sky god'. But as far as we have ascertained, no research exists which addresses and covers the topic this thesis deals with. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies in the fact that it is a novel attempt seeking to relate 1 John to the Zulu context using some insights gleaned from Berger and Luckmann's theory of the symbolic universe.

What the researcher finds striking is that though the sending of missionaries into Africa is almost a thing of the past, the Western approach of dismissing anything indigenous still lingers on. But a new danger has reared its head, that is, the danger of expecting Christianity to accept anything 'African' without critically examining it to see to it that it does not compromise the basic core of scripture (Mbiti 1979:279). The apparent failure of African theologians and preachers to come up with a viable alternative to the Western approach has exacerbated the situation.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Hermeneutics has its origin in a reading situation, that is, in dealing with text (Lategan 1984:2). The topic of this dissertation focuses on reading the first letter of John (hereafter 1 John) in a Zulu context, which activity is far from merely a passive acceptance of the message, but a very productive activity (Lategan 1984:4). The focus in hermeneutics has always been on the text but over the last few decades a paradigm shift has occurred. The focus has shifted from concentrating solely on the text onto the relationship between the text and the reader (West 1995:60).

The problem is that there is an apparent failure on the side of Zulu people to embrace the gospel fully. That there is a failure to embrace the gospel fully is evidenced by the fact that they revert to their original behaviour before they became Christians whenever they are overtaken by moral lassitude, danger or suffering (Tempels 1969:17f). This study therefore seeks to investigate and locate the source of this failure as well as to discover what is involved in reading 1 John, a text, which arose from a specific context, into another context - particularly a Zulu context. This, we believe, entails an investigation of the social and cultural of the text of 1 John as well as the universe of Zulu people. This research attempts not only to identify some hermeneutical tensions and issues raised by this kind of reading but also factors that will enhance an effective reading and understanding of the text of 1 John in a Zulu context. A chapter will be provided later on, in this study, in which focus is on hermeneutical issues raised by this trans-cultural kind of reading.

The researcher presupposes that the reader is inextricably bound by the cultural context within which this reading has to take place and therefore contends that there is a need to investigate and discover the powerful influence symbolic universes have on readers in the process of understanding the text.

The researcher will also try and illustrate that there are similarities and differences between the symbolic universe of 1 John and that of the Zulu people; that he hopes to show that if some of the ideas and themes discussed in 1 John are introduced properly it would be possible to find common ground between the two universes. We will explore that possibility by

examining the following: God, Jesus, sin, forgiveness, sacrifice, love, eternal life, mediation and the influence these have on the creation of morality and societal behaviour.

The researcher will also show that the contours of the Zulu religious symbolic universe have not been thoroughly researched, and as a result Christian practitioners, as well as those concerned about morality in our nation, have not fully exploited even the obvious points of departure and contact to make the necessary connections. This has resulted in parallel and seemingly very divergent world-views that seem irreconcilable. We will take a closer look on this later on in our discussion.

1.4 The objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- * To investigate the symbolic universes of 1 John and the Zulu people in order to relate them to each other.
- * To discover what present day Zulu people believe and how they perceive reality, including a religious perspective.
- * To identify similarities and differences in the symbolic universes of 1 John and the Zulu people with a view to establishing common ground for harmony and congruence in bringing together the two world-views.

- * To facilitate the interpretation and communication of 1 John's message in an effective, understandable and acceptable way to a Zulu person in today's context.

1.5 The Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will be tested: that there exists a measure of congruency between the worlds of 1 John and Zulu people, which if properly identified, investigated and exploited, could enhance a smooth construction of a hermeneutical bridge of understanding of the message of 1 John, leading to its heightened relevance and significance within the Zulu symbolic universe.

1.6 The significance of the study

The study will be significant in that it will provide a hermeneutical bridge that will make possible the mutual interaction and exchange of some aspects of 1 John's symbolic universe and the Zulu symbolic universe, leading to a better understanding of the message of 1 John in a Zulu context. The researcher believes this to be the first study of its kind, a study that seeks to locate the message of 1 John into a particularly Zulu context. It will therefore be a new contribution to the field of New Testament studies, in particular, the Johannine studies.

This study because of its emphasis on the importance of understanding a people's symbolic universe in order to enter their universe, will also enable

Christian practitioners to communicate 1 John's message in an effective, understandable and acceptable way to a Zulu person in today's context.

This study will serve to underscore the importance of linking biblical values and norms to a people's cultural heritage so as to establish a common base for moulding behaviour and reinforcing morality, which is the greatest concern of the South African society. This study, I believe will also create potential for more research in this field that has been lying dormant.

1.7 A synopsis of this study

Part of the task this study is to setting out to accomplish, is to discover how an ancient document could be read particularly in Zulu context. In order to accomplish this goal, it will be necessary at least to uncover the original cultural contexts within which 1 John was first conceived and conceptualised.

The first chapter, which is this one, is meant to be a general introduction to the study as a whole, serving not only to provide an outline of what will follow but also to justify the need for this particular study.

Chapter two sketches out briefly Berger and Luckmann's phenomenological theory, especially their conception of the symbolic universe. This theoretical framework will undergird this study. In this thesis we will seek to discover what is involved in reading an old text into a new situation. We will in particular with the help of Berger and Luckmann's theory of the symbolic universe, focus on reading the first letter of John in a Zulu context. Zulu people are a part of Africa, which is a continent with ancient cultures and art - comprising a host of ethnic and cultural varieties (Baffa 1978:293).

Cultural diversities preclude any generalisation regarding an African perspective.

The section on 1 John has been divided into two chapters—chapters three and four, which would basically be complementary. Before delving into the task of trying to reconstruct the original context, it is important to provide first a chapter in which a discourse analysis of 1 John is conducted, this will form chapter three of this study. A discourse analysis will be done with the view to identifying symbols and discovering some of the basic and underlying themes of 1 John. The method is an old one but suitable for our purpose in that it focuses on every detail as our study requires. For this analysis we are deeply indebted to J A du Rand for the work he has done in this area.

In chapter four, we will conduct a systematic discussion of some of the symbols identified in chapter three, using some of the insights gained from our reading of Berger and Luckmann's theory of the symbolic universe. In this thesis we contend that the first letter of John was first conceptualised within a particular cultural context, that the author's ideas were first formulated and crystallised within that context. This means that to a large degree, the author was able to relate to the world-view of the people he addressed. Any investigation into 1 John makes it incumbent upon the investigator to take a hermeneutical trip back to the context of both the author and his audience. A trip of this kind will enhance our understanding and enable us to identify the symbols he used and in our interpretation to find a relevant message for today.

The symbolic universe of 1 John is not something that is given in the text. In order to attempt a reconstruction of this universe we relied so much on the

symbolism of language within the text. A variety of symbols which the author employed as vehicles for explaining and conveying his understanding of reality as well as constructing a new reality will be examined. Our examination of those symbols, we believe, will give us a glimpse of something, which we think comes close to resembling the universe of the author and first readers.

The process of reconstructing a universe is not an easy venture. But we will begin this work with the assumption that the first readers like all readers were preconditioned by their socio-historical context; that it was within this context that the author sought to communicate his message. Second, we will focus on the symbols and metaphors that the author employed in his communication. These symbols will be subjected to a number of interrogative questions such as: why did the author use this symbol? What meaning did it carry for his readers? Did they understand the meaning of what the author was conveying to them? In cases where no explanation is supplied by the author of what the symbol means, we will ask, what background information is being assumed here? And where are these symbols derived from?

In the case of the New Testament genre of letters, the implied pragmatic effect was to respond to the needs of a particular individual or communities, and to persuade the readers to bring about changes (of attitude and behaviour) in their situations (Moulton 1994:361). We therefore think that as we continue the interrogation of the text, we will be able to show that some of the dynamics operative within symbolic universes as stated by Berger and Luckmann, were also at work when 1 John became concretised. We think we would be in a position to show how the author employed some of the

symbols either as agents of integration and construction or as agents of disintegration.

We will be able also to demonstrate that the metaphorical antithesis drawn between light and darkness, love and hate, children of God and children of the devil, are operative within this scheme. The author does this by clustering them on two opposing poles representing the positive and negative. Symbols on the negative pole serve to undermine the reality posited by the new emerging deviant group. The categorising of the deviant group as the Antichrist is thus a strategy for demonising and destroying the deviant viewpoint. This amounts to what is called 'witchcraft accusation' (Neyrey 1990 & Wilson 1980), which functions to denigrate rivals and to pull them down.

In chapter five, we will paint a broad outline the contours of what might be called the symbolic universe of Africa of which the Zulu is but a part, even though it may exhibit some variation to certain extent. This chapter is necessary also for providing a picture of how much research has been conducted in this area and why this particular research is necessary.

The situation of the present reader or receiver, which we consider in chapter six also needs to be taken seriously if any cross-cultural leap with 1 John's message to another culture will yield any fruit in the new context. This created the need to do empirical research in order to check how many of the old ideas are still prevalent today and whether one can still claim that the symbolic universe as conceived then has not been adapted to meet modern needs. Repetition cannot be avoided if we seek to verify some of the old perceptions to see whether they still hold their ground today. Sensitivity

such as this to modern readers is a hermeneutical requirement. Chapter six then aims at doing two things: 1. Explaining briefly the research method we have used in the acquisition of data, and 2. to discuss and synthesise the actual results of focus group discussion with various insights from preceding chapters, especially chapters four and five. Since reading involves interpretation and the text that will be read is a communication from the past, this will no doubt raise hermeneutical issues. It is our intention to highlight these issues in chapter seven.

For our research tool, a questionnaire has been constructed and translated into Zulu to facilitate understanding of what is being asked. Both the English and Zulu version will appear under annexure one and two. Particular themes have been followed in designing the research tool and these have also been divided accordingly for discussion by focus groups. Reasons for choosing focus group method for conducting interviews will also be supplied in the same chapter.

The philosophical basis upon which all this is based is the theory of communication. Every communication involves a sender, a message and a receiver, that is, author, text, and reader. In reader-response hermeneutics, increasing attention is being paid on the active role of the reader in creating meaning (Thiselton 1988:297). Since this study involves reading, an activity performed by a reader, the reader will receive special focus in chapter seven where hermeneutical issues raised by this kind of reading are considered.

In chapter eight, this whole study will be bound together in the form of a summary, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

A brief explanation of the Berger and Luckmann's theory that will be used in this thesis.

2.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is twofold. First, to discuss briefly Berger and Luckmann's (1966) phenomenological approach to the sociology of knowledge, especially their conception of the symbolic universe and how this serves to explain and justify the social reality within which people find themselves. Although this is an old theory and not the only one available, it is useful and still provides a basic and valid tool for describing and analysing the material relevant to this study.

Second, following Berger and Luckmann's approach, we will investigate the symbolic universe of 1 John, bearing in mind the fact that any attempt to reconstruct the socio-historical scenario of the first century readers must remain hypothetical since we can not with certainty purport to have accurately done so. The intention of this investigation would be to discover how the symbolic universe of 1 John influenced the manner the author expressed himself, and what symbols he used in communicating his message, and whether those symbols still provide relevant communication today.

There is also a tendency among scholars to make statements that are not based on any research findings. It is therefore our intention to conduct a field

study on some aspects of Zulu culture, which we hope will furnish information relevant for today.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Berger and Luckmann's conception of the symbolic universe

We have already stated that this study will be based on some aspects of Berger and Luckmann's well-known phenomenological approach to the sociology of knowledge, and in particular their conception of symbolic universes. However, there will be no constant referral to them since it has been mentioned that what follows are insights based on their theory. It is stated that the symbolic universe constitutes the highest level of legitimation of the social reality that human beings create (Berger & Luckmann 1966:95).

The authors ascribe the origin of institutions to frequently repeated actions, which become cast into a pattern. The process by which actions are patterned and frequently repeated until their performers apprehend them is called habitualization. In other words institutionalisation occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualised actions by the types of actors (Berger & Luckmann 1966:54).

By means of role-playing institutions become embodied in individual experience. As individuals play their roles, they participate in a social reality, a reality that must be made meaningful and subjectively plausible to all its members. The process by which this is achieved is called legitimation.

Through this process reality is explained and justified. Legitimation produces and integrates the meanings that are already attached to institutions.

The need for legitimation arises whenever the already objectified meanings of the institutional order have to be transmitted to a new generation. It is at this point, when institutions can no longer be maintained by means of the individual's own recollection and habitualization, that the unity of history gets broken. Legitimation restores the broken link by 'explaining' and 'justifying'. It explains by ascribing cognitive validity to the institutional order and it justifies by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives. Legitimation not only tells the person why he should perform one action and not the other, it also tells him why things are what they are (1966:94), i.e. it supplies the person with knowledge. Berger and Luckmann point out that there are different levels of legitimation; namely:

The first level is called incipient legitimation. This level is pre-theoretical, that is, when the simple traditional affirmations to the effect that, 'This is how things are done' are operative.

The theoretical level constitutes the second level, which contains theoretical propositions in a rudimentary form. Here may be included such things as proverbs, sayings, folk tales, stories that are used to explain reality.

The third level contains explicit theories by which the institutional order is legitimated in terms of a differentiated body of knowledge. Because of the specialised nature of this form of knowledge, it is always entrusted to

specialised personnel who transmit it through formalised initiation procedures (Berger and Luckmann 1966:95).

The fourth level is the symbolic universe, which according to the authors constitutes the highest level of legitimation. It is this level which we will discuss briefly since in our research we will be using insights based on it.

2.2.1.1 Symbolic universe

It should be noted that our intention here is not to develop a theory but to give a brief orientation on the method we are partly going to be using. Detailed information for anyone who wants to read more about this theory is available in Berger and Luckmann's book, 'The Social Construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge'. What is a symbolic universe? Berger and Luckmann (1966:95) define a symbolic universe as a body of theoretical traditions that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality.

This level of legitimation is distinguished from preceding ones by its scope of meaningful integration. The symbolic universe encompasses marginal situations, which are experienced in dreams and fantasies as provinces of meaning detached from everyday life, endowed with peculiar reality of their own. These marginal experiences are integrated within a meaningful totality that 'explains and justifies them'.

The operation of symbolic universes is nomic i.e. ordering, in character. It provides order for the subjective apprehension of biographical experience.

Experiences belonging to different spheres (such as dreams) are integrated by incorporation in the same, overarching universe of meanings. The nomic function of the symbolic universe for individual experience may be described quite simply by saying 'it puts everything in its right place' (Berger & Luckmann 1966:98). When one strays, the symbolic universe allows one to return to reality.

The symbolic universe apart from integrating marginal realities provides the highest level of integration for the discrepant meaning actualised within everyday life in society. The symbolic universe orders and legitimates everyday roles, priorities, and operating procedures by placing them in the context of the most general frame of reference conceivable (*sub specie universe*). As Joubert (1995:50) points out, even the precariousness of the world is overcome within the symbolic universe.

The same legitimating function pertains to the 'correctness' of the individual's subjective identity. Placing it within the context of a symbolic universe ultimately legitimates identity. The individual can live in society with some assurance that she/he really is what she/he considers him/herself to be as he plays his routine social roles, in broad daylight and under the eyes of significant others.

The symbolic universe also provides psychological reinforcement in the face of a crisis such as death, illness, or in times of uncertainty and heightened anxiety. It is to one's conceptual system that one turns for refuge and encouragement. For instance, death, which is terrifying, is integrated within the reality of social existence. Its terrifying aspect, which may be paralysing

to the extreme to the individual person is removed. The symbolic universe tends to integrate and reinforce death, and each of the situations mentioned above, either through rituals or ceremonies. For instance, when someone has died, people tend to ritualise their grief in a variety of ways. The ritualisation of grief is important for their healing and well-being. In that way the individual is able to face death and make sense of it.

The symbolic universe therefore shelters the individual from ultimate terror and from a world that appears to be filled with capricious and uncontrollable forces by bestowing ultimate legitimation upon the protective structures of the institutional order. In this way the precariousness of the world is overcome (Joubert 1995:50). Berger and Luckmann (1966:102) call symbolic universes sheltering canopies because of their ability to absorb, integrate and order reality.

2.2.1.2 The role of language

Berger and Luckmann (1966:36-7) define language as the most important sign system of human society originating in the face-to-face situation. Common experiences of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification. As these authors contend, life is life because there exists a common language, which I share with other people. Through language people are able to define and express in words the reality, as they perceive it. It must be stated that language operates according to its own rules, which must be adhered to. One cannot take rules applicable to one language and use them to the other. Language has the capacity of bridging different zones

within the reality of everyday life and integrating them into a meaningful whole (Berger & Luckmann 1966:39).

Furthermore language is able to construct immense symbolic representations that tower over the reality of everyday life (Berger & Luckmann 1967:40). Symbolic language attempts to reach out to that which is not immediately known. It operates for this task by taking images derived from the world of every day, i.e. the world of sense experience, and using them to speak of that which transcends them. Therefore, an understanding of language is essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life (Berger and Luckmann 1966:37).

2.2.1.3 The maintenance of symbolic universes

Having discussed the symbolic universe, it is necessary that we discuss how symbolic universes maintain themselves since 1 John exhibits some of these techniques. Berger and Luckmann (1966:105) state that specific procedures of universe maintenance become necessary when the symbolic universe has become a problem. A problem arises whenever the symbolic universe has to be transmitted to another generation. As a matter of fact the symbolic universe is imposed upon the young of any society by means of familiar teaching and learning and in some cases through initiation. What this means is that people who have been brought up within a particular cultural context will be conditioned to interpret reality in terms of the conceptual systems of that culture. If women are reared within a culture where no status or respect of any kind is accorded them, they will simply accept that unquestioningly and uncomplainingly and will see nothing wrong with that.

The problem becomes accentuated for the symbolic universe if there has arisen a deviant version of the symbolic universe with a substantial number of subscribers, which challenges the reality status of the symbolic universe as originally constituted (Berger and Luckmann 1966:106). The encounter and interaction between two societies with conflicting universes, marked by strenuous resistance from both sides, may result in a dynamic interaction and forced adaptation as each challenges and impacts on the other. Such confrontation may either result in the rejection and replacement of the symbolic universe or its confirmation.

The usefulness and relevancy of Berger and Luckmann's theory for this dissertation lies in the fact it provides a basic and valid tool for analysing the material pertaining to both the Zulu world and that of 1 John. Since all human experiences should be conceived as taking place within the symbolic universes, it is our intention first, to identify, and describe with the help of this theory, symbols in 1 John. Second, in chapter four, a description of what the relationship between these symbols is, will be done. In the ensuing chapter an attempt through a discourse analysis of 1 John will be made in order to identify some of the symbols that the author employed in communicating his understanding of the Gospel message to his community. We are aware that a discourse analysis is an old method with deficiencies of its own but we have chosen it because for the purpose of this research it is still effective. The nature of our research requires that one focuses as far as possible on every detail. The discourse analysis is the right method to help us focus on every aspect in the text as well as illustrating what the relationship is among these aspects.

CHAPTER THREE

Entering 1 John's world with the view to identifying key symbols employed by the author in conveying his message.

3.1 Introduction

Any attempt to enter, identify and analyse the symbolic universe of any New Testament document, is fraught with difficulties. Before identifying and discussing some of the symbols and themes found in 1 John, it is vital that we consider briefly the relationship between this letter and the Gospel of John especially the authorship, the sequential question and the situation that prompted the author to write it. Conzelmann & Lindemann (1988:257) state that a working knowledge of the letters of John can best be achieved by considering them in relationship to the Gospel. The discussion conducted here would not be a detailed one, rather it will focus on the areas already mentioned, that is, the authorship and sequential questions. These we believe will shed light on whether either of them was dependent on the other and how far each influenced the other.

3.2 The authorship question

Regarding the authorship question, Coetzee (1993:202) states that the most important question in this regard is the relationship between the Gospel of John and 1 John. Is the same author responsible for both? Tenney (1985:374) says that if the criteria of vocabulary and style were ever adequate for

pronouncing judgement on the authorship, these three short letters must be attributed to one author who is also the author of the Fourth Gospel.

Having said this, we will not however, get into an in depth discussion of the authorship because many books have been written on the subject. Various theories concerning the authorship of both the Gospel and the letters have been proposed. An important question raised there is: did a single author write the gospel or was its production a community venture? A number of theologians have discussed the authorship question very extensively. The following are just a few of many who have made contributions to this question: Haenchen 1984; Morris 1971; Tasker 1989; Brown 1966; Fuller 1957; Stott 1964.

For our purpose the question of authorship of the gospel has been sufficiently discussed by J.A. du Rand in 'Guide to the New Testament' Vol 6 pp. 22-25. In this discussion du Rand (1988:25) concludes that the authorship of John's gospel cannot be attributed exclusively to any single historical figure, but that the evangelist was the personal element in the group within the Johannine community, which compiled the gospel, based on the authoritative interpretations of the beloved disciple, who had been an eye-witness. We concur with Painter (1979:4) who sums up the above view by stating that John should be seen as the origin of the tradition, which was ultimately expressed in the Gospel.

Regarding the authorship of 1 John, the question is whether the writer was John the Apostle, another John the Presbyter, an unknown pupil of John the Apostle, named the Presbyter, or whether 1 John was a product of the

Johannine community. Goppelt (1982:290) sees the author of 1 John in terms of an individual who had joined the company of a group. Bruce (1970:31) holds the view that the various arguments scholars have advanced for diversity of authorship are insufficient to overthrow the evidence both internal and external, for common authorship with the Gospel. Here we also list some authors who have dealt with the authorship question. For further reading consult the following scholars: Brown 1982; Edwards 1996; Westcott 1966; Marshall 1978; Schnackenburg 1975; Fuller 1957; Stott 1964.

For the purpose of this thesis, it will suffice at this point to voice our concurrence with Coetzee (1993:202), Thiessen (1943:308), Lenski (1966:363) and Freed (1986:376) who argue that elements common to both are so overwhelming, reaching to the marrow of each, that we have little doubt that the writer of the Gospel also wrote 1 John and further states that the author is none other than the apostle John, the son of Zebedee. Streeter also says that the three Epistles and the Gospel of John are so closely allied in diction, style, and general outlook that the burden of proof lies with the person who would deny their common authorship affirms this (in Brown 1982:20).

And for the purpose of this study (even though we make constant reference to the author), we assume that 1 John was in fact the work of John the apostle, whom we also assume wrote or was the origin of the Gospel of John. Even though the focus of this study is on 1 John, references to the Gospel of John will be made since as stated, this letter has a lot in common with the gospel, in language, theology, style and frame of reference.

3.3 In what sequence were they written?

Important in this regard is considering the sequence in which the Gospel and the letter came into being. This will enable us to determine which symbolic terms came into operation and in which context. This will also enable us to discover whether these have been applied either in 1 John or the Gospel without alteration or rearrangement and what they eventually came to mean. Lieu (1991:4) states that we will certainly not be in any position to determine this or to interpret 1 John without a prior decision being made as to whether or not the Gospel is to be presupposed.

Even though the dating of 1 John is a matter of guesswork, Brown (1982:32) and Smalley (1984:xxxii) date the gospel before the first letter of John. From this we can presume that some of the symbolic terms and concepts used in 1 John were taken from John's Gospel. In fact Brown (1982:32) in dealing with the dating of these argues for a span of ten years to allow debate to have arisen about the implications of John's Gospel. Perrin & Duling (1982:362) argue that the date of 1 John would not have been long after the Gospel, the reason being that the attention has shifted from external opponents ('the world'; 'the Jews') to false teachers within the community.

One of the assumptions of this thesis is that the readers of 1 John had access to either the written or oral versions of the Gospel. In any case the Gospel developed over a long period. The final date of fixing should be regarded as the date for the final redaction. This does not imply that the core of what is known as the Gospel did not exist much earlier. It indeed did.

Houlden (1973:25) asserts that it is not impossible that sections of 1 John developed like snowballs from a beginning in sayings of the kind found in the Gospels. Brown (1982:124); Van Staden (1991:495) endorse the view that the epistolary author was drawing upon the theology and wording of the Johannine tradition embodied in the Gospel of John and assumed the mantle of the evangelist as an interpreter of that tradition (the 'we' of the Johannine School), a priori, it is not inconceivable that he used John's Gospel as a model in structuring his comments in 1 John.

That the gospel and 1 John were written to address diverse situations in congregations somewhere in Asia Minor is less disputed. Robinson (1976:289) asserts that the Johannine epistles are intelligible only on the assumption that their readers have been their writer's pastoral concern from 'the beginning' and had been nurtured in Johannine Christianity.

But if we were to decide that these are not works of the same author, it would be surprising that the Gospel and 1 John have so much in common in terms of 'language, style, vocabulary, modes of expression and proclamation' (Coetzee 1993:202; Lieu 1991:16; Williams 1965:15). We think this commonality accounts sufficiently for the dependency of 1 John on the Gospel.

Dependency in this regard is seen in terms of the same symbols and concepts. Some of these are the antithetical word-pairs such as light-darkness, love-hate, truth-lie, children of God-children of the devil, knowing God-not knowing God, having life-not having life that are found in both. As we go on we will discover how the author uses these to communicate his understanding

of the gospel message to the Johannine community. For now we turn to examine the circumstances that led to the writing of this letter.

3.4 The occasion of 1 John

It is difficult to say with certainty when 1 John was written but with a measure of probability, we settle for a date around 100 AD (Coetzee 1993:203). 1 John was written probably for a congregation or group of churches somewhere in Asia Minor (Coetzee 1993:206). The occasion of 1 John was the struggle with the secessionists, who were former members of the community but had broken away (Brown 1982:29) over right doctrine and right practice (Klauck 1988:56) and who also were propagating a type of docetic Christology (Vorster 1975; Dunn 1990; Fuller 1971), denying the coming of Jesus in the flesh (1 Jn 2:22f; 4:2f; 5:6).

The clue to the purpose of 1 John lies in 1 Jn 2:19 (Fuller 1971:180). That heretical teaching had become a more coherent system of thought and its adherents were trying to persuade the rest of the church to follow them (Marshall 1978:4) can barely be doubted. This group posited a threat to the already constituted symbolic universe. The struggle in 1 John appears to have been on proper faith in Jesus as 'the incarnate Christ' (1 Jn 4:2) and 'the Son of God' (1 Jn 5:1,5) as well as the ethical implications of this faith on believers.

The context of 1 John is one of schism to which the author wrote to offer an encouragement and strengthening of Christians against the attacks of secessionists as well as to challenge the secessionist group that was positing

an alternative view of reality. Even though 1 John is not a letter in conventional terms, in its form and content it resembles a theological treatise or sermon, written with the obvious affection and concern for the spiritual welfare of those to whom it is addressed (Perrin & Duling 1982:363). 1 John was written to establish certainty (Tenney 1985:375).

3.5 A brief focused discussion on the basis of a discourse analysis of 1 John

3.5.1 Introduction

It has already been pointed out in the introduction that 1 John is more of a theological treatise (Conzelmann & Lindemann 1988: 258) or a pastoral document in a homiletic form (du Rand 1979:3; Aune 1987:218; Fuller 1971:181; Johnson 1999:565; Perrin & Duling 1982:363), or a tract in time of persecution (Edwards 1989:170), or it may also be regarded as the result of putting together a number of discrete sections rather than a single act of writing (Houlden 1973:25). Its structural arrangement does not conform to the conventional format of ancient letter writing. As du Plessis (1978:10) points out 'daar is geen aanhef, outeursgroet, danksegging, seënbede en groete aan die einde nie'.

The introduction as well as the conclusion, (regardless of whether one considers either 5:21 as the conclusion or 5:13, as Bultmann does) does not have the character of a letter (Conzelmann & Lindemann 1988:258; du Rand 1979:3). Du Plessis (1978:10-11) argues that 'dit wil egter nie sê dat ons nie met 'n egte brief te doen het nie'. This is echoed by Fuller who says that even

though 1 John has no epistolary introduction or conclusion, yet in content it is undoubtedly a letter (Fuller 1971:181; Painter 1979:112). According to Klauck (1991:32) the author is dealing with concrete addressees in a specific situation, he is seriously concerned about their well-being, he reflects on the necessity of writing and he refers to common experiences and history. The contents therefore suggest that it is a letter.

It is generally stated that in 1 John, *'lasst sich ein klar gegliederter aufbau nicht erkennen'* (Conzelmann & Lindemann 1977:293). According to De Jonge (1968:10) there is no pattern or systematic or logical progression of thought in its stylistic presentation (in du Rand 1979:2; Spivey & Smith 1969:437; Painter 1979:109). Observable, however, is that even though 1 John appears to be moving 'spirally' (Freed 1986:378; Fuller 1971:178) or in circles, there is progression of thought in that *'elke gedagtereeks lei na 'n volgende en voer die aanvanklike uitgangspunt steeds verder totdat die hoofpunt bereik word'* (du Plessis 1978:11). R. Law says that it moves like a winding staircase – always revolving around the same centre, always recurring to the same topics, but at a higher level (in Freed 1985:378-9).

Longacre (1992:271) rightly points out that every expositor has an outline of the book, and the outlines, although similar at some points of division, for the most part go their own ways. Attempts to divide 1 John structurally have been made and a variety of reasons given for each division. Some of the divisions are dependent on certain aesthetic or even dogmatic principles, leading in that case to part of the truth being often overindulged in and raised to the absolute (du Rand 1979:2). But when one reads 1 John, some of the proposed divisions

do not satisfy. They are upset by a series of repetitious and reiterations that occur throughout the letter (Lenski 1966:365).

This chapter is important in that it provides the backdrop against which discussion in the next chapter will be conducted. The purpose of this chapter is mainly to identify the symbols around which the author developed his theology as well as sections or verses where further discussion of these symbols is conducted. In the next chapter these symbols and theme will be discussed and developed further in a systematic manner. Our interest is not so much in providing a detailed exegesis of everything in the text but on the theological picture that emerges as the author employed symbols and symbolic language in developing his theology.

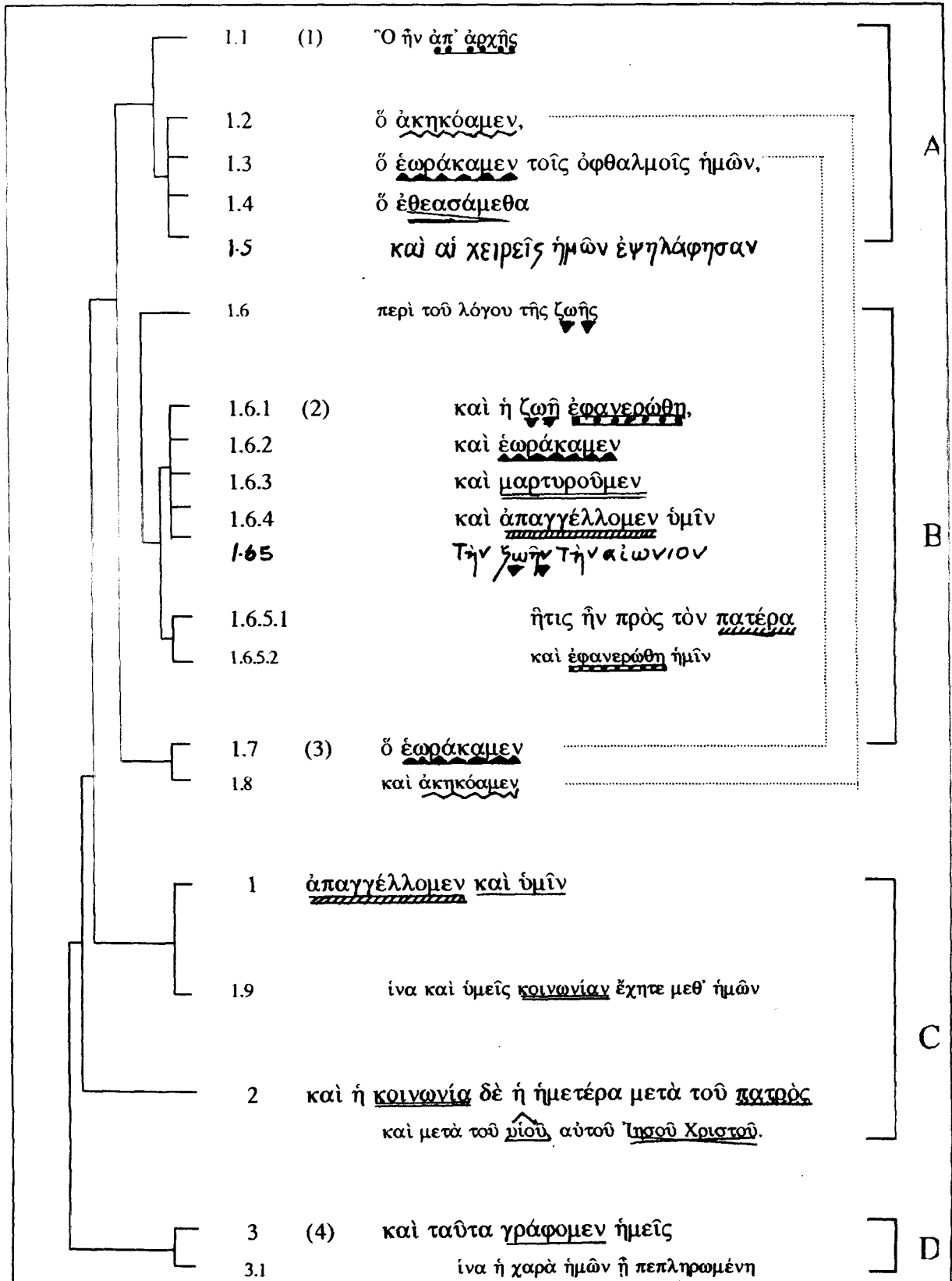
Since the focus is more on the theological orientation of the text, our purpose, therefore, is more that of gathering relevant information and systematising the message of 1 John with the view to drawing appropriate conclusions as to how the symbols or themes, that is, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, love, fellowship and many other, which have been identified, perceived as well as utilised by the author. This does not only involve grouping similar material together, but also explaining and interpreting the material within its original context and giving indications for the application of the material in present day situations. In terms of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) approach, it can be stated that the way in which one's symbolic universe is structured plays a major role in determining one's attitude towards the transcendent reality. What emerges in this kind of reading will give us a glimpse of what the author's symbolic universe might have looked like.

Having identified key symbols that governed the author's message, we will also establish whether his message hangs together, hence our discourse or structural analysis. The intention however is not to give a detailed discourse analysis but to offer brief comments on how the message hangs together. For our analysis of 1 John, we will basically follow du Rand's structural analysis of the Johannine letters, addendum to *Neotestamentica* 13, 1979. Where there is a difference of opinion, it will be pointed out and reasons given for our opinion.

3.5.2 A discourse analysis of 1 John and brief comments

Division 1 (Cola 1-3)

1 Jn 1:1-4



3.5.2.1 Brief remarks about the structure

What is given here is not a full discussion of every point. For a fuller picture, these comments should be read in conjunction with du Rand's remarks in *Neotestamentica* 13, of 1979. However a few important and relevant aspects are highlighted. However, focus in this chapter is on identificative and descriptive not interpretive or explicative. The latter will be done in the next chapter, which is a sequel to the present one.

1 John 1:1-4 may be divided into three subunits, which are grouped together by virtue of equal actants 'we' and 'you' (du Rand 1979:3). Colon 1 is made up of four asyndetic clauses. The 'we' endings of each verb refers to the apostles (Lenski 1966:373) or the tradition bearers (Brown 1982:160) and have the same semantic function.

Some scholars distinguish ἄπ' ἀρχῆς from ἐν ἀρχῇ and argue that the former phrase is a reference to the beginning of the Christian dispensation (Williams 1965:17; Lieu 1991:24) rather than the beginning of creation (Bruce 1970:34f.). Edwards (1996:70) refers to the ambiguity of the phrase, stating that it is not clear whether the preaching of Jesus or that of the community is intended. That which was from the beginning concerns the word of life. As Marshall (1978:103); Williams (1965:17) point out that the 'word of life' could be a reference to Jesus as the NIV; Stott (1964:73) have so easily assumed. This question however is not an easy one to settle (Schnackenburg 1975:61; Westcott 1966:6f.).

The four statements in verse one have a cumulative effect; the evidence is piled up leading to the revelation of what constitutes the climax of what the author is talking about- *περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς* (1 Jn 1:1) (Lenski 1966:373). *Ζωῆ* as a symbol plays a central role in the author's understanding of Jesus. The basic question however is: Why does the author associate Jesus with life? What is his understanding of life? The answer to these searching questions will be provided in the next chapter.

In verse 1, there is an obvious interruption caused by the addition of the parenthetical statement *περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς*. Colon 1.6.1 is another interruption providing explanation for *ζωῆ* mentioned in verse 1 (Brown 1982:153). This interruption further divides into independent comata, extending *τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς* (du Rand 1979:4). The aorist is followed by a perfect tense verb *ἑωράκαμεν*. This serves to accentuate what has already been said. If the interruptive sections were deleted, colon 1.5 would be followed by colon 1.7.

Remarkable also is the way the author uses the tenses. In the first cola two perfects '*ἄκηκόαμεν*' and '*ἑωράκαμεν*' followed immediately by two aorist, '*ἑθεασάμεθα*' and '*ἑψηλάφησαν*', are used. The perfects probably convey the continuity of the effect of hearing and seeing in the present time and in the lives of the tradition bearers. Williams (1965:17) suggests that the vivid words heard, seen it, looked upon it, felt it, seem to suggest the vivid contacts of the first disciples with Jesus himself. The repeated relative clauses of verse 1 find an explanation in the phrase *περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς* and together with them constitutes the object of *ἀπαγγέλλομεν*.

By adding in colon 1.6.1 a parenthesis, which is introduced by ‘καὶ’, the author makes an independent elucidative statement, a colon extending from the focal statement τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς. The word which is life is presented as having existed from the beginning (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς), as being manifested (ἐφανερώθη) and sensory experienced, emphasised by the perfect verbs, ἀκηκόαμεν and ἑώρακάμεν, the effects of which lead to bearing witness (μαρτυροῦμεν) and proclamation (ἀπαγγέλλομεν). The logos of life therefore, is the object of the proclamation of the author (Panikulam 1979:132).

The location of ζωὴ or τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα appears to be a clear reference to the pre-existence of the logos. The logos of life was manifested ἐφανερώθη. The aorist ἐφανερώθη emphasises the manifestation in a precise moment in history of that which was ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς. If a comparison is made with the prologue of John’s Gospel, this appears to be a reference to the fact that Jesus as incarnated; the logos became flesh and tented among us (Lenski 1966:371).

Fuller (1971:179) is of the opinion that the strong statements of 1 Jn 1:1-4 must not be taken to imply apostolic authorship or eyewitness of the historical Jesus. To ‘see’ is the common experience of the whole fellowship, resting as it does on the work of the Paraklete in transmitting the words of Jesus to later generations. If authorship of 1 John as tradition attributes it to the apostle John is accepted, then it is possible that the verbs used are an allusion to a concrete situation of seeing, touching and hearing the historical Jesus.

Colon 1.7 beginning exactly as colon 1.3 thereby accentuating all that has been stated above but also moving further to stating the ultimate purpose of proclamation as— ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν. Their κοινωνία as witnesses and those who proclaim is μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1 Jn 1:3). Κοινωνία understood within the symbolic framework of family in the Mediterranean context constitute an important symbol, which describes a state of openness, freedom, cleanliness, mutuality and common heritage. This fellowship is made possible by the acceptance of the life the Father manifests and imparts in the incarnate Son. The assertion of a fellowship with the Father is altogether absent elsewhere in the Bible and this new relation mentioned here is made possible because people could share the life of the Father in his Son (Panikulam 1979:132).

Du Rand (1979:4) states that the prologue is closed off – as a summary – in colon 3. What are ‘these things’ – ‘ταῦτα’ which the author is writing about? According to Du Plessis (1978:23) these things ‘is duidelik die betekenisvolle uitspraak wat hy so pas gedoen het’, that is, a reference to all that the author has said or written thus far or to what has to follow (du Rand 1979:4).

3.5.2.2 Descriptive identification of important symbols and themes

Concerning the theology of 1 John, Lieu (1991:22) states that it cannot be separated out topic by topic; themes and ideas are interwoven, and it is impossible to explore one without having to say something about the others as well. Having said that, below we will show symbols and themes that are

discernible in the prologue. First, the author seems to claim an unequivocal authority (Lieu 1991:23) for the 'We'.

On a human level they have heard, seen with their eyes, touched with their hands, hence their proclamation. This sounds like a clear claim to vivid contact of the 'We' with Jesus (Williams 1965:17), the eyewitnesses or tradition-bearers that speak for the Johannine School (Edwards 1996:69). According to Hills (1991:373) the 'we' are those who have the incontestable right to remind the local community of that which was from the beginning and of that teaching which can confirm the κοινωνία or fellowship of the author(s) with the readers – and in 1 John, of both with God.

What is it that has been sensory perceived? The author's answer is: It περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς. It is this word of life, which was with the Father but has been made visible, which the 'We' proclaims. Scholastic opinion is divided as to what the λόγος in this prologue stands for. What did λόγος represent in the author's stock of knowledge that he should link it with ζωῆ ? Edwards (1996:70) on the one hand, argues that the answer to this puzzle depends on whether the prologue draws from the Gospel's prologue. If it does, then a reference to Jesus as the eternal word is possible. Other scholars who translate λόγος as a reference to Jesus are: Balz, Boismard, Braun, Bultmann, Coetzee, de Ambroggi, du Rand, Hauck, Milch, Schnackenburg, Schneider, also KJV and JB.

Lieu (1991:23) on the other hand contends that, that which was heard, seen and handled is not Jesus, the Son, or even 'the word who was in the

beginning' (cf. John 1:1), but 'that [thing: neuter] which was from the beginning ...concerning the word of life'. Therefore she concludes that it was life, not Jesus that was manifested (v.1), thus accentuating the centrality of ζωῆ as a symbol here. The following scholars are among those who represent this position: Barclay, Brooke, Bruce, Dodd, Houlden, Marshall, and Stott.

Our position in this study is that the 'Word' is a reference to Jesus. The 'Word' is associated with the symbol or metaphor of life. A comparison of the life-symbol in 1 Jn 1:1-4 with 1 Jn 5:20 where Jesus is clearly identified with the life-symbol, corroborates our position. The central theme of the prologue is the proclamation of life-Jesus, Jesus who was revealed at a particular time in history. Why is Jesus identified with life? What does life within the universe of the readers of 1 John symbolise? These questions are important as we seek to discover the world within which these symbols developed and ultimately what the readers understood as they listened.

In 1 Jn 1:1-4, the life-symbol is clearly identified and the usage of functional words such as 'ἀκηκόαμεν' and 'ἑώρακάμεν' followed immediately by 'ἔθεασάμεθα' and 'ἐψηλάφησαν', intensify the association of life with Jesus and therefore with God. ζωῆ or τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. God and Jesus Christ are identified with true life.

In as far as the proclamation of Jesus the life, the author states in no uncertain terms that those who accept and appropriate for themselves what is being proclaimed enter into a new relational state with one another and with God, that is, they have κοινωνία μεθ' ἡμῶν. Καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα

μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Κοινωνία is enjoyed only in the context of the Father and Son. Father and Son are two more symbols in this section, which are significant. It will suffice at the moment to point out that the father-son symbols as used in relation to God and Jesus are pregnant with meaning. In order to discover their meaning, one has to delve into the author's symbolic universe, which encompassed and gave meaning to these words (Joubert 1995:51). Since our task here is to identify these symbols, we will content ourselves with this but an attempt will be made in the next chapter to unpack their meaning.

3.5.3 Division 2 (Cola 4-45) 1 John 1:5 – 2:17

Section 2.1 1 Jn 1:5-2:2

4 (5) Καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία
 4.1 ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ
 5 καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι
 5.1 ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστίν
 5.2 καὶ σκότια ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία
 6 (6) Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν, ὅτι
 6.1 κοινῶν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ
 6.2 καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατοῦμεν,
 6.3 ψευδοῦμεθα
 7 καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν·
 8 (7) ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατοῦμεν
 8.1 ὡς αὐτὸς ἐστίν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ,
 8.2 κοινῶν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων
 9 καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ
 καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας.
 10 (8) ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι
 10.1 ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν,
 10.2 ἐαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν
 11 καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.
 12 (9) ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν,
 12.1 πιστὸς ἐστίν καὶ δίκαιος
 12.2 ἵνα ἀφῆ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας.
 12.3 καὶ καθάριση ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας..
 13 (10) ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι
 13.1 οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν,
 13.2 ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτὸν
 14 καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

CHAPTER 2

15 (1) Τεκνία μου,
 15.1 ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν
 15.2 ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε.
 16 καὶ ἐὰν τις ἁμάρτη,
 16.1 παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα,
 Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον
 17 (2) καὶ αὐτὸς ἰλασμός ἐστιν περὶ
 τὴν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν,
 17.1 οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον
 17.2 ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.

A

B

a

b

a

b

3.5.3.1 Brief remarks about the structure

In colon 4, the author used καὶ which connects the statement in verse 5 to the preceding one. Brown (1982:192) states that ambiguity as to whether the primary direction of the 'this' is to what precedes or to what follows is one of the more annoying grammatical peculiarities of the Epistles. The context seems to suggest that the 'this' points forward to the actual content, which is proclaimed. The ἀγγελία has been heard ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, which no doubt is a reference to Jesus Christ (Lenski 1966:383; Brown 1982:193). The ἀγγελία is ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία. The antithetical dualism of light and darkness is introduced. In the world where there was no electricity, what did light signify? What kind of information got activated in the hearers as the author spoke of God as light? These questions will be answered in the next chapter.

In cola 6,8,12, 13, and 16 follow a series of six conditional clauses. Du Rand (1979:5) points out that by means of conditional clauses, the stylistic antithetical device in cola 4-17 acts as a unifying principle. By the use of ἐὰν in both the negative and positive statements the conditional clauses are made vivid. Fellowship with God introduced in colon 1.9 is picked up in colon 6.1 and its implications with reference to light are spelt out. Preposterous self-contradictory claims (Lenski 1966:386) of walking in the light while one continues to live in darkness are not acceptable. Light and darkness are two important symbols we need to note here. They are important in that the author's argument is cast along these opposites, which represent two opposing

domains. Walking in the light is proof of fellowship with God (du Rand 1979:6) and with one another.

Another important symbol, which the author activated as he dealt with the implication of being in fellowship is the whole notion or idea of cleansing of sin with the blood. This is an allusion to the Jewish ceremony of sacrificing lambs for the cleansing of sin. In this instance, it is Jesus' blood as opposed to that of the lamb that cleanses and enables people to be in fellowship with God and one another. For the cleansing to become a reality, and fellowship with God and one another to be firmly established the author is convinced that acknowledgement and confession of sin are essential.

Between cola 9 and 17, ἁμαρτία is mentioned eight times, thus identifying it as another symbol. The occurrence of ἁμαρτία is in the context of Jesus' sacrificial death symbolised by his blood. The theme of sin and Jesus' sacrificial death links colon 14 and 15 together. What does the word ἁμαρτία represent in the author's context? Discussion of the meaning of ἁμαρτία is deferred to the next chapter.

3.5.3.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

What constitutes the central theological premise of this section is the fact that 'God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all' (1 Jn 1:5). Light and darkness stand for two opposites. Bruce (1970:41) states that it is in the ethical sense that John here affirms that 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all'. He further states that what this statement implies is that God

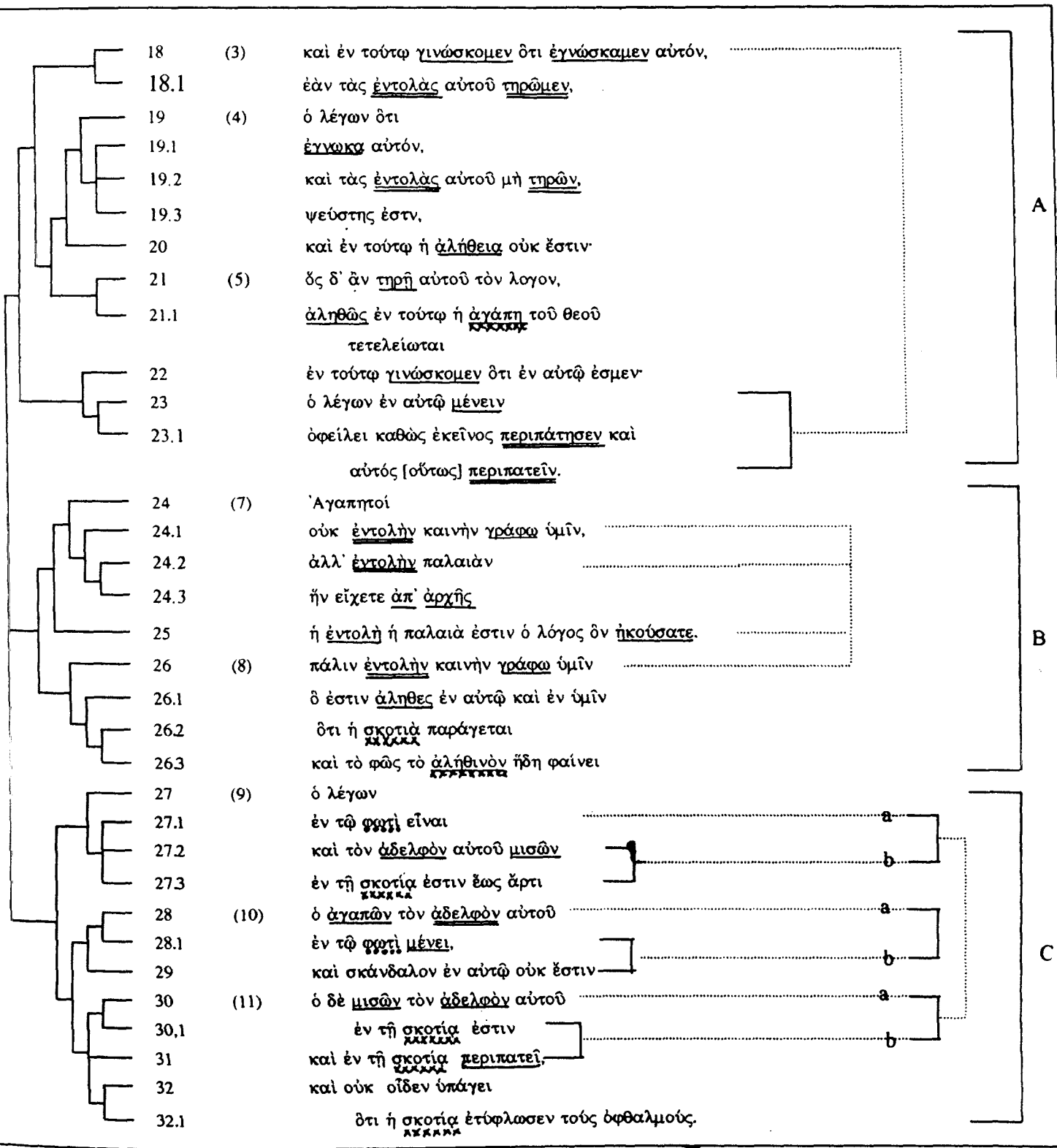
is the source and essence of holiness and righteousness, goodness and truth; in Him there is nothing that is unholy or unrighteous, evil or false.

Group terminology, that is, family language, is also evident in this section and is stated in terms of fellowship, forgiveness, cleansing and right conduct. Fellowship with God who is light means sharing a common life that belongs to Christians, a life of fellowship with God and with other Christians, and the process of our being cleansed from all sins is going forward (Williams 1965:20). The blood of Jesus which functions in a cultic sense here has significance within *κοινωνία* context.

The antithetical formula of light and darkness serves to accentuate the criteria distinguishing who is in fellowship with God and who is not. The believer's ethical disposition is contrasted with the nature of God, so that all actions, which are contrary to God who is light, are seen as a denial or proof of being outside the sphere of fellowship with God. The central motif of this section is: God is light and believers must walk in the light. This motif works with contrasts in reality, i.e. good and bad in real life are measured against this.

3.5.3.3 Section 2.2 (Cola 18-32)

1 Jn 2:3-11



3.5.3.3.1 Brief remarks about the structure

As du Rand (1979:6) points out, three pericopes can be distinguished in cola 18 –32, A (18-23), B (24-26), and C (27-32). In pericope 18-23, γινώσκω occupies a central position. This theme is introduced in colon 18 and then expanded in cola 19-21. Whereas in the preceding section, cola 6-14, conditional statements were used, in this section the author employs the participial verb forms – (19, 23, 27, 30). The use of participles has a binding effect on this section. Semantically, γινώσκομεν as the subjective side of certainty corresponds with the objective side of the same matter (du Rand 1979:6; Lenski 1966:406). In other words to know God and to have fellowship with him are alternative ways of expressing the same reality (Marshall 1978:121; Lenski 1966:404).

Γινώσκω seems to be a communicative device employed by the author to remind his hearers that he has with them access to a common stock of knowledge. This could be seen as a symbolic language expressing the subjective certainty existing among them. Knowledge or fellowship with God is based on the fact that τηρῶμεν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ. Τηρεῖν embodies in it an element of obedience, which was central within the Mediterranean family context. Obedience also served as a distinguishing criterion for true membership of an earthly as well as heavenly family.

Ἀγαπητοί in colon 24 constitutes an important marker. Du Rand (1979:7) notes that Ἀγαπητοί slightly interrupts the course of the preceding structure. Marshall (1978:128) argues that it is preferable to see here the beginning of a

new sub-section closely linked to what precedes. Brown (1982:263); Marshall (1978:128); and du Rand (1979:7) point out that ‘beloved’ is used frequently in 1 John, indicating that the author is writing to those who already stand in the circle of Christian love. The idea of writing (γράφω), which was brought out in colon 15 is reactivated here. The author also through associative parallelism now picks up the idea of commandment (ἐντολή) in colon 18 which he develops further in cola 24-26. The dualistic and antithetical motif of light and darkness mentioned in cola 4-8, surfaces again in cola 27-32, but now in an ethic perspective with the accent on ‘walking in the light’ (du Rand 1979:5). A chiasmic construction -ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν and ἀγαπῶν τον ἀδελφὸν as well as an ab ab form can be observed in cola 27-31 due to the antithetical parallelism. The same antithetical formula is used here as Love and hate, which are two important symbols within the context of family, are discussed.

3.5.3.3.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

The criterion or test for any claim of fellowship is outlined. The claim stands or falls with the obedience of the claimant to the commands of God (Williams 1965:22). The author also introduces another recurrent theme in the letter – knowledge of God (Edwards 1996:72). The criterion for knowledge of God is obedience to his commandments (du Rand 1979:31; Westcott 1966:45). The author’s purpose is to encourage believers to be obedient and to show their unity with the Father and Son by imitating (Westcott 1966:45) or walking as Christ did (1 Jn 2:6). Having mentioned commandment, the author states that the commandment is as old as the Christian message of the Gospel and yet as new as the latest realisation of its power (Westcott 1966:51).

The polarized opposites of light and darkness are helpful here in that they show that a person enters the light by loving his brother or enters the darkness by hating his brother (O' Neill 1966:16). Those who live in fellowship with God do not hate their brothers and sisters; the opposite is true of those who are out of fellowship with God. The whole question of doing the truth is introduced and cast along the same antithetical poles. Hating one's fellow human being means one is still walking in darkness, whereas loving one's fellow human being means walking in the light and doing the truth and being in fellowship with God, his Son and fellow Christians. What the author does here is to provide his readers with the right information from their symbolic universe to help them adjust their behaviour accordingly. He is forced by the situation not only to provide knowledge but also to draw or define the boundaries of the universe to which they now belong as Christians.

3.5.3.4 Section 2.3 (Cola 33-45)

1 Jn 2:12-17

	33	(12)	Γράφω ὑμῖν, τεκνία, 33.1 δτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἀμαρτίαι λαλᾶσαί διὰ τὸ ὄν ομα αὐτοῦ.		A
	34	(13)	γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες , 34.1 δτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πατέρα	a	
	35		γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, 35.1 δτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν ἐγγραψα		
	36		ἐγγραψα ὑμῖν, παιδιά, 36.1 δτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα		
	37	(14)	ἐγγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, 37.1 δτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς , ἐγγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, 38 δτι ἰσχυροὶ ἐστε	b	
	38.1				
	39		καὶ ὁ λογος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει 40 καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν . λαλᾶσαί		
	41		Μὴ ἀγαπάτε τὸν κόσμον 41.1 μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον , οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ λαλᾶσαί		
	42				
	42.1				
	43	(16)	δτι πάν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ , 43.1 ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς 43.2 καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν 43.3 καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου 43.4 οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς λαλᾶσαί 43.5 ἀλλὰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστιν. λαλᾶσαί		
	44	(17)	καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται 44.1 καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ 45 ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ 45.1 μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.		
					B

3.5.3.4.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Cola 33-45 can be divided into two pericopes: A (33-40) and B (41-45). Pericope A may be divided further into six parallel clauses. The first set of three (cola 33-35) begins with the present tense γράφω and the second set of

three (cola 36-40) begins with the aorist tense ἔγραψα and largely repeats the first. Van Staden (1988:129) argues that ‘die feit dat die drie uitsprake wat begin met γράφω (praesens) gevolg word deur die drie met ἔγραψα (aoristus), het meergebring dat □ paar eksegete in die gebruik van ἔγραψα die verwysing na □ vorige skrywe gesien het; onder andere is die Johannesevangelie, 2 Johannes, □ verlore brief en □ bron van die huidige brief as moontlikhede voorgestel’. The view with which we concur is du Rand’s (1979:8), who states that the purpose of this parallel recapitulation-scheme is to accentuate.

Observable also here is that each set is directed in turn to children, fathers, and young men (Marshall 1978:135), basic symbols that are central within a family. The only variation is in cola 33 and 36, where as Du Plessis (1978:46) points out, the author ‘gebruik wel twee verskillende Griekse woorde vir kinders (τεκνία and παιδία) maar hulle het dieselfde betekenis’.

At first glance the message does not seem to have any connection with what precedes it but on closer look, colon 31.1 appears to refer back to colon 12, where members know the joy of being in fellowship with God because they have confessed and have been granted forgiveness. The use of the perfect tense ἀφέωνται indicates primarily the initial experience of forgiveness into which John’s readers would have entered at their conversion, while the present tense ἀφῆ suggests the continual forgiveness which the Christian needs (Smalley 1984:72). According to the author, forgiveness is not solely dependent on human confession but it is granted on account of his name, a phrase which directs our minds back to what John has said about the blood of Jesus and his role as advocate and offering for sin. (Marshall 1978:138).

Knowing him who is from the beginning seems to be a reference to the beginning of Christ's ministry. The idea of 'defeating the evil one' (colon 35) corresponds to the defeat of the evil one (colon 40) (du Rand 1979:8). The motif of victory τὸν πονηρὸν must be interpreted proleptically (du Rand 1979:8), that is, it refers according to Malatesta (Interiority 169) to the eschatological triumph of all Christians by reason of their faith (in Smalley 1984:75).

In cola 41-45 the author echoes his earlier thoughts, that is, that of victory over evil (du Rand (1979:8) and the moral responsibility expected of Christ' followers. This unit is set off by its lack of explicit vocatives and by the negative commands Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε ...μηδε (ἀγαπᾶτε) 'do not love ...'. The other prevalent themes that also hold the unit together are: κόσμος 'world' (15-17) and θεὸς 'God' (15-17) (Miehle 1981:272).

In the writings of John, the world-κόσμος is an important symbol usually signifying mankind in rebellion to God (Marshall 1978:142). Believers must not love the world (κόσμος) or anything in it. Κόσμος, according to Bruce (1996:60) is any worldly orientation against God or the world organised, as it largely is, without reference to God and his will, or without that true knowledge of him that Jesus Christ gives (Williams 1965:28).

All that is in the world (colon 43) ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς. This describes the desire of our fallen and sinful nature (Stott 1964:104). In short, all these, that is, ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, are external allurements appealing to the senses, material in nature, by which the devil

tries to gain our love (Schönweiss 1986:458). This transient world and all in it is passing away and love for these things is not of the Father and therefore stands in contrast to him. Love of God and of the world are two opposites, the one cancels the other.

3.5.3.4.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

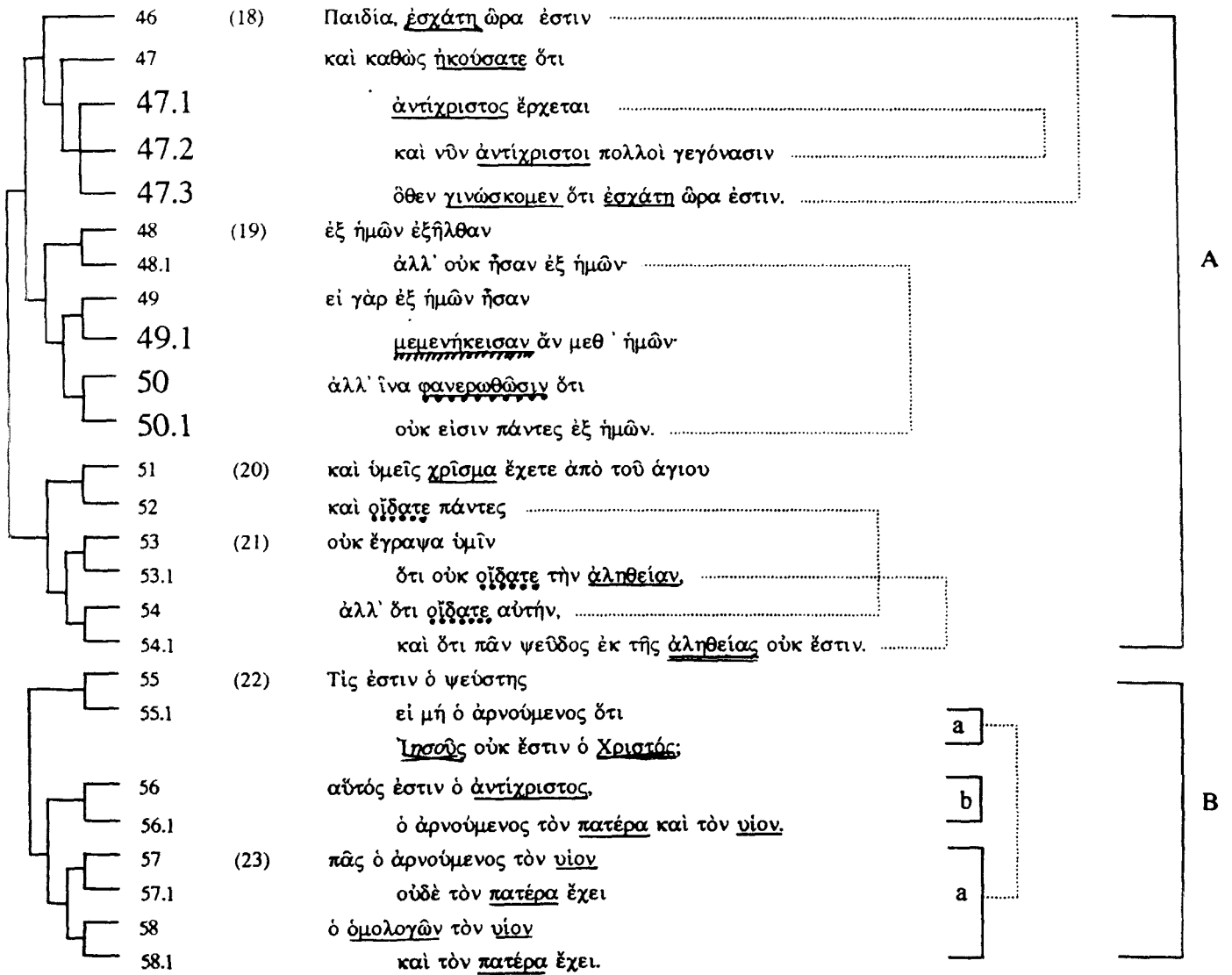
The central theme of this section is the encouragement and admonition given to believers. The following sub-themes continue the main theme of this section, that is, 'God is light and believers have to walk in the light'. The first sub-theme deals with forgiveness, which is on account of faith in Christ's name. Forgiveness is an important pre-requisite for remaining in fellowship or within God's family. In fact from 1 Jn 1:5, the theme of forgiveness has formed an integral part of the main theme.

A second sub-theme deals with 'knowledge', that is, knowledge of him who is from the beginning (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς). Believers know him and the consequent victory grounded in the knowledge of Jesus (1 Jn 2:13). Knowledge of Christ is consequential to their being members of God's family and being in fellowship with God and his Son.

The sub-theme of love, which in the foregoing verses was discussed in relation to brothers, is stretched and placed in the context of the world versus God. In these verses 15-17, a contrast is drawn between 'love of the world' and 'God's love'. Loving the world and all that is in it stands in contrast to having the love of the Father. Not loving the world is a sign of being in fellowship with the Father and thus possessing eternal life.

3.5.4 Division three Section 3.1 (Cola 46-66)

1 Jn 2:18-27



59	(24)	ὕμεις δὲ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς,
59.1		ἐν ὑμῖν μέντω.
60		εἰάν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη
60.1		ὁ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε.
60.2		καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ <u>αἰῶνι</u>
60.3		καὶ [ἐν] τῷ <u>πατρὶ</u> μένετε.
61	(25)	καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία
61.1		ἣν αὐτὸς πηγγείλατο ἡμῖν
61.2		τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον.
62	(26)	Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν
62.1		περὶ τῶν <u>πλανήτων</u> ὑμᾶς.
63	(27)	καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ <u>χρῖσμα</u> ὃ ἐλάβετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ
63.1		μένει ἐν ὑμῖν
64		καὶ οὐ χρειαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκη ὑμᾶς
65		ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ <u>χρῖσμα</u> διδάσκει ὑμᾶς
		περὶ πάντων.
65.1		καὶ ἀληθές ἐστὶν
65.2		καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος
66		καὶ <u>καθὼς</u> ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς
66.1		μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ

3.5.4.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Most scholars agree that colon 46 marks a new section in the literary arrangement of 1 John (Smalley, 92; Marshall, 147; Brown, 362; du Rand, 9). Marshall (1978:147) admits that there is an immediate link between vv 17 (colon 44) and 18 (colon 46) in terms of their eschatology and antithetical structure (du Rand 1979:10). Those who are of the author's group, the group identified as being in fellowship with God, he addresses as children (παιδιά). As Marshall (1978:148) rightly asserts, there is no particular force in the appellation. This appellation only serves to establish the identity of members of the Johannine church against that of the ἀντίχριστοι (colon 47). By

emphasising the ἐσχάτη ὥρα, the author enables his readers to situate the ἀντίχριστοι in the eschatological context (see Klauck 1988:62).

Cola 46-66 as du Rand (1981:5-6) shows in the addendum to Neotestamentica 13, can be divided into three groups: A (46-54), B (55-58) and C (59-66). Pericope A may further be divided into three clusters. In the first cluster cola 46-47, one can observe an antithetical parallelism between ἐσχάτη and ἀντίχριστος creating a chiasmic pattern ab ba. Here the author identifies in no uncertain terms the group he associates with the ἀντίχριστοι and the ushering of the eschatological period. In terms of the symbolic universe of John the ἀντίχριστοι represent the deviant group. The usage of the appellation ἀντίχριστοι is one device the author employs in order to demonise this group.

In the second cluster cola 48- the author traces the origin of the ἀντίχριστοι with the structural emphasis on οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν, and ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν the test for disclosure (du Rand 1979:11). In the third cluster cola 51-54 a reference to the second group, namely, believers, is made. What identifies them from the previous group – the ἀντίχριστοι, is the χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου. The χρῖσμα enables them to know every thing - (οἴδατε πάντες).

In pericope B the author having identified the existence of the ἀντίχριστοι in cola 46-47, now turns to what constitutes their id entity (cola 55-57), that is, they are liars because they deny that Jesus is the Christ. Denying Jesus Christ –the Son amounts to denial of the Father. That the second group, identified in cola 51-54 belongs to or has God is demonstrated by their confession of the

Son (colon 58). Confessing Jesus as the Christ plays a very important role here in that it discloses the true identity of those who belong to God.

In pericope C, there is a slight play on words reflecting the Johannine stylistic preference for variety (Brown 1982:356), creating a chiasmic pattern ab ba in cola 59-60.1. ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς- (what you heard from the beginning) seems to be a reference to the time of their conversion, that is, when they heard the message for the first time. What they heard (the word or doctrine) should be permitted to ‘dwell’ (μενέτω) in them (Smalley 1984:118). If what they heard is allowed to dwell in them, they will also dwell in the Son and in the Father. Remaining in the Son and in the Father leads to the promised promise – eternal life (colon 61).

In cola 62-67, the author issues a warning concerning those who are out trying to lead believers astray. He reiterates the living presence in them of the χρίσμα mentioned in cola 51-54. The χρίσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων and it is not counterfeit, hence their being exhorted to remain or dwell in him. What is the author representing by the word χρίσμα? Discussion on this will be engaged in the following chapter.

3.5.4.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

In this section the writer asserts that a certain division, which has occurred in the church, has a deep significance (Williams 1965:30). The author infers from the appearance of false teachers, in the shape of those who departed from the community (Edwards 1996:75) against whom he warns his readers that the end-time Antichrist is now at hand and that his spirit is active in these

teachers (Klauck 1988:62); that is how 'we know that it is the last hour (Bruce 1996:65).

The central theme of this unit is found in verse 23. The phrase ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν - 'acknowledging the Son' places the emphasis on the positive value of acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ against the negative status of those who do not do so, the latter are antichrist. (Miehle 1981:274). The two opposing groups are identified, that is, the presence of the antichrist in contrast to those who have the χρίσμα (du Rand 1979:31). The latter group possess knowledge of the truth, knowledge, which they demonstrate by confessing Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God.

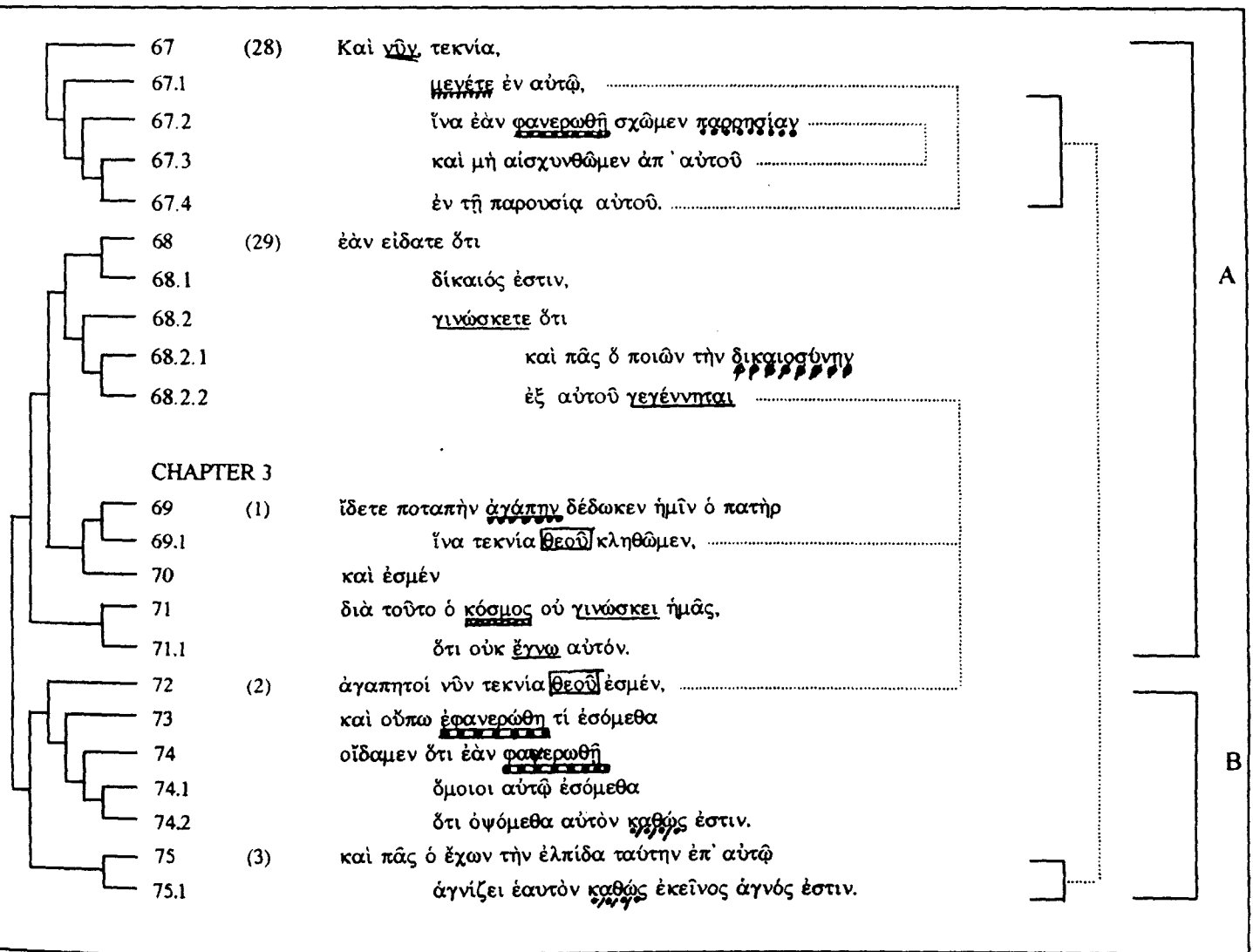
It is therefore in the confession that each group's alignment can be distinguished, whether it is of God or in opposition to God – of the antichrist. Verses 18 and 19 are considered to be a further justification both for acknowledging the Son and for letting his message remain in one's heart (Miehle 1981:274). Members of God's family like any healthy human family are properly aligned, a fact demonstrated by their acknowledgement of who Jesus is.

The former group, the children of the devil are precisely those false teachers who are denounced throughout the whole epistle (Feuillet 1973:207). They are not only called the antichrist, but they are also called 'liars' and 'deceivers' because they deny that Jesus is the Christ (Edwards 1996:75). Believers or those who possess the χρίσμα are therefore called upon to remain (μενέτω) in Christ.

The theme of abiding or remaining in Christ μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ is reintroduced. Verses 26 and 27 are therefore a recapitulation of the main points of above paragraphs. To cling to what they were taught was to have the secret of unbroken fellowship with Christ, the source and subject of the teaching (Williams 1965:33). It is within the fellowship that the Spirit operates; it is there that he teaches the people of God (Bruce 1970:76).

3.5.4.3 Section 3.2 (Cola 67-75)

1 Jn 2:28-3:3



3.5.4.3.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Brown (1982:362) asserts that the real problem for the structure of the present unit is not the beginning but the end, with scholars evenly divided as to whether this section ends with 2:27 (colon 66) (Schnackenburg, 141) or 2:28 (colon 67) (Bultmann 1967:43; Feuillet 1973:200) or 2:29 (colon 68) (Westcott, 68). While Καὶ νῦν τεκνία in colon 67 appears to cause structural interruption, stylistically it combines with the previous through the parallel command μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ (Smalley 1984:127) in colon 67. Μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ also achieves an easy transition to his (the author's) next line of thought by a repetition of the phrase, which serves to underline and emphasise its importance (Marshall 1978:165). The command to remain in Christ is strengthened by a forward glance at the coming of Christ. Du Rand (1979:10) points out that the usage of νῦν and ἐὰν φανερωθῆι creates an eschatological tension with functional value.

In spite of the close connection with the foregoing verse, there is difference of opinion, with several writers regarding 2:28 (colon 67) as the start of the new section (Smalley 1984:128; Marshall 1978:164-5; du Rand 1979:7). Its transitional value lies in the fact that it picks up the eschatological reference of 2:18 (colon 46), which had been muted since 2:23 (colon 57). Ἐὰν φανερωθῆι also shows the author's orientation towards the future. Παρρησίαν, which has been translated 'confidence' refers to the democratic right of a citizen to express an opinion freely and in public (Smalley 1984:130; Marshall 1978:166). A chiasmic arrangement ab ba is observable when φανερωθῆι σχῶμεν παρρησίαν is arranged parallel to καὶ μὴ αἰσχυρθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

As du Rand (1979:13) points out, colon 67 is followed by 68–71 in which the readers are made aware of their present status: children of God. Children of God act righteously because they originate from Him (ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται). The author introduces here the symbol of birth, which within the Mediterranean context symbolised belonging. The identity of believers as children of God is based on the fact that they have been born of Him and therefore as members of his family enjoy fellowship with God and with one another. Their identity is concealed from the world because the world failed to recognise Christ. Further discussion on birth as a symbol will be discussed in the next chapter.

Cola 72-74 deals with the reality of their present status, that is, ‘they are children of God’. This knowledge gives them hope that when he appears, they shall be like him, for they will see him as he is (1 Jn 3:2). Any one who cherishes such future hope cleanses ἀγνίζει ἑαυτὸν. Purity of life seems to be a prerequisite for those who hope to see him. Du Rand (1979:13) points out the proleptic function of ἀγνίζει with respect to τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἄρη (78.1).

3.5.4.3.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

The theme of this unit is derived from the phrase μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ which the author reiterates in verse 28. This is an exhortation to remain in Christ. Remaining in Jesus presupposes an intimate and ongoing relationship with the Father through the Son, which is only possible for the faithful (Smalley 1984:128). Those who remain in Christ can look forward to his coming with confidence (Bruce 1970:78).

Westcott (1966:83) argues that there can be no doubt that Christ is the subject in verse 28 and that since no personal pronoun is introduced, it is logical to assume that Christ is the subject of this verse also. Along with Westcott are the following scholars: Brooke 1912:68; Marshall 1978:168; Schnackenburg 1963:166-167; Schneider. Against this position and in favour of God being the subject of verse 29, are the following scholars: Bruce 1970:79; Williams 1966:34; Stott 1964:122; Feuillet 1973:205; Smalley 1984:133; O' Neill 1966:31; De Jonge 1973:131.

In verse 29, the author introduces the theme of the community's righteousness, a theme that extends down to the middle of 3:10, where there occurs a further change of theme, from righteousness to love (O' Neill 1966:31). The author makes it clear that membership in the family of God is to be recognised by the family likeness. Family likeness within the context and symbolic universe of 1 John was the operative word. Since the Father of the family is righteous, the children are expected to bear the same likeness and practice righteousness (Bruce 1970:79). The author describes the relationship which leads to membership of God's family in terms of being ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται. Everyone who does what is right as opposed to all who commit sin; has been born of God (Brown 1982:383). In the context of family, birth, becomes an important symbol.

Inherent in verse 2:29 and 3:1-3 is the theological truth that believers are related to God, through Christ as children of the Father (Smalley 1984:140), they have been born of Him. To be born of God is of course differentiated from physical birth. They are not born through a human agency but their birth has been engineered from above. This fact is corroborated well in John's

Gospel, where the author states in no uncertain terms that the right to be children of God is a gift of God; that the children of God are born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (Jn 1:12-13). This of course is a reference to spiritual birth but the full meaning of this symbol will be unpacked in the next chapter.

The same point is made in 1 Jn 3:1-3, where the author exclaims in wonder at God's great love that they should be called children of God (Edwards 1996:76). This gift of love is as Westcott (1966:95) puts it, not simply exhibited towards the believers, but imparted to them. As a result believers stand in a relationship of children to God, which is not only a matter of names and titles; but also a solid reality (Williams 1965:35). There is a strong degree of intimacy and filiation in the manner they are described as members of God's family (Smalley 1984:141). When the author called believers children of God, what was their understanding of this? Within the universe of 1 John, members of the Johannine community knew exactly the implications of being God's children.

The believers' identity as children of God, even though unrecognised by the world at present, rests on the eschatological hope that when he is revealed at his parousia, they will be like him (Edwards 1996:76). The one whose likeness they will bear is pure – he is indeed the norm of purity – and a hope that rests 'on him' cannot but have a purifying effect on the one who so hopes (Bruce 1970:88). The sudden switch from the corporate reference of verses 1-2 ('we are God's children'; 'we shall be like him'; 'we shall see him') underscores the importance of the ethical demands, which are laid upon every believer who is a true child and member of God's family (Smalley 1984:148).

3.5.4.4 Section 3.3 (Cola 76-89)

1 Jn 3:4-10

76	(4)	πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ,	A
76.1			
77		καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.	
78	(5)	καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη	
78.1		ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ	
79		καὶ ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐστίν.	
80	(6)	πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει·	
81		πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν	
82		οὔδε ἔγνωκεν αὐτὸν.	
83	(7)	Τεκνία, μὴ εἰς πλανάτω ὑμᾶς·	
84		ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην	
84.1		δικαίος ἐστίν	
84.2		καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δικαίος ἐστίν·	
85	(8)	ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν,	
85.1		ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει.	
86		εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ	
86.1		ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου.	
87	(9)	Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ	
87.1		ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ,	
87.2		ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει	
88		καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν	
88.1		ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται.	
89	(10)	ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστίν τὰ τεκνία τοῦ θεοῦ	
89.1		καὶ τὰ τεκνία τοῦ διαβόλου	
89.2		πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην	
89.3		οὐκ ἐστίν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ	

3.5.4.4.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Cola 78-89 and cola 90-103 repeat and reiterate what was discussed in cola 4-17 and cola 18-32. The stylistic tool the author employed is called associative parallelism and is a familiar Johannine form (du Rand 1979:10). Cola 76-89.3 may be divided into two pericopes: A (76-86) and B (87-89). In pericope A, ἁμαρτία is mentioned eight times thus constituting the dominant co-structural

marker (du Rand 1979:13). It is also an important symbol that distinguishes between members of God's family and those who belong to the devil ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου (colon 85). Obviously here the author seeks to emphasise to his readers what sin is. He describes it as breaking the law and therefore lawlessness (colon 76.1) and as being instigated by the devil (Marshall 1978:184).

In cola 80-81, the author uses πᾶς ὁ to emphasise the serious implications of individual belief and behaviour (Smalley 1984:158). Jesus Christ's appearing as the author states was in order that sin might be removed (ἄρη). Colon 85 and 85.1 show a chiasmic pattern: ἁμαρτίαν (a) διαβόλου (b) διάβολος (b) ἁμαρτάνει (a) (du Rand 1979:14, Smalley 1984:171).

Pericope B (cola 79-89) distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil. The children of God do not do (ποιεῖ) sin because God's σπέρμα is in them. Sin has no hold or power over them ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγέννηται (colon 88.1). The doing of δικαιοσύνην and the practising of ἀγαπή are also distinguishing features between the children of God and the children of the devil (colon 89). The children of God do righteousness and practice love whereas those of the devil do not practice δικαιοσύνην and ἀγαπή.

3.5.4.4.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

Purity characterises those who have been born into God's family. The author emphasises that members of God's family do not commit sin. The criteria that the author used for distinguishing the children of God from those of the devil

rests on ‘committing sin’ or ‘not committing sin’. Christ, in fact appeared so that he might take away our sins (1 Jn 3:5). In this verse his work of removing sins and his personal sinlessness are brought together (Stott 1964:127). As Edwards (1996:76) points out the familiar dualism is hammered home, but the theme is amplified with a new thought: those born of God cannot sin because God’s σπέρμα is in them (Edwards 1996:76).

The distinction between the children of God and those of the devil is worked out in terms of sin and righteousness. O’ Neill (1966:36) mentions the fact that the division between the children of God and the children of the devil (3:7-10) is closely paralleled in the Qumran division between the sons of light and the sons of darkness. The children of God are his because they are born ἐκ Θεοῦ.

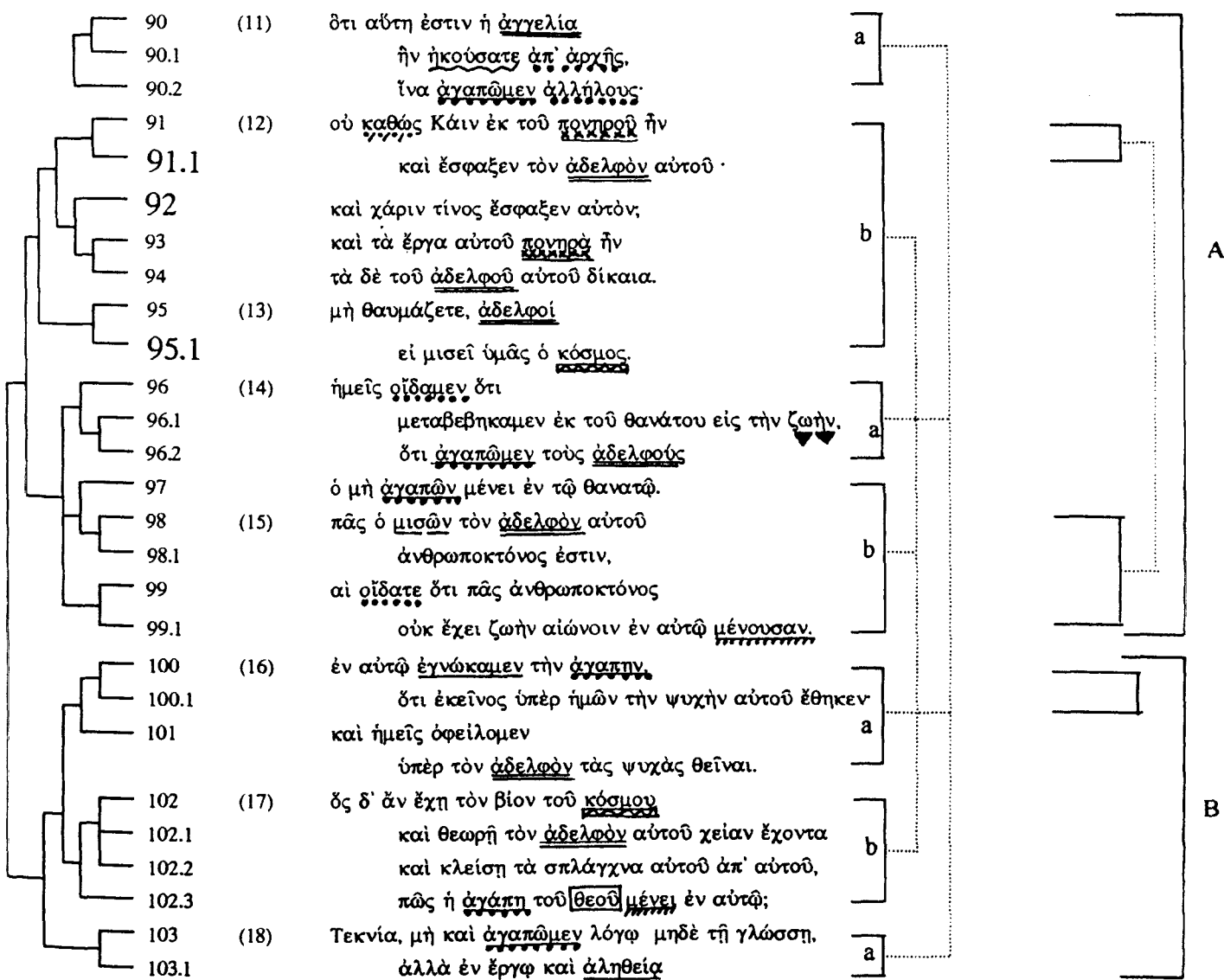
‘Children of God’ indicate an intimate familial bond that exists between them and God or rather their introduction into the most intimate social structure, where they – irrespective of age or sex – become part of God’s family (Van der Watt 2000:182). Sin, therefore, is by its very nature an abomination to God and irreconcilable with membership of His family. Sinful behaviour reveals a kind of family likeness (Williams 1965:37). In fact it marks a connexion with the devil as righteousness with Christ (Westcott 1966:101).

Having established the fact that the children of God do not sin deliberately and continually because of who they are – children born of God, the author introduces another criterion by which the two opposing groups are to be identified. First, anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God. Obviously she/he is a child of the devil. Second, anyone who does not love

his brother is also not of God but the devil (1 Jn 3:10). The author's statement clearly has to do with defining boundaries. After what he has stated with regard to God's children and those of the devil members of his symbolic universe know what is expected of them.

3.5.4.5 Section 3.4 (cola 90-103)

1 Jn 3:11-18



3.5.4.5.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Cola 89 provides a transition from the previous section, in which the author sets out a negative condition for living as God's children to the present passage, in which the second condition to be described is positive in nature (Smalley 1984:179). The condition set out for children of God is that they should be obedient especially to the love commandment. Within the context of family, love is an important symbol. Members of the family love one another hence the emphasis that God's children are obedient to the love commandment. This pericope (cola 90-103) forms a parallel to 1 Jn 2:3-11 (cola 18-30).

The author constantly compares and contrasts two opposing positions to reinforce to members of his symbolic universe behaviour commensurate with their new status and to draw clear demarcatory lines within which such behaviour is acceptable.

Cola 90-103 can be divided into two pericopes: A (90-99) and B (100-103). In pericope A, the author is contrasting love and hatred for the brother. The contrast between Cain's attitude and that of his brother serves to intensify author's argument that like Abel's righteousness, the Christian community should be loving towards one another. Love one another is the content of the ἀγγελία which they heard from the beginning. Ἀρχη could be a reference to the beginning of the reader's knowledge of the Christian message (Marshall 1978:189).

Haas et al (1972:87) points out that the aorist ἠκούσατε refers to the action

of hearing ‘regarded as a completed whole irrespective of its duration’. Cain’s action of murdering his brother showed that his origin is ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. Not only murder but also sin in general derives from the devil. Cain as a sinner and ἀνθρωποκτόνος has no ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ (colon 99). Ζωὴ αἰώνιος belongs to the children of God who love one another. Those whose actions emulate Cain’s belong together with him to the evil one.

In pericope B (cola 100-103) the author now turns to consider positively the nature of love (Marshall 1978:192). By bringing in the example of Christ in colon 100, the author accentuates the demand for brotherly love. Christ is the example *par excellence* of what love is, he leads by example. He laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. Love, according to the author is not a matter of words but action. ‘If anyone has material possession and sees a brother or sister in need καὶ κλείση τὰ σπλάγχνα (the seat of natural passions, including anger and love) (Marshall 1978:197), how can s/he claim to possess the love of God. Colon 103 stresses the importance of demonstrating love in action and in truth, not just in word or tongues.

3.5.4.5.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

In the above pericope the author identified one of the distinguishing characteristics between the children of God and those of the devil as being the doing of righteous deeds as opposed to sinning. Now in the present pericope love, an important symbol within the author’s symbolic universe especially as it relates to family is set out as another distinguishing criteria. Brotherly love distinguishes the children of God from the children of evil

(du Rand 1979:32). Loving one another for the children of God is not a matter of choice but a command (1 Jn 3:11) (O' Neill 1966:38). Westcott (1966:110) claims that the phrase 'love one another' has a broader social dimension than just 'loving the brotherhood', a response, which is directed to the members of the church (Smalley 1984:183). Believers as children of God are bound to reproduce in themselves the family likeness (Bruce 1970:93).

Cain who murdered his brother (Gen 4:8) is cited as an example of hatred, a prototype of the world (Stott 1964:144) and an opposite of love. Marshall (1978:189) points out that the example of Cain is the only specific allusion in 1 John to the Old Testament. Lieu (1993) on the other hand has shown that Old Testament language and thought permeate this text. Cain's hatred, which culminated in the killing of his brother, represents the hatred of the world and indicates clearly to which family he belonged (Bruce 1970:94), he is in fact, the case of extreme opposite attitude (Williams 1965:38).

To be without love is to be in the realm of death – for no love means hatred, and hating is murder, and to be a murderer is incompatible with being filled with eternal life (Williams 1965:40). Love redeems one from the realm of death to the realm of life (1 Jn 3:14), for murder and hatred are opposites of love and life and murderers have no eternal life as a present and permanent possession (Stott 1964:146). The language exhibited in this verse is that of realized eschatology (Edwards 1996:77).

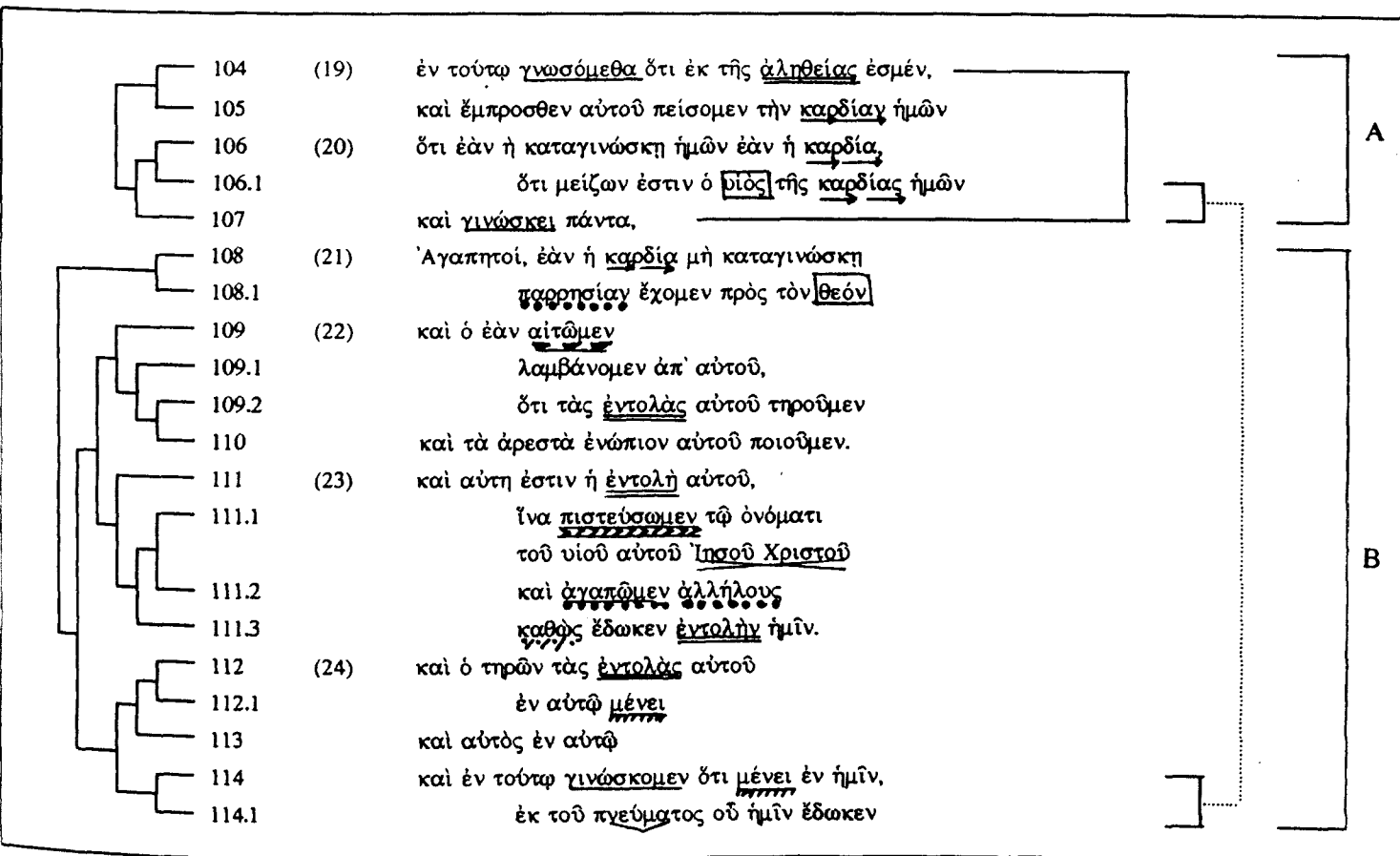
For believers, Jesus is the supreme example of love (Bruce 1970:96). If a believer is prepared to imitate Jesus by truly laying down his/her life for others, then he/she is a true child of God. Believers are beckoned to

demonstrate their love by their actions (Edwards 1996:77). In verse 17 the author brings us down with a bump (Williams 1965:41; Marshall 1978:194).

Following Christ's example issues in being prepared to open one's heart to the needy brother or sister. This, as Marshall (1978:194) states is a high ideal, to which we should enthusiastically consent. Hardening one's heart is contrary to having the love of God in one's heart, readers are urged to love in action and in truth (Edwards 1996:77). To be like Christ, believers must be merciful, especially towards the needy (Smalley 1994:198). Christian love is not a matter of high sounding words or phrases, it is a matter of practical behaviour and genuine reality (Williams 1965:41; Marshall 1978:197).

3.5.4.6 Section 3.5 (Cola 104-114)

1 Jn 3:19-24



3.5.4.6.1 Brief remarks about the structure

The link between cola 104-114 and what has gone before seems to be the word ‘truth’ (ἀληθείας) (Stott 1988:148; Smalley 1984:200). The passage can also be regarded as a bridge to the remaining part (Marshall 1978:196, Brown 1982:454). Even though ἀληθεία acts as the hinge between cola 103 and 104, it would appear that γινώσκειν is central in this section. As Brown (1982:455) points out the author is saying that we shall know and [by that knowledge] we shall convince. It is with the knowledge that we belong to God that we act.

Longacre (1992:275), and Smalley (1984:199) contend that the passage 1 Jn 3:19-24 as a whole may be regarded as a unity, governed by the thought in verse 19a. Whilst the reading does confirm the unity of verses 19-24 (cola 104-114), this passage, however, exhibits a clear division into two pericopes: A (104-107) and B (108-114).

Ἐν τούτῳ in most instances when followed by ὅτι refers to what follows. But there are other instances when it refers to what precedes it. Colon 104 seems to be one such instance when it refers to what precedes it (Smalley 1984:200). Ἀληθείας links up with cola 103 where the author stated that truthfulness of love has to be manifested in acts of love. The knowledge that we are of the truth (ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐσμέν) sets our heart at rest before God (colon 105). If our hearts condemn us, the assurance we have is that God is greater than our hearts καὶ γινώσκει πάντα (colon 107).

Pericope B (cola 108-114) looks at the positive side, that is, if the heart does not condemn. If this is the case, then we have *παρρησίαν πρὸς τὸν θεόν* (colon 108), that if we ask, we shall receive (colon 109) because we are obedient to his commandments (109.2) and do *τὰ ἀρεστὰ* him (colon 110). Confidence before God is one result of an untroubled conscience (Smalley 1984:204). If we keep God's commandments, we dwell in him and his Spirit gives us knowledge that we truly dwell in him. (Colon 114). Du Rand (1979:17) contends that *ἐν τούτῳ* (colon 114) refers proleptically to the *πνεῦμα*, which we have received.

3.5.4.6.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

In the previous section, believers were exhorted not to harden their hearts towards their needy bothers and sisters but to demonstrate their love in action and in truth (Edwards 1996:77; Bruce 1970:98). In the present section, its thesis is stated in verse 19 and 20, 'This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence, whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything' (Longacre 1992:275).

O' Neill (1966:42) leaving aside verse 19 and 20, sums up the teaching in verses 20 and 21 that the person whose own heart does not condemn him/her can make petitions to God in confidence that he will receive whatever he/she asks because he/she keeps God's commandments. The author says that if believers demonstrate their love in action then they are of the truth (*ἀληθείας*) and they have confidence (*παρρησίαν*) before God. Confidence

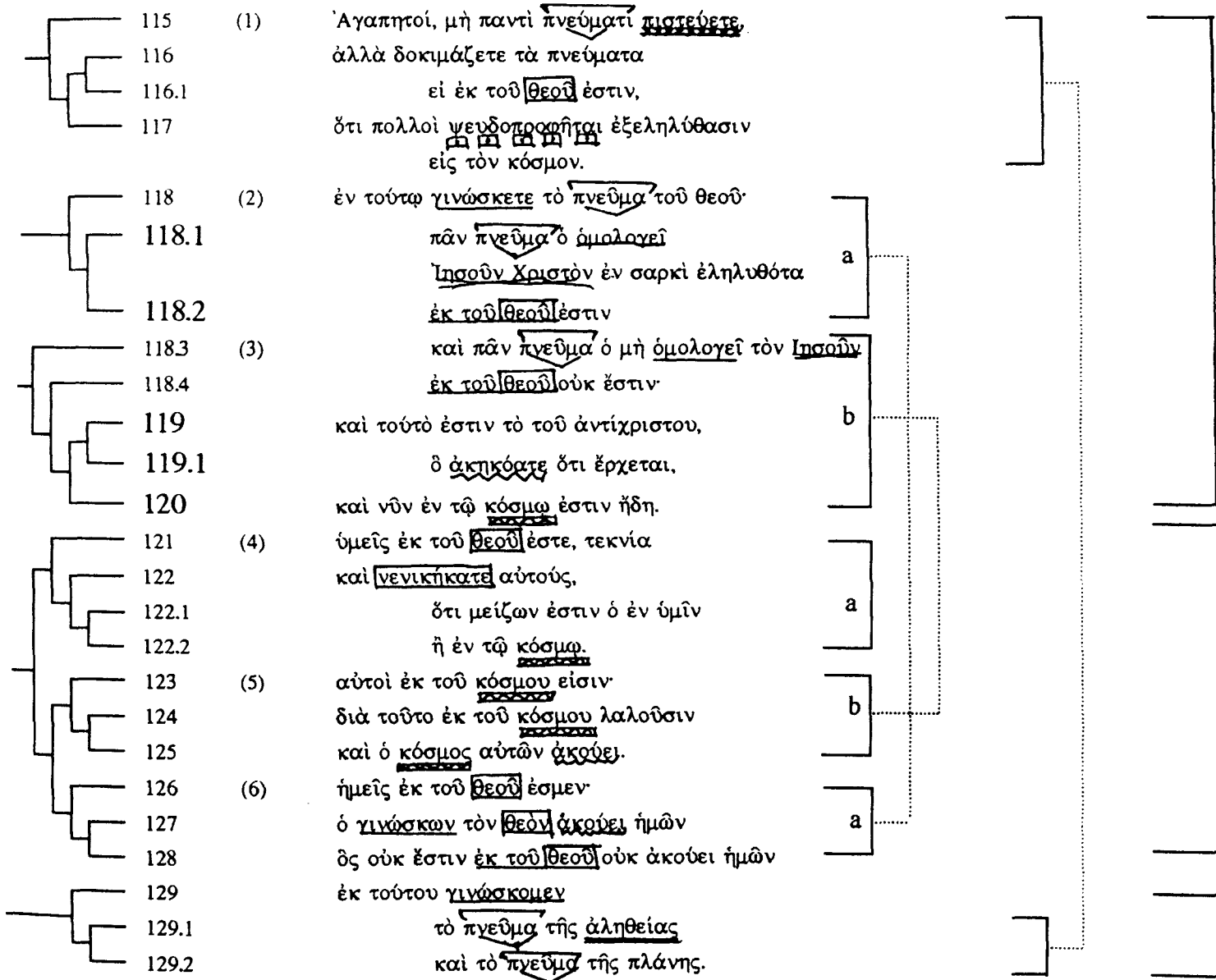
is assured even in the face of an accusing conscience because of God's mercy that immensely surpasses people's hearts (Feuillet 1973:208).

Faith, love, right conduct and obedience to God's commandments are inextricably bound up together (Edwards 1996:77). They are identified by the author as belonging to the realm of God and therefore belonging to all who are born of God. They are a source of confidence before God resulting from divine love and divine fellowship (Feuillet 1973:207). In verse, the author adds another reason for confidence, namely that γινώσκομεν ὅτι μένει ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος οὗ ἡμῖν ἔδωκεν (O' Neill 1966:42; Feuillet 1973:208). The mutual abiding between God and the believer is as a result of obedience to God's commandments. Obedience is not the course but the proof of His people's dwelling in Him (Bruce 1973:100).

3.5.4.7 Section 3.6 (Cola 115-129)

1 Jn 4:1-6

CHAPTER 4



3.5.4.7.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Cola 115-129 constitute a unit (Brown 1982:501; Marshall 1978:203; O' Neill 1966:46), concentrating on the Spirit-given ability to confess Jesus Christ truly as one come in the flesh (Brown 1982:502). It also has close relations with preceding units (du Rand 1979:10). The stylistic interruption provided by ἄγαπητοί in colon 115 raises the question whether cola 115-129 belong together with above cola 46-114. According to du Rand (1979:10) structural results show that cola 115-129 belong to division 3. Πνεῦμα from the previous section provides a transition by reference to the spirits in 3:24 (Colon 114.1) (Smalley 1984:217; Marshall 1978:203;), or a hinge to the next structural group (du Rand 1979:11). Πνεῦμα in colon 114 provides a transition-hinge to the present section. Brown (1982:501) and Marshall (1978:203) state that this passage 4:1-6 (cola 115-129) constitute a unit. Brown (1982:502) further states that within the unit, there is a clear subdivision between vv. 1-3 and 4-6. (Cola 115 -120 and cola 121-129).

The Johannine dualism is displayed in this section in the author's identification of the existence of two groups of spirits. The spirits are a symbol representing either good or evil. Therefore, that author in line with the Johannine style of argumentation, identifies these groups by drawing a contrast between the spirits which are ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (colon 118) and those which are not of God (cola 118-120) but of the world. He therefore establishes the criteria by which to test the spirits – confession. Every spirit that ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστιν (colon 118.1,2). And πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν (colon 118.3,4).

The argument in cola 115-120 is accentuated in cola 121-129. The two groups are strung between ὑμεῖς and αὐτοὶ in cola 121; 123; and 126 thus creating an aba construction. The ὑμεῖς are ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (colon 121, 126) whereas the αὐτοὶ are ἐκ τοῦ κόσμῳ (colon 123). Those who are of God listen to God's messengers. Those who are of the world do not listen to them but to those of their kind. Du Rand (1979:18) treats colon 129 as a separate pericope. Our contention against that division is the fact that it provides a conclusion to this whole section and for that reason we are convinced that it is part of it rather than a separate pericope. Ἐκ τούτου (literally – from this) appears to strengthen the argument that cola 129 belong together with the preceding section. Brown (1982:500) claims that ἐκ τούτου refers unambiguously to what has preceded.

3.5.4.7.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

The author acknowledges the existence of an opposing spirit to God embodied in the actions of those whom he calls ψευδοπροφῆται. As Edwards (1996: 78) states, the concept of false prophets is familiar from the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere in the New Testament; but that this must allude to a contemporary situation in the Johannine community. There had arisen among them those whom he identifies with ψευδοπροφῆται, which stands in opposition to the Spirit of God.

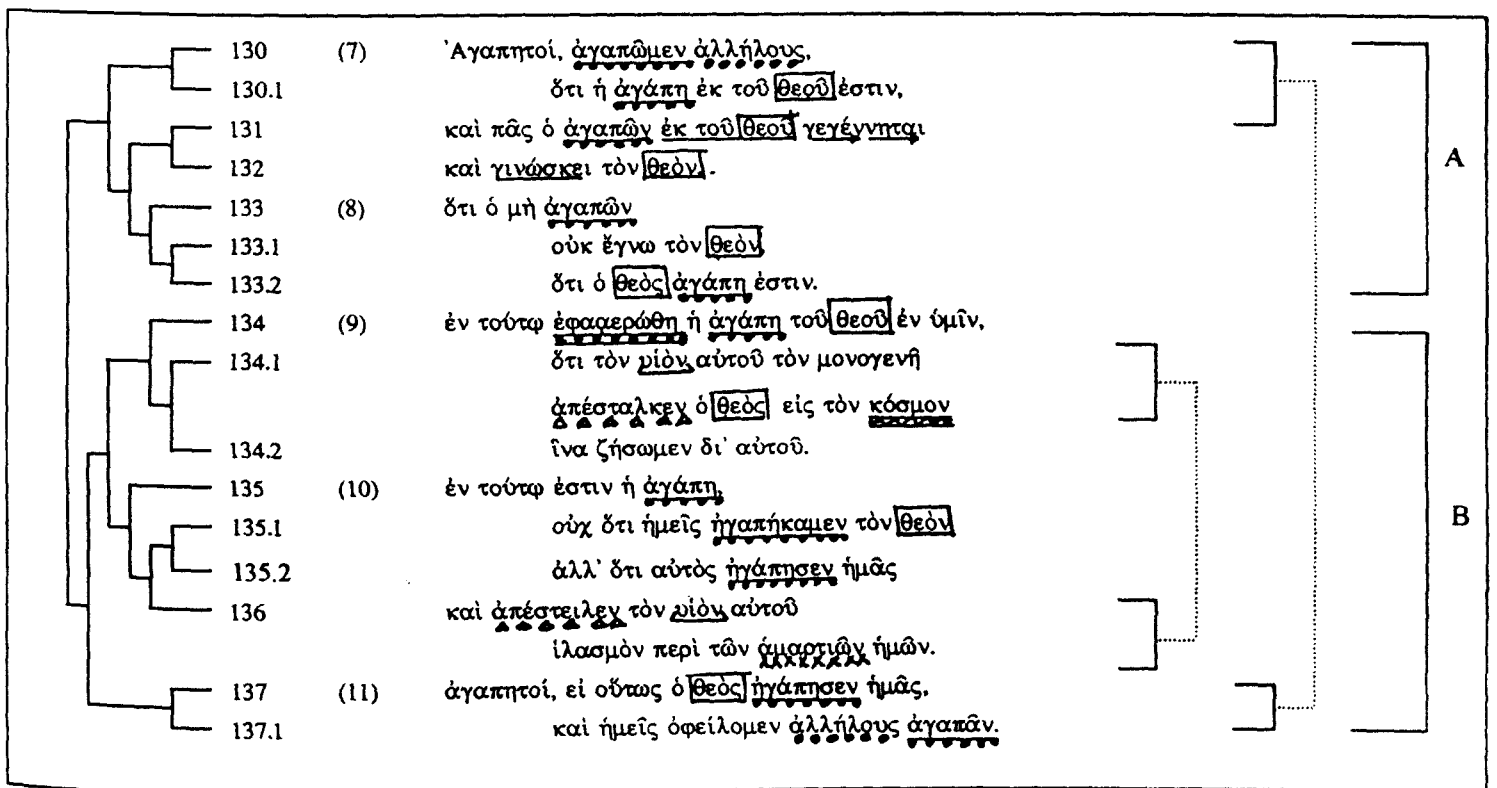
In verse 2 and 3, a criteria by which the spirits could be tested, is established, that is: πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν (1 John 4:3) (O' Neill 1966:48), και πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν, but of the antichrist of whom

they have heard that it was coming; and now it is in the world already. No matter how charming, how plausible, how eloquent the prophet in question may be, the test of their witness to Christ and His truth is the test by which they should be judged (Bruce 1970:105).

Believers are of God's family (Williams 1965:46) and have overcome the world because the one in them is greater than the one in the world (1 Jn 4:4). Another criteria by which the children of God could be discerned from those of the devil (Feuillet 1973:209), is treated in verses 4-10. The children of God listen to those who are of God whereas those who are not of God do not listen to us (Edwards 1996:78). Believers are therefore in no danger of confusing 'the Spirit of truth' with the 'spirit of error', the spirit that leads people astray (Bruce 1970:106).

3.5.5 Division 4, Section 4.1, Cola 130-165, 1 Jn 4:7-5:5

1 Jn 4:7-11



3.5.5.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Reference is made in colon 127 to the fact that believers are children of God and that those who know God listen to us (them) (JB). This provides a link with the present section in that in cola 132 and 133.1 reference to knowledge of God is made. In the previous section the dominant motif was filiation and that the readers are of God (du Rand 1979:20). In this section the author abruptly turns from his discussion of true and false spirits to appealing to his readers to love one another (Marshall 1978:210; Smalley 1984:235). However, the requirement of Christian love is related to the very nature of God himself (Smalley 1984:235). The believer's love of other believers is in response to God's own love demonstrated in his Son Jesus Christ. Ἀγάπη is the dominant motif in cola 130-137, occurring at least eleven times.

Cola 130-137 may be divided into two pericopes: A (130-133) and B (134-137). In pericope A, the author's hortatory injunction is stated in antithetical terms. He emphasises that love has its foundation and origin in God, and that whoever loves is born of God (identity) (1 Jn 4:7) (cola 130-131) and knows God (colon 132). The second part of the statement states the opposite, whoever does not love does not know God ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἔστιν. God is love has been described by Stott (1964:163) as the most comprehensive and sublime of all biblical affirmations about God's being.

Pericope B (cola 134-137) begins with ἐν τούτῳ, which in this case, as most scholars agree, seems to be a reference to what follows (Brown 1982:515). The love of God is revealed in that he sent (ἀπέσταλκεν) his only begotten Son into the world. The reason for the incarnation is in order that the world

might be saved through him (colon 134). Ἐν τούτῳ in colon 135 seems to be a reference to what has already been stated. The initiative to demonstrate love to humanity is God's; it does not originate with human beings. It is God who sent (ἀπέστειλεν) his only begotten Son to be an expiation for our sins (colon 136). The exhortation in colon 137 is based on the fact of God's love for us and is stated in conditional form. 'If' this is how God loved us, we ought to love one another (1 Jn 4:11).

3.5.5.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

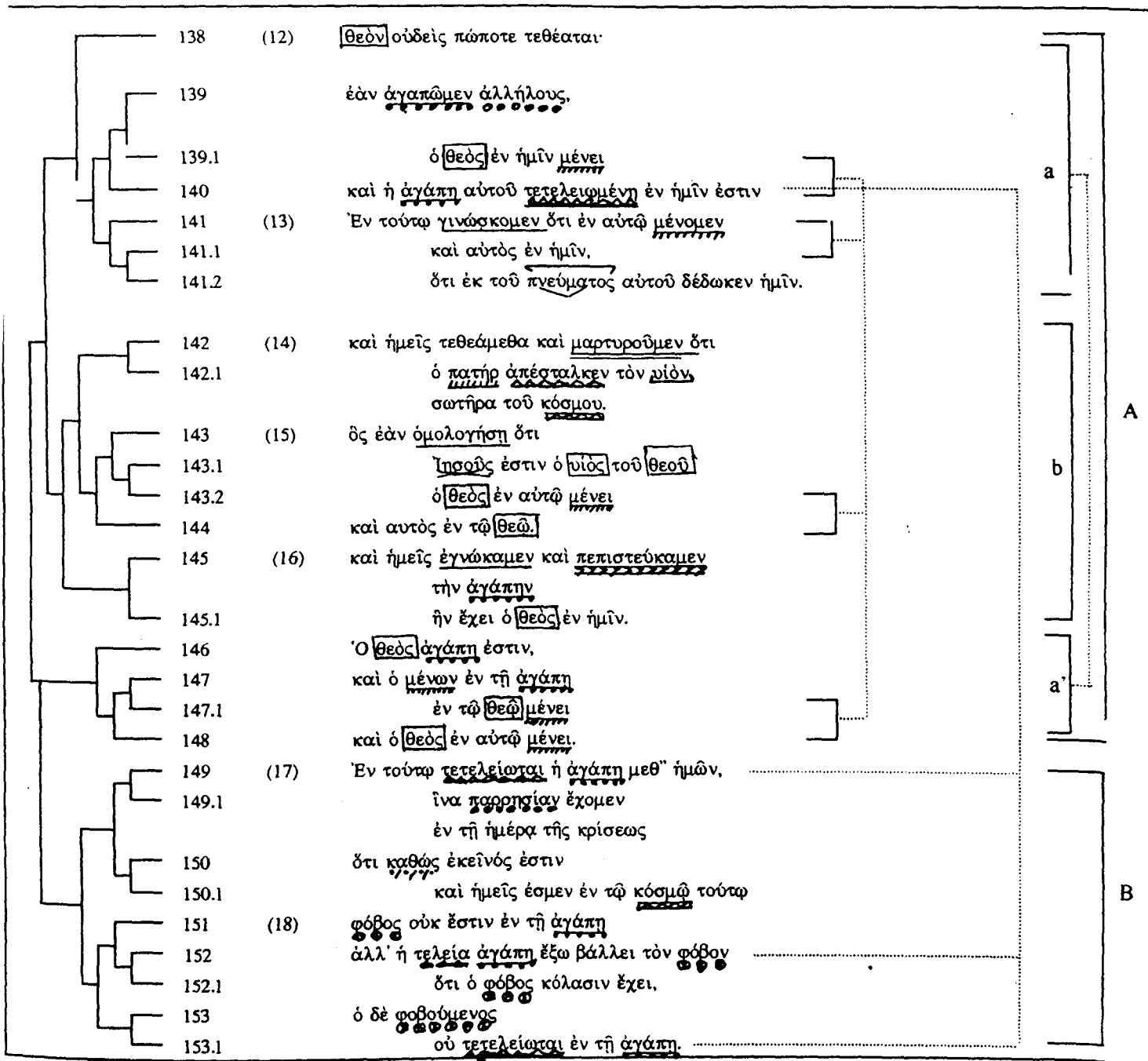
The theme of love dominates in 1 John, appearing first 2:5, 2:7-11, 15-17; 3:1-3, 10-18, 21-23, and in 5:1-3 (Edwards 1996:82). Klauck (1991:244) has described this section as *'eine sammlung von Liebesliedern'*. In this particular unit under discussion, the theme is derived from the initial exhortation found in verse 7, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love comes from God'. The verses, which follow are theologically very significant since they are an amplification of the exhortation. The theme statement above reveals what is expected of the children of God. Since love has its wellspring in God, the children of God must reproduce their Father's nature (Bruce 1970:107).

God, apart from being the wellspring of love is also the motivation for mutual love (du Rand 1979:33). This love which derives from God and which the New Testament enjoins, involves a consuming passion for the well being of others. (Bruce 1970:107). This consuming passion God demonstrated in the incarnation (Williams 1965:48) when He sent his Son into the world so that

humanity might live through him (1 Jn 4:9). The love the author is speaking about is not our love but God's love for us.

3.5.5.3 Section 4.2 (Cola 138-153)

1 Jn 4:12-18



3.5.5.3.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Having stated in colon 137 that we ought to love one another, in colon 138, the author slips in a contrasting statement, against which his conclusion must be understood (Marshall 1978:216). He states that ‘No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God dwells in us’ (1 Jn 4:12). The idea of God’s invisibility is familiar in the Old Testament (Smalley 1984:246; Marshall 1978:216). This verse also echoes what is stated in Jn 1:18 where the author draws a contrast between the invisibility of God and the fact of his revelation in his incarnated Son, Jesus Christ (Marshall 1978:216).

Cola 138-153 may be divided into two pericopes: A (138-148) and B (149-153). In pericope A, the author introduces the criteria for the mutual indwelling of God and the Christian (Brown 1982:556). The criteria is: brotherly love (colon 139) and faith in Jesus as the Son of God (colon 143). Three subunits are also discernible within pericope A, that is, 138-141; 142-145; and 146-148.

Cola 138-141 deals with the mutual abiding of God within the believer and the believer in God. The mutual abiding is on condition that the believer loves other fellow believers. By keeping the love command, God’s love is perfected (Τετελειωμένη) in them. Colon 141 introduces another criterion by which they will know they abide in God and God in them.

Cola 142-145 seems to provide an answer to the statement made in colon 138 that 'No one has ever seen God'. Colon 142 begins by stating that they have seen (τεθεάμεθα) the incarnate Son (du Rand 1979:22) and therefore testifies that Jesus is from God and has been sent to be the Saviour of the world (colon 142). Therefore, a true confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God becomes another criterion for dwelling or remaining in God (colon 143). Cola 146-148, as du Rand (1979:23) rightly points out, are a mere recapitulation of the preceding cola 138-141. Pericope B, cola 149-153 deals with the perfection of love among believers, leading to their having confidence (παρησία) on the day of judgement. Where there is perfect love, there is no room for fear (colon 151). Fear and love cannot coexist (Marshall 1978:224).

3.5.5.3.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

1 John 4:11-21, as Longacre (1992:275) rightly points out acts like an amplification and paraphrase of the preceding paragraph. The author picks up what has already been said and continues his hortatory injunction that 'if God so loved us we ought to love one another'. In his amplification, he adds a considerable amount of new material (Longacre 1992:276).

Westcott (1966:150) right points out that the character of God's love carries with it an obligation to love (v.11) through the fulfilment of which by the Spirit we gain the highest possible assurance of fellowship with God (vv. 12, 13). Bruce (1970:110) provides a very apt summation when he says that the Spirit persuades and enables us to believe in Jesus as the Son of God; He

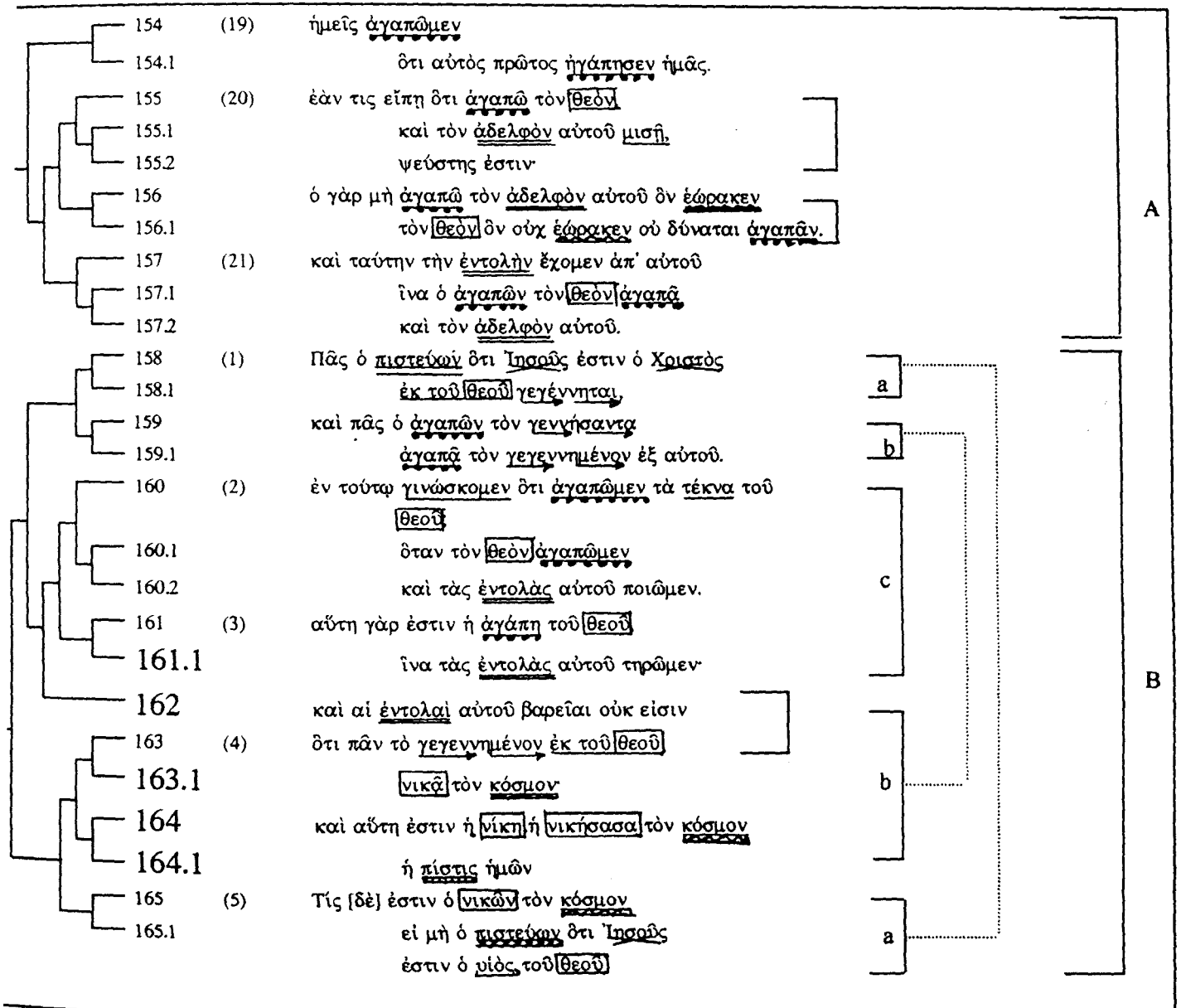
communicates to us the new life, which is ours as members of God's regenerate family.

In verse 17, the author reiterates what he stated in verse 12 but now he develops it in a new way (Williams 1965:50). The believer's dwelling in God is a source of confidence with which he or she will face judgement (Bruce 1970:113). Those who live in this relationship of love will not shrink on the day of judgement because in this world they are like him (1 Jn 4:17). True love excludes any fear (1 Jn 4:18). Fear, as Williams (1965:51) points out, anticipates and makes real the pains it fears and contemplates, it indicates a faulty love-relationship with God. The absence of fear is another criterion by which we judge whether we are in a relationship of love with God.

Just as fear has no place in a relationship of love, neither has hating one's brother. Love for God and hate for one's brother are mutually exclusive. It is impossible to love the unseen God, and to hate the brother who is visible (Williams 1965:51). Love for God becomes visible through love for the brother (du Rand 1979:33)

3.5.5.4 Section 4.3 (Cola 154-165)

1 Jn 4:19-5:5



3.5.5.4.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Section 4.3 may be divided into two pericopes: A (cola 154-157) and B (cola 158-165). Cola 154-157 continue the discussion on the same theme of love. According to the author, ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς. Brotherly love is in response to the love God has already demonstrated

in his Son, Jesus Christ. God's love, therefore, is prior (Marshall 1978:225); He loved us first (πρῶτον). If we fail to love a person whom we have seen, it is obvious then that loving God whom we have not seen is almost impossible. God's command is that whoever loves Him must also love his fellow human being (1 Jn 4:21). Love and faith are the contents of ἐντολή (cf. colon 111 above) (du Rand 1979:23).

In pericope B, cola 158-165, the themes of love and faith are pursued further. Colon 158 begins with an affirmation that whoever holds a true confession of faith about Jesus has been born of God (Marshall 1978:226). The test of whether believers love one another is by loving God and doing (ποιῶμεν) his commandments (τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ) (colon 160.2). Love for God and one another is dynamic love (Van der Watt 1999:509). It is seen in action as brought out by ποιῶμεν.

The commandment to love is not beyond their ability to keep (Marshall 1978:228), they are not βαρεῖαι. Brown (1982:567) states that the very status of being begotten by God makes Christians share in Jesus' victory over the world (colon 163). Faith in Jesus is the main constitutive factor in the victory, which believers have over the world (colon 164). Colon 165 accentuates the question of victory over the world by pointing out that the victor is one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (NIV).

3.5.5.4.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

The theme of this unit can be summed up as follows: 'love for God entails love for God's children' (O' Neill 1966:54). This is summed up well in a

statement: 'We love because he loved us first'. What this means is that because of God's act of love in Jesus Christ, something has come into our hearts which releases a stream of love flowing out both to God and humanity (Williams 1965:51). Love if it is to remain in the Christian, must actively express itself in love for one's brother (Brown 1982:563).

According to the author, it is impossible to love the unseen God, and to hate the brother who is visible (Williams 196:51). Loving the brother whom one has seen is proof of the reality of the love of God. The author in chapter 5:1-5 continues the theme relating to the relationship between true love for God and love for God's children (Hiebert 1990:216). However, in 5:1 the theme of faith is mentioned, a thing, which has led many commentators to regard this as a sign that a new unit begins here (Brown 1982:565).

The faith that the author refers to here, is more than assenting to the proposition that Jesus is the promised Messiah; it means trust, commitment (Edwards 1996:83), a receptive attitude (Schlatter 1982:218), personal faith in Him, personal union with Him, who has been revealed 'in the flesh' (4:2) as the Christ and Son of God (Bruce 1970:116). Faith in Jesus is the key to victory over the hostile environment (Williams 1965:54).

Coming back to the theme of love, the author mentions that love for God issues in obedience, that is, in keeping his commandments (O' Neill 1973:54-55; Hiebert 1990:216), which are not burdensome. The reason why God's commandments are not burdensome lies in the fact that the new life imparted to members of the family of God carries with it a new desire to do his will and a new power to give effect to that desire (Bruce 1970:117).

Not only does the author in this unit continue with his treatment of the theme of love but previously discussed themes such as victory, divine begetting, and obedience to God's commandments are brought together here (Edwards 1996:78). The idea that those who are born of God overcome the world leads on to a further definition of that victory. The victory consists of faith in God's Son (O' Neill 1973:54).

3.5.5.5 Section 5.1 (Cola 166-178)

1 Jn 5:6-13

166	(6)	οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι' ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος, <u>Ἰησοῦς Χριστός</u>	A	
167		οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον,		
167.1		ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι ·		
168		καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστὶν τὸ μαρτυροῦν,		
168.1		ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστὶν ἡ ἀληθεῖα		
169	(7)	ὅτι τρεῖς τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες		
169.1	(8)	τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα		
170		καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.		
171	(9)	εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν,		
171.1		ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων ἐστὶν		
171.2		ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ		
171.3		ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.		
172	(10)	ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ		B
172.1		ἔχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἐν αὐτῷ.		
173		ὁ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ θεῷ		
173.1		ψεύστην πεποίηκεν αὐτὸν		
173.2		ὅτι οὐκ ἐπίσταικεν εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν		
173.3		ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ θεός		
173.4		περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.		
174	(11)	καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία,	C	
174.1		ὅτι ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ὁ θεός ἡμῖν		
175		καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ θεῷ αὐτοῦ ἐστίν.		
176	(12)	ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν	C	
176.1		ἔχει τὴν ζωὴν		
177		ὁ μὴ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ		
177.1		τὴν ζωὴν οὐκ ἔχει.		
178	(13)	Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν	C	
178.1		ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζωὴν ἔχετε αἰώνιον,		
178.2		τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ		

3.5.5.5.1 Brief remarks about the structure

The demarcation of division 5 has posed a lot of problems for scholars. One group of scholars end division 4 at 5:4 (colon 163) (Brown 1982:512-3; Smalley 1984:274; Marshall 1978:218; Schneider 1961:180; The Jerusalem Bible (JB)). Another group ends division 4 at 5:5 (colon 165) (du Rand 1979:20; Du Plessis 1978:116; The Revised Standard Version (RSV)). A closer examination of these two verses shows a unity of thought. V.5 acts as a bridge between division 4 and 5 (Smalley 1984:275; Marshall 1978:230), linking up with the subject of faith and victory.

It has already been stated that colon 165, whether one decides to link it up with the preceding section or the present one, performs the same function of constituting the bridge to the section under discussion. Cola 166-178 may be divided into two pericopes: A (cola 166-173) and B (cola 174-178). In pericope A, μαρτυροῦν(τα) is mentioned ten times including colon 174, thus constituting “witness-bearing” a central theme of pericope A. Jesus came by water and blood and the Spirit (πνεῦμα) bears witness. Du Rand (1979:26) points out that the authenticity of the content of the witness in cola 166-168 lies in the testifying of the Holy Spirit.

In cola 172-173, πιστεύων features prominently thus emphasising the fact that the believer’s witness is dependent on believing in the Son of God. In pericope B, cola 174-178, there is a shift of emphasis from μαρτυρία to ζωὴν αἰώνιον. The fact of the believer’s possession of ζωὴν αἰώνιον is cast in term of witness from God (colon 174). Any person, who does not believe, makes God out to be a liar (ψεύστην). According to the author, the Son of

God is the embodiment of ζωὴν αἰώνιον (Colon 175) so that he who has the Son has life and he who does not have the Son of God has no ζωὴν. Jesus Christ is not only the content of witness; he is the ζωὴν αἰώνιον itself.

We have alluded above to the problems surrounding colon 178 with regard to whether it is part of this section or the concluding section. We will not engage in any further discussion here except to point out that it is a summary of section 5.1 (du Rand 1979:27) and that verse 13 functions as the introduction to this concluding section and acts as a bridge from the preceding section (Marshall 1978:243). Scholars have also pointed out the close parallel (which according to Brooke is by no means exact) that exists between colon 178 and John 20:31 (Brown 1982:605; Smalley 1984:290; Marshall 1978:243; du Rand 1979:27).

3.5.5.5.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

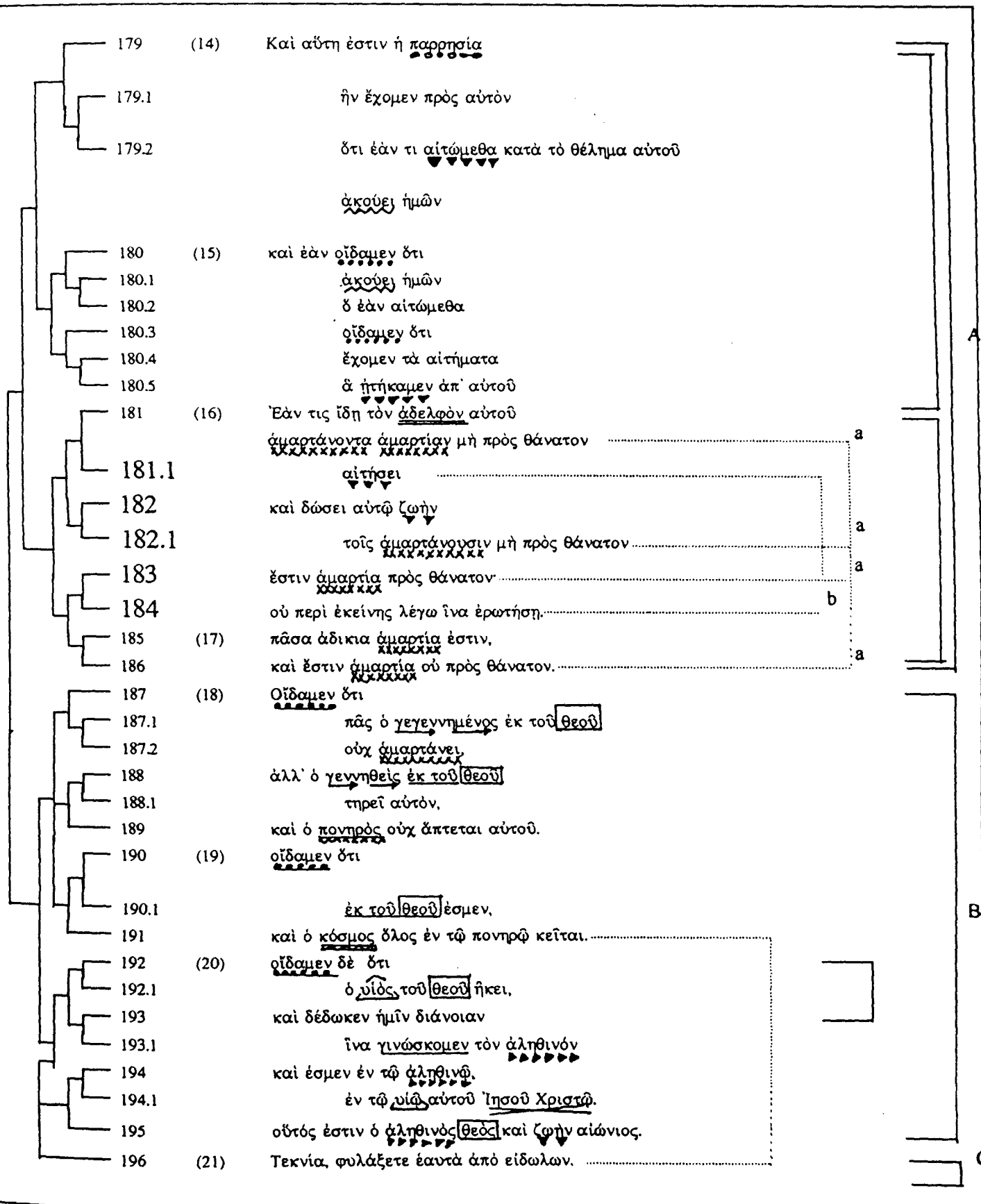
In verse 6 the emphasis is on the fact that there is more than one witness that Jesus is the Son of God, not only by water (of birth or baptism) but also by the blood he shed when He died on the cross (Miehle 1981:300). The theme of witness has not appeared since the Prooemium (Edwards 1996:79). The truth about Jesus Christ does not depend on the witness of the two but on the irrefutable witness of the Spirit (Williams 1965:56). The identity and the validity of the witnesses is then elaborated in greater detail in verses 8-9 (Miehle 1981:300). It is because the witness of the Spirit is true that we should accept it. The witness of the Spirit is the same as that of the Father. To accept the Spirit's witness is equal to accepting the Father's witness which he

has given about his Son. God's witness through the Spirit is far superior to human witness. It is a witness that does not belong to God alone, it is also said to be within the believer (Edwards 1966:79), that is, if a person chooses to accept this witness, the witness-bearing-Spirit resides within him or her (Bruce 1970:121).

The refusal to accept the witness of God in Jesus Christ is tantamount to calling God a liar. The acceptance of the reliability of the witness (Miehle 1981:300) means accepting the Son and he who accepts the Son receives eternal life, but if he or she refuses to accept the Son he or she does not have life (Marshall 1978:242). It is true, as Williams (1965:58) rightly points out that 'life indeed', true life, eternal life, is to be found from one source alone, from Jesus the Son of God who is the embodiment of eternal life (Bruce 1970:122). The life-symbol, which we identified earlier, is directly linked here with the person of Jesus, but it is a gift that is appropriated only through faith. Eternal life is the gift of life, the experience of fellowship with God through Christ (Stott 1964:185). Since eternal life is not separate from God but in God, believers by being united with Christ through faith are united with God (Westcott 1966:188).

3.5.6 Division Four, Section 5.2 (Cola 179-196)

1 Jn 5:14-21



3.5.6.1 Brief remarks about the structure

Issues surrounding the demarcation of division 5 are numerous. With regard to the present section, the issue concerns the structural position of colon 178 (du Rand 1979:25), whether it belongs to section 5.1 or 5.2. Brown (1982:605); Marshall (1978:242); Schneider (1961:184); the Jerusalem Bible (JB); New International Version (NIV) place colon 178 in the concluding section 5.2, whereas du Rand (1979:25); Du Plessis (1978:116); Smalley (1984:274) have colon 178 as part of section 5.1.

Du Rand (1979:27) notes that numerous motifs which occurred earlier in 1 John, occur again in section 5.2; for example the *παρρησία* motif (179), *ἀδελφὸν* (181), *οἶδα-γινώσκειν* (180,182,180,3, 187, 190, 192 193.1), *ζωή* (182 and 195), *ἁμαρτία* (181, 182, 183, 185, 187.2), *γεγέννημενος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ* (187.1, 188), and *ἕως τοῦ θεοῦ* (192.1, 194.1).

Colon 178, while it provides a conclusion to section 5.1 also introduces section 5.2. The following themes of knowledge and eternal life in colon 178 were identified earlier as pregnant with meaning within the symbolic universe of the author and his listeners, but now they are pursued further in cola 179-196. In colon 178, the author mentioned that he has written that they may know (*εἰδῆτε*). The 'know' motif runs through the whole section, that is, in cola 180,187,190, and 192 (Brown 1982:631). Likewise the theme of life mentioned in colon 178 reappears in cola 182 and 195.

This section may be divided into two pericopes: A (cola 179-186) and B (cola 187-196). Cola 179-186 deals with Christian παρρησία (confidence) (προς) in God. According to Brooke, the use of the preposition προς suggests a relationship, which is realised in active fellowship (in Smalley 1984:295). Christian παρρησία is based on the fact that whenever they ask κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ, he hears (colon 179). Οἰδομεν in the context of this passage expresses their certainty at the fact that they have what they ask for. Κατὰ τὸ θέλημα qualifies this exuberant confidence; prayers have to be in accordance with God's will. The author then joins the thought of prayer to praying for the brethren who are committing sin (colon 181). Smalley (1984:297) sees this responsibility as the 'social' dimension of the Christian life.

Pericope B, cola 187-196, deals with certainty expressed in terms of οἰδομεν, that those γεγέννημενος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ do not commit sin (colon 187). The believer's certainty is accentuated by the fact that the one born (γεννηθεὶς) of God protects him and the evil one (ὁ πονηρὸς) cannot touch him. Γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ as rightly pointed out by Westcott, 194; Brooke, 148-49; Dodd, 138, is a reference to Jesus Christ (in Smalley 1984:303).).

Cola 190-191 continues the argument of cola 187-188, but the certainty of the children of God is set against unbelievers who are of the world which is under the power of the evil one (colon 191). Believers know that the Son of God has come to give them understanding (διάνοιαν) to know the true one (ἀληθινόν), who is Jesus Christ (colon 194). Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴν αἰώνιος (colon 195). Colon 196, as du Rand (1979:28) notes is

syntactically loose from the rest but the contrast, which the author draws between the true God and εἰδώλων links this colon to the above cola.

3.5.6.2 Descriptive identification of important themes

The author states the reason for writing 1 John that it is to assure believers that they have eternal life (Edwards 1996:79). At verse 14, the author surprisingly introduces a new theme of prayer. The confidence-παρρησία, which is mentioned in this verse has to do with their present experience in prayer (Lieu 1991:89), that if prayers are made in accord with his will, then believers are sure that they will receive the things they have asked for (Williams 1965:59; Bruce 1970:123).

Believers are exhorted to pray for a fellow believer who is seen to be committing a sin and a prayer for such will be answered (Williams 1965:60). Believers should pray for all people unless their sin is 'unto death'. If it is, the author does not encourage intercession (Edwards 1996:80).

Those who are born of God do not continue sinning. This statement picks up the thought of 3:9. As Williams (1965:61) rightly points out, lawless behaviour in a Christian is ruled out, through the protection of the Son of God, who keeps him or her out of the clutches of the evil one. But believers know that they are of God's family as opposed to the world, which is under the control of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19). What is encouraging however, is the knowledge that believers have that the Son of God has come and has given them the ability to distinguish the True one (Edwards 1996:80) Jesus Christ, the true God and eternal life. The author ends by exhorting believers to avoid

anything that would lead them astray from this God who has revealed himself in Jesus (Marshall 1978:255).

3.5.7 Summary

An attempt has been made here to identify symbols that were not only conventional but central in the author's communication of his understanding of the divine mystery as he perceived it. Below we present a summary of what has been discovered in each division.

Division 1, constitutes the prologue of 1 John and begins by making reference to the ἀρχῆ. For the various possible interpretations of ἀρχῆ, see the commentary above on 1 Jn 1:1. The linking of ἀρχῆ with λόγος has led some theologians to thinking that this could be a reference to the pre-existence of Jesus the λόγος of God or the beginning could be the times when the tradition bearers first heard the message and believed (Williams 1965:17; Bruce 1970:35; Brown 1982:157). The relative clauses of verse 1 are repeated in verse 2 and both find their explanation in the phrase περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς, which constitutes the object of ἀπαγγέλλομεν. In verse two, the author claims sensory perception of τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς.

The central theme of the prologue as stated above is the proclamation of life, the life that has been revealed. Life has been identified in this division as an important symbol relating to the social conventions of the Mediterranean world. Those who accept and appropriate for themselves what is being proclaimed enter into a new relational state with one another and with God,

that is, they have *κοινωνία* with God and his Son and with fellow believers. *Κοινωνία* here is another symbol identified above, which is central to familial relations and represents an ideal state of family life within each family. The author points out that it is the proclamation of and reception of life that leads to fellowship-*κοινωνία* among the preachers and hearers and further leads still to a deeper reality, that is, fellowship with God and his Son. The Father and Son are two more important symbols we identified, which were common conventions operative within family and central in the author's stock of knowledge as he communicated his understanding of the Gospel message.

Division 2, cola 4-17 introduced another important symbol, the symbol of light. The author focused the reader's attention to the fact that God is light and the basis for fellowship. Ethical relationships among believers are defined in term of and against this background that God is light (Bruce 1970:41). Bruce further states that what this statement implies is that God is the source and essence of holiness and righteousness, goodness and truth; in Him there is nothing that is unholy or unrighteous, evil or false.

Believers who are in fellowship with God cannot continue doing the works of darkness, darkness being another symbol, which is used here in contrast to light. Hatred of one's fellow human being is excluded because it is in contrast to love, which belongs to God. But if believers fail to live up to this standard and fall into sin and therefore appeal to God's loving kindness and confess their sins, they are assured of God's forgiveness. Forgiveness plays a significant role in that without it fellowship within God's family is not possible. Over and above forgiveness believers are promised the help of the *παράκλητος*—Jesus Christ who is also their *ἰλασμος*.

What constitutes the central theological premise of this section is the fact that 'God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all' (1 Jn 1:5). Group terminology, that is, family language, is also evident in this section and is stated in terms of fellowship, forgiveness, cleansing and right conduct. Fellowship with God who is light means sharing a common life that belongs to Christians, a life of fellowship with God and with other Christians, and the process of our being cleansed from all sins is going forward (Williams 1965:20). The blood of Jesus which functions in a cultic sense here has significance within the *κοινωνία* context and provides continual purification (Westcott 1966:21).

But the buck does not stop there. The author introduces the theme of obedience to emphasise that it is a prerequisite to remain in fellowship with God, his Son and the rest of the Christian community. Obedience was an important word within the symbolic universe of the Johannine community. Also within the context of family, obedience is very central. Within the family of God, one must show obedience by keeping God's commandments (cola 18-32), which is, loving one's fellow Christians and walking as Jesus Christ walked (1 Jn 2:6).

The author also introduced another recurrent theme in the letter – knowledge of God (Edwards 1996:72). A comment has been made above on the importance of this word 'knowledge'. Within the author's universe it referred to the common stock of knowledge the author shared with the readers, which only could be demonstrated through obedience. Du Rand (1979:31) and Westcott (1966:45) see obedience to the commandments of God as the criterion for possession of knowledge. The author's purpose is to encourage

believers to be obedient and to show their unity with the Father and Son by imitating (Westcott 1966:45) or walking as Christ did (1 Jn 2:6).

A distinction is made in Section 2.3 (cola 33-45) between those who are in fellowship with God and those who belong to the world. Those who love the world are not of God but of the world. The children of God act in accordance with the θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, whereas those of the world love the world.

Division 3, cola 46-66) deals with a number of interrelated themes. The identity of the ἀντίχριστοι (cola 46-50) as well as those who possess the σχρῖσμα from God. The identity of those who are of this world and the children of God who are born of Him is established (cola 51-54). These are two symbols important in identifying and distinguishing who belongs to God and who does not.

The central theme of this unit however, is found in verse 23. The phrase ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν - 'acknowledging the Son' places the emphasis on the positive value of acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ against the negative status of those who do not do so, the latter are antichrist (Miehle 1981:274).

Each group distinguishes their origin by the nature of their confession. The ἀντίχριστοι deny that Jesus is the Christ whereas those who have the χρῖσμα of God confess the Son (cola 55-58). The author therefore exhorts believers to keep what they have heard from the beginning. The theme of abiding or remaining in Christ μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ is reintroduced. In order to remain in fellowship with the father and the Son, they must remain in him and as a result they will have παρρησία on the day of his revelation (cola 59-67).

Sin, is another symbol identified above, representing any action or violation of the group norms and values. It is also a distinguishing feature between those who are of the world and those born of God. The children of God are ethically upright (1 Jn 3:4-10) (cola 76-89). Love, which is a theme on its own, is also set up as a criterion for distinguishing the children of God from those of the devil. 'Children of God' indicate an intimate familial bond that exists between them and God or rather their introduction into the most intimate social structure, where they – irrespective of age or sex – become part of God's family (Van der Watt 2000:182). Love and children are two important symbols, which in this case are used in relation to God.

The children of God love one another and keep God's commandments as opposed to Cain who murdered his brother because he was of the evil one (ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ). The children of God show their love in action (1 Jn 3:11-24) (cola 90-103).

Chapter 4 begins by establishing the distinction between the spirits from the world and the ones from God. The identification is done through confession. The spirit of this world denies the incarnation of Jesus whereas the Spirit from God confesses Jesus as having come in the flesh (cola 115-129). The central theme of this pericope is having the right confession. He who confesses Jesus as having been born a human being identifies himself or herself as of God. The opposite is true of those who deny the incarnation of Jesus, they are of the spirit from the world.

Division 4, spells out that God is the foundation of true love, this love he demonstrated by sending Christ into the world to be its Saviour (1 Jn 4:9) and the ἰλασμος for our sins. The idea of loving one another in verse 7 is amplified in the following verses. The reason believers have to love one another is because love is of God. God is the one who first took the initiative to love. His love was demonstrated in the sending of His only begotten Son Jesus into the world. God's loving example in Christ should drive us into doing the same (cola 130-137).

Since God is the wellspring of love, the proper response to God's love is love for others (Edwards 1996:83). Believers are expected to exhibit the same loving character in their dealings with one another (Bruce 1970:107). Those who love their fellow human beings dwell in God and God in them. In this unit we observe a double command to faith and mutual love (Edwards 1996:83).

Loving ones brother is the first criterion for remaining in fellowship with God. The second criterion finds expression in the statement: whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God (1 Jn 4:15). Obedience to the love commandment and holding the right faith in Jesus as the Son of God result in victory over the world (cola 154-165).

Division 5, cola 166-196 provide a conclusion to 1 John and deals with witness about Jesus Christ which is authenticated by more than one witness, water, blood and the Spirit. It is witness that does not belong to God alone, it is within each person who has accepted the validity of the witness and ultimately put his or her faith in Jesus (Edwards 1996:79).

Jesus is the embodiment of eternal life, therefore, to accept him in faith is to receive eternal life and to reject him is tantamount to choosing the way of death and amounts to forfeiture of life (Bruce 1970:122).

In verse 13 (colon 179) the author writing to those who believe in the name of the Son of God, reiterates the purpose of his writing: 'I write this that you may know that you have eternal life'. The author wants to assure believers that they have eternal life (Painter 1979:123). Having given them assurance that they possess eternal life, the author moves on to a new theme of prayer. The word *παρησία* - confidence is mentioned here in the context of prayer. Believers therefore are assured that when they ask in accordance with God's will their prayers will be answered (Williams 1965:59). Prayers are also to be offered for a member of the family of God who strays but not for those whose sin is unto death.

The concluding verses as Williams (1965:61) notes, closes with three great assertions, each introduced by '*we know*'. To be a child of God means one does not continue living in sin. Lawless behaviour is ruled out (Williams 1965:61). Believers receive a certain impeccability (Feuillet 1973:214) as a result of God's protection upon their lives. The certainty, which they possess, enables them to understand they possess eternal life. This confidence arises from the fact that they are in God because they are in, i.e. linked to and surrounded by, Jesus Christ (Williams 1965:61), who is the true God and eternal life (1 Jn 5:21).

Our aim as stated at the beginning of this chapter was to identify key symbols, which the author used as he provided members of his symbolic universe with fresh knowledge and insights in order to re-focus their attention to their new roles as members of God's family. The action of the breakaway group, which he now calls the Anti-christ convinced the author that members of his symbolic universe had not fully internalised all the typifications, meanings and responsibilities of their new identity as Christians. He was therefore forced in his argument to hop backward and forward demolishing as well as re-emphasising fundamental truths and defining boundaries that pertain to their new status and universe.

In this chapter, we have also been able to isolate and identify important symbols and themes that would help in the further development of this thesis. In order to come to terms with John's symbolic universe which the author reinterprets in order to provide new typifications, meanings and obligations associated with their new status as children or members of God's family, the discussion in the next chapter will further develop and systematically describe these symbols and themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

A systematic description of the symbols identified in 1 John and their relations to each other.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a sequel to Chapter 3 and aims to discuss and further develop, in a systematic way, some of the themes and symbols which were identified above. 1 John, like any text of scripture must be viewed as a communication. It reflects the culture, values and opinions of the group, which are presupposed, illustrated, confirmed and expressed in this text. It could be said without any fear of contradiction that 1 John reflects the beliefs that underlie their universe and preserve important cultural information. If we are to discover why the author uses certain symbols and expresses himself as he does, it is necessary to discover cultural beliefs that undergirded and constituted the reality obtaining in his world.

When we examine the unexplained usage of certain symbolic terms in 1 John, they reveal rather that the people to whom the author was speaking or writing shared with him some knowledge about those aspects of the symbolic universe in which these terms and concepts functioned. Being a member of a particular universe means that there is large quantity of knowledge which the author shares with the audience. In most cases words and concepts are not explained because the author assumes the availability of this stock of knowledge. When he employs certain metaphors, he is sure that his audience knows the meaning and implications of those images.

Here we list some of the symbols John uses. He defines the nature of the reality, which he describes by the symbol 'God' by adding metaphors such as Light (1:5), Father (2:1), Love (4:8), fellowship (1:3). Other symbols such as Jesus the Son of God (1:7; 3:8), the Christ (5:1), blood (1:7), confession (1:9), forgiveness (1:9), Jesus an Advocate (2:1), the righteous (2:1), the expiation for sin (2:2), life (1:1,2; 5:12,13,16), God's children (3:1), sin (1:8,3:4), the world (2:15), darkness (1:5), the antichrist (2:18), birth (3:9), confidence (3:21), the Spirit (3:24; 4:2,3; 5:6,7), eternal life (1:2, 5:11,13,20), prayer (5:14) are also used. The list is long but we will pick up some of these concepts and symbols as we go on with our investigation. However, our contention is that the manner in which the author employed some of these symbols in his argumentation, was deeply influenced by how he perceived reality. In the next subsection, we will make an attempt to discover something of the author's universe and the influence it had on him.

4.2 John's view of the cosmos

John as a product of the first century world grew up and was socialised within a first century cultural system. By a cultural system we mean not only the culturally interpreted versions of a people's cosmology but also the cultural specific institutions, values and norms developed for communal organisation and well-being. The author or John whom the tradition of the early church identifies as the apostle, the son of Zebedee (Coetzee 1993:202) was initially socialised within a strong Jewish tradition and culture. As a result, the strong influence and impact of this symbolic universe surfaces in the letter. It is therefore probable that his views of the cosmos, like those of many Jewish

people, were those of a very orderly universe, an orderliness which could be traced back to the creation story as found in Genesis 1.

Neyrey (1990:23) describes the orderliness mentioned above in terms of 'Purity and Pollution'. 'Purity' represents that which is 'in place' and 'Pollution' that which is 'out of place', i.e. disorder. If the author is John, then his Jewish background is helpful in that we can assume with a measure of certainty that like all Jews he was thoroughly socialised and such categories as stated above were ingrained into his thinking at a very early stage. Lines of what was 'in place' or 'out of place' were clearly drawn up and set in place for him from an early stage. What this means is that boundaries, which were mentioned in chapter three were clearly defined for him at an early stage. He knew that anything that does not conform to the order and specific cultural norms that make up the symbolic system of his particular social group was out of place and therefore constituted a threat to the symbolic world as originally constituted.

The pattern of order in terms of Purity and Pollution is also evident in the antithetical word-pairs identified above such as light-darkness, love-hate, truth-lie, children of God-children of the devil, knowing God-not knowing God, having life-not having life, which the author uses to communicate his understanding of the gospel message to his community. The employment of the antithetical formula i.e. moving from the positive to the negative, such as in the statement 'God is light and in him is no darkness at all' (1 Jn 1:5), as pointed out above is deliberate.

The author reflected on his situation in the light of the knowledge he shared with the Johannine community. The communication that followed such reflection served, on the one hand, to explain or interpret (what was happening) and on the other hand, to secure behaviour that is consistent with their new status. Neufeld (1994:57) rightly points out that it is through a series of antithetical speech acts that the author makes clear his theological and ethical orientation, in order thereby to engender maximal reception in his readers and to force a guided course of action. It could then be said that the knowledge the author of 1 John communicates serves to motivate behaviour (Petersen 1985:205).

Since modern readers know that theology is reasoned discourse about God (Wiles 1976:1), it is possible then for us to say that the author was making clear his theological orientation in what he said and wrote. However, we are of the opinion that the author himself was not conscious of the fact that he was performing the role of theologian since the role was not known at the time.

With the establishment of sub-universes of meaning on the Johannine message, a variety of perspectives on the total community had emerged, each viewing John's message from the angle of their particular sub-universe. These perspectives, since they were fast becoming part of the total stock of knowledge, began to impinge strongly on the community's own outlook and were becoming a mitigating factor in the community's change of identity. The diversity of perspectives that emerged caused uncertainty in the community. This was so because whenever new perspectives emerge, they tend to

challenge and threaten established institutions. It was this situation which forced the author into the role we now call 'theologian'.

The author of 1 John developed his theological views in a situation riddled by such divergent and discrepant views and perspectives. As Robinson (1976:285) points out, the author wrote 1 John to reassure Jewish Christian congregations in Asia Minor, who were the product of the Johannine mission and in danger of being shaken from their faith and morals by false teachers of a gnosticising tendency.

Regarding the author's background, Robinson (1976:292) states that tradition has it that John's missionary activity, like Peter's, did not start in Asia Minor but in Jerusalem and Samaria (Acts 3:1-4:31; 8:14-25). So he believes that the epistles point back beyond the point which marked 'the beginning' or their readers to 'the beginning' of the events in which the writer, with his associates, claimed to have had a very personal and tangible share (2 John 5; cf. 1 John 1:1-3,5; 2:25) and indeed behind that to the ἀρχή in which eternally those events were grounded (1 John 1:1; 2:13f; cf. John 1:1). He states therefore that John's message would be worthless if it were not already rooted and shaped in Palestine (Robinson 1976:292).

Localising John within a Jewish socio-religio-cultural context, which viewed reality as divided between what is pure and polluted, is very important. This is the 'macro level' (Neyrey 1990:12) on which he operated. This level includes all knowledge and perceptions about reality, which he shared with Jews, which embodied the above divisions about reality. These perceptions informed and coloured the way he viewed and experienced reality and

structured the manner of his behaviour. We see this as a 'Macro level' because it constituted the foundation against which any other reality was evaluated.

His writings, which emanate from this period, reveal not only cultural perceptions on a macro level but also on a 'micro level'. The 'micro level' for the purpose of this discussion refers to knowledge, which was not purely Jewish, but knowledge common to most Christians and Greek-speaking congregations especially the Johannine community.

For a comprehensible reading of 1 John in different context other than the context of the first readers, it is expedient that the reader enters first the world of the author before venturing into an interpretation of this message in another cultural context. An attempt must be made to see the world and reality through the lenses of the cultural reality of the author. An attempt such as this will be beset with difficulties. Joubert (1995: 50-61) outlines six of these difficulties as follows:

First, that the New Testament offers only outlines of these universes, since the various authors refer only to those aspects which are relevant to the purpose of their writings;

Second, that the 'ideological' character of the New Testament must be taken into consideration, since in them we have reflections upon and justification for, symbolic universes which are threatened in one way or another;

Third, that we do not have much information available on the social context of the various Christian communities, information that will make sense of the dynamic relationship between the socio-religious realities of early Christianity and their efforts to maintain it;

Fourth, that we have no access to the semantic domains of the different early Christian communities' language systems;

Fifth, that the New Testament does not present us with a single, homogeneous symbolic universe shared by all the respective early Christian communities; and

Finally, that the documents do not stand in a one-to-one relationship with the extra-textual reality to which they refer.

Be that as it may, the difficulties that have just been outlined should not deter or derail us from endeavouring to enter and describe the symbolic universe of John. The modern reader has about two thousand year's chasm that separates him/her from the author. The first century Mediterranean world in which the author and his immediate audience lived was far different from our modern world. It was a world which in some way resembled Africa, where according to Mbiti, a person 'is because he belongs, and because he belongs he is' (in Setiloane 1975:31), unlike the individualistic world of the west.

As Neyrey (1990:15) states, the shaping and forming of individuals begins as soon as they are born into this world. This process of socialising new members takes place at a family level and then at a clan level. Certain stereotypes about reality are passed on to new members so that they end up

viewing the world and its workings in accordance with those stereotypes. It is therefore obvious that one's symbolic universe is necessarily conditioned by place of birth, period in time, ethnic group to which one belongs, and social status of one's family.

There is also a countless number of ways in which people become conditioned in society, largely unconsciously, to accept as natural and to follow rather uncritically the cultural patterns of that society. We think that the author of this letter was fully incarnated in his culture and lived and acted according to the specifics of his culture. That the author was thoroughly immersed and totally influenced by the culture within which he grew up and was socialised, is evidenced by the amount of family metaphors he uses in explaining and communicating his understanding of the new reality. As a child of his time, he must, therefore, be understood as totally and inextricably immersed in culture, a culture within which he learned and shared and had his behaviour shaped as a result of membership of it (Ross 1968:112).

The culture within which he grew up also had fairly strong family ties. In fact it was a group-oriented kind of society. As we read John's Gospel and the Epistles of John, there is certainly a sense of community in all of them (Jn 10:1-16; 15:1-6; 17:6-26; 1 Jn 1:7; 2:19; 3:13-17) (Dunn 1990:118). Rowland (1985:260) points out that the impression with which the Johannine letters leave us is of tightly knit communities. In fact it has been suggested with a degree of plausibility, that the Johannine communities were indeed inward-looking groups, who managed to maintain a high degree of cohesion possibly at the expense of any extensive intercourse with the world (Rowland 1985:260).

To sum up, we can say without any fear of contradiction that the categories of purity and pollution referred to earlier were evident in the manner in which the author himself viewed the cosmos. The cosmos-symbol for the author represented any worldly orientation against God or the world organised without any reference to God or his will.

4.3 The use of symbols and symbolic language

At the beginning of this chapter reference was made to the fact that the author made use of symbols that were commensurate with the understanding of his audience. It is important now to define what we mean by symbols and symbolic language? The word 'symbol' takes its origin from the Greek word *συμβάλλειν* 'to put together, compare' 'to recognise a legitimate guest'. The symbol was originally a kind of invitation card made of two parts – of a ring, of a staff or of a tablet. If the two parts fitted, the guest was recognised as legitimate. A symbol, to be recognised as one, and understood, has first to be recognised by the observer and 'fitted into his experience' (Shorter 1973:93).

Baldich observes that a symbol in the simplest sense may be used for anything that stands for or represents something else beyond it – usually an idea conventionally associated with it (in Van der Watt 1999:5; Emery & Browser 1952:1924). The World Book Encyclopaedia describes a symbol as anything that communicates a fact or an idea or that stands for an object.

Rees (1992:11) observes that we use a wealth of symbols in life. All life as Song (1979:103) remarked is saturated with symbols. Symbols and stories of our families and society surround us from the time of our birth. Before we

know how to reflect, we begin to discover the richness of what ‘father’ and ‘mother’ mean (Rees 1992:15). These are emotion-charged images found in almost every culture. All these symbols communicate something of the reality within which people find themselves.

Symbols serve to communicate information, which may cause recipients to respond. In order for them to respond, they have got to access the store of encoded messages, which are obtained through social experience, that is, the pattern of social interaction between members of the community sharing a common cultural background. The symbol and its meaning need to be culturally learnt using what Firth (1973:81) calls social processes of ‘imitation’ and ‘participatory experiment’.

As stated above, a symbol points beyond itself to something else. For instance, words are symbols but they point beyond themselves to sounds and meanings and to objects. One should however distinguish between a sign and a symbol. A sign points to something without necessarily participating in the reality of that thing. Signs can be removed for reasons of expediency or convention while symbols cannot (Tillich 1957:42). The symbol does, however, share with the sign the capacity to stand for something other than itself, but in a way, which opens up possibilities, which are closed to the sign (Fawcett 1971:26-27).

A symbol participates in the reality of that to which it points. Every nation, country or group of people have symbols peculiar to them. A nation’s flag participates in the power and dignity of the nation for which it stands (Tillich 1957:42). Because it represents something so profound, it cannot be changed

without altering the meaning and reality, which it symbolises. Symbols therefore, participate in the reality they symbolise (Shorter 1973:96; Fawcett 1971:29).

Symbols within each community are not produced intentionally but they grow out of individual or collective unconscious and cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being (Fawcett 1971:29; Tillich 1957:43). What is meant is that each community has a way of legitimating such symbols so that they become part of the already constituted reality. Like human beings, symbols grow and die. They come up at the right time and die when the situation changes (Tillich 1957:43).

Some symbols find their most natural setting in rituals (Rees 1992:12). For instance, human beings symbolise their grief at a funeral in a variety of ways. In some cultures, they do this through sombre clothes and music. Through rituals people express the myths they live by. They retell the old stories in ceremonies that make the ancient act come alive (Rees 1992:19). Another ritual common to most cultures is that of initiation. Through this rite, young men and women are weaned from their parents and made members of their clan or tribe. The group becomes a second family, to which the young are symbolically sacrificed, to re-emerge into a new life.

Symbols have constantly been the means whereby people have attempted to understand the universe and their place within it (Fawcett 1971:30). Through symbols, people express their ultimate concern and symbolic language is the only vehicle that is able to express the ultimate. Fawcett (1971:33) goes further to point out that symbols in actual fact are concerned with our

subjectivity as human beings and with the subjectivity of the cosmos itself. The symbol, says Munson is born in and for an encounter, or, as Martin Buber would put it, for dialogue between the 'I' and 'Thou' (in Fawcett 1971:33). The richness of the Bible in symbolism is very largely explained by the fact that it is a book which seldom indulges in intellectual debate about the nature of God but is constantly concerned to speak of man's relationship with God in person-to-person encounter. (Fawcett 1971:33).

According to Wright (1988:129) religious language is not a matter of giving names to clearly discernible objects; it is a complex web of metaphors and symbols pointing towards an imperfectly understood reality. Shorter (1973:92) therefore, contends that the only adequate way of speaking about God is through symbols, appealing to man's religious experience. As a result, the language that the Bible or the church uses is symbolic language. Within the Christian or the Johannine church, God is the fundamental symbol for what concerned them ultimately. All the qualities attributed to him, power, love, justice, truth, are taken from finite experiences and applied symbolically to that which is beyond finitude and infinity (Tillich 1957:)

Symbolism, as Shorter (1973:97) contends, explains and makes articulate certain deeply felt and shared experiences of the present. It helps people to classify – 'to humanise' – their experience, integrating themselves into society and the world. Symbolism validates social institutions and norms of conduct in society. Finally, he says that valuable information is transmitted through symbolism, from one generation to another. What Shorter says underlines the importance of the symbolic universe (Berger and Luckmann) for understanding a people's perception of reality. In fact, theologians and

preachers cannot afford to neglect African or, to be specific, Zulu symbolism, because it is a point of contact with Zulu people and the way they think. Below we focus on symbols as identified in chapter three above.

4.4 God, as a symbol representing the ultimate reality.

Since all reality is cast through symbols, the only adequate way of making reference to the reality, which we call God, is by using the symbol God. Scripture and theology employs this symbol to speak about God. What do we mean by saying that God is nothing but a symbol? If God is a symbol, a symbol for what? As Tillich rightly points out, God is a symbol for God (Tillich 1957:47). Some symbols such as the symbol 'God' have an enduring character.

When we refer to the word 'God' as a symbol, we should also be reminded that religious language of symbols and myths is created in the community of believers and cannot be fully understood outside this community (Tillich 1957:24). Symbols arise within communities and only as a member of the community can one comprehend the meaning of symbols used in that particular community.

Using symbolic language to describe God and what He does forces us to work by analogy with relations known and understood at our level (Suggit 1993:3). The symbol 'God' which the writer describes, is by definition unknowable (Jn 1:18; 1Jn 4:12), except in so far as the reality which the symbols represents chooses to reveal him/her self in many and various ways to human beings. In

1 John, a description of God through a variety of metaphors is given. Some of the metaphors used are: love, and light.

There is also in 1 John an abundance of analogies of human relationships taken from a coherent network of family metaphors (Van der Watt 1999:491), that the author used. These include such symbols as father, son, children, birth, life, love, brotherly love and fellowship, which were identified in chapter three above. Some of these analogies as Van der Watt (1999:137) notes are used with notable frequency throughout the Gospel of John. Since family metaphors dominate, they will constitute the basis along which their discussion in terms of Berger and Luckmann's insights is to be conducted. It is therefore, necessary to begin by giving a description of what family life was like in the ancient Mediterranean world; an undertaking, which is not an easy venture (Van der Watt 1999:492). We believe that a survey of family structures and life will yield important clues and supply relevant social information, which echo what is found in 1 John.

4.5 Family in the ancient Mediterranean world

Family often means the patriarchal one, including the wives and children of married sons (Stambaugh & Balch 1986:84). Israelite families were also patriarchal (De Vaux 1974:20). It should however be stated that within the bible, we do not find a monolithic, static view of family life (Felder 1989:151). The composition of each family differed one from the other according to the manner in which it was organised (De Vaux 1974:20). In some significant ways, the bible also endorses the extended family model and even supplements it with a kind of fictive kinship (Felder 1989:150).

Solidarity within families was such that all facets of family or community were interconnected, and profoundly interrelated. No one could exist without the other. Members created each other, made each other possible. This means that members were part of the collectivity and belonged within the network of family relations. Their being entrenched into this network implied that they could not go against the wishes of society, the family or the head of the household (Scott Peck 1987:61).

According to Esler (1994:31) the family was a primary seat of group honour. Affronts to the honour of one member were affronts to the honour of all.

Honour and the good name were central to families in the first world (Malina 1981:33). Individualism was not considered a pivotal value as western societies do but collective or corporate honour was one of their major focuses.

The father was the major figure in the family of the first century (Malina et al 1996:6). Through out the Old Testament, the dominant authority figure is consistently the father; his sons were more important than daughters (Malina et al. 1996:7), and next in prominence in the social hierarchy (Felder 1989:152). As head of the group, he was responsible for the honour of the group with reference to outsiders, and symbolised group's honour as well (Malina 1981:40). Among the Israelites, the head was a redeemer, a protector, a defender of the interests of the individual and of the group, and members of the family had the obligation to help and protect one another (De Vaux 1974:21).

Generally, fathers were endowed with two particular characteristics. On the one hand, the father ruled as head of the household and the person to whom

most respect was due, and as one having absolute authority over his family he was in a position of influence and responsibility (Bimson 1988:120). On the other hand, he had the responsibility of guarding, supporting and helping other members, characteristics which are also present when a deity is described or addressed as 'Father' (Hofius 1986:614).

The powers and duties of the father differed from one society to another. In the Roman world, fathers had extra ordinary powers over their families and children, they had the right to decide whether they accepted children as their own (Malina et al 1996:6), they could sell their children and if they attained freedom, resell them (Stambaugh & Balch 1986:124).

It should be observed that the idea of fatherhood in the New Testament is derived from the Old Testament conception of Fatherhood, which itself is determined by the conceptions of an Eastern household, and further that it is nowhere extended to all people everywhere (Westcott 1966:27). According to Eastern understanding of fatherhood, God is the great head of the family, which looks back to him as its author. His children owe him absolute obedience and reverence: they are 'in his hand': and conversely He offers them wise counsel and protection (Westcott 1966:27).

Added to the above view of fatherhood, Malina et al (1996:6) points out that it was also the Mediterranean father's duty to supply his family's food and clothing, to represent his family in public, in the cultic place, and to defend the good name and honour of the family. He also had to help educate his children. The father therefore became the embodiment of what was right, proper and acceptable within each particular family entity. Cicero for instance

acclaims Appius for maintaining absolute command over his household and for protecting the customs and discipline of his forefathers (in Van der Watt 1999:500-501).

In Jewish circles the father had no absolute power over his children, even though this had not always been the case (De Vaux 1974:20). A Jewish father was not only expected to feed, protect, and educate his family, but, more important still he was the family priest (Exod.12: 3ff) and teacher (Exod. 12:26f, 13:14ff; Deut 6:7,20ff, 32:7,46; Isa.38: 19), he was responsible for seeing that family life was in accordance with the covenant, and that children receive religious instruction (Hofius 1986:617, De Vaux 1974:49).

Among Israelites and Mediterranean's, sons were preferred to daughters (Malina 1996:7) and the eldest son took precedence over every other son since he was the one expected to perpetuate the family line and preserve the ancestral inheritance (De Vaux 1974:41). Each family had set boundaries, which members were obliged to adhere to strictly. It is in the context of these strictly drawn boundaries that violating group laws was considered a serious matter. Undertones of the seriousness of this offence come out as the author of 1 John address himself to the secessionist's attacks.

Children by virtue of their birth and belonging knew their obligations. Together with the rest of family members they were to emulate the example of the head and reciprocate this by showing loyalty, respect and obedience of a kind, which committed their individual honour without limit and without compromise (Malina 1981:40).

The picture that has just been painted of what family life was like is only a description of certain aspects that we will focus on, within the broad framework of the Mediterranean context. The intention in this thesis is not to provide a more detailed description than the picture we have already given, which we believe embraces the world of 1 John as well. We also believe that what is found in John is to a large extent similar to what was found in the ancient Mediterranean world (Van der Watt 1999:493).

4.6 God the Father

The concept of father is a powerful symbol in most cultures (Rees 1986:16). Father, according to Jung is an emotion-charged image. Jung further described such emotion-charged images as archetypes. Archetypes are dynamic nuclei of the psyche, which have an enormous impact and affect people differently (in Rees 1986:16).

In 1 John this emotion charged symbol is used to represent God. The question posed in chapter three regarding the meaning of father is pertinent here. It is our contention that it's meaning was dictated by the context in which it was used. The author took a word, which was a common social convention applicable mostly within family circles and employed it metaphorically to convey something of the nature of God. What the word 'Father' symbolises, can only be discovered and understood better within the context of family as shown in the section above.

Consequently, we intend further to discuss the Fatherhood of God together with the role of Jesus as the Son of the Father and believers as children of

God as well as the kind of fellowship that ensues in the family of God. All these are closely interrelated and mutually bound together within the social network of family. But since in each a vast array of factors needs to be covered, they will therefore be discussed separately. Their interrelatedness means that in some areas overlapping cannot be avoided.

Coetzee (1993:218) notes that in 1 John the name ‘God’ (θεός) occurs more than sixty times and ‘Father’ (πατέρ) is mentioned twelve times. Both these are used interchangeably and as result they will not be discuss separately but together. But before proceeding any further, let us first, start by listing all the phrases in which ‘father’ is mentioned in this letter and then engage in a discussion about the fatherhood of God in 1 John.

- * τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα (1 Jn 1:2)
- * ka¹ koinwn. a dē¹ 1 netšra net| toà patrŌs (1 Jn 1:3)
- * παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα (1 Jn 2:1)
- * ἐὰν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ (1 Jn 2:15)
- * ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἢ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἢ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἢ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βου οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς (1 Jn 2:16)
- * αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν (1 Jn 2:22)
- * πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱόν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα οὐδεὶς ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱόν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει (1 Jn 2:23)
- * καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε. (1 Jn 2:24)

- * ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ ἵνα τεκνία θεοῦ κληθῶμεν (1 Jn 3:1)
- * καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ πατήρ ἀπέσταλκεν τὸν υἱὸν σωτήρα τοῦ κόσμου (1 Jn 4:14)
- * καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ (1 Jn 5:1).

Even though the number of occurrence of each word cannot be used as a strong base for one's argumentation, but it does in some way give some indication as to the centrality of certain words. The number of occurrences shows clearly that the author of 1 John laid particular emphasis on the self-revelation of God the Father (Coetzee 1993:219). 'Father', functions, to quote James Fernandez's words (1972:42), like an 'organising metaphor' in that in this letter it implicitly or explicitly is the focus of everything that the author describes.

Caird (1980:153) describes the word 'father' as a commissive metaphor. He says that when we call God 'Father', we commit ourselves to filial dependence and obedience. In 1 John 3:1 for the first time a syntactical and contextual link between 'Father' and 'God' is laid. Also in 2 and 3 John we find this link in the words 'from God the Father' which confirms the identification between God and Father (Van der Watt 1999:495).

In 1 John there is a symbolic transfer of characteristics and duties pertaining to human fathers in the Mediterranean world to God. By speaking of God as Father, family language is activated. But in this case it is used to define the new relationship between believers and God, a relationship defined (1 Jn 1:3)

above in terms of fellowship. Believers have fellowship with the Father and with his Son. The location of life-symbol with the Father-symbol, as shown in chapter three above appears to be a clear reference to the pre-existence of the Son. The Son as shown there, i.e. cola 174-175, where we have these words: καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, ὅτι ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν, is the embodiment of life. The advocate according to the author is also with the Father (1 Jn 2:1). Everything in 1 John revolves around the Father figure.

John in his gospel used the word Father synonymously for God and stressed Jesus' unique relationship with the Father (Jn 6:57; 10:30; 14:10). As the Son who has been accorded complete knowledge of God (Jn 3:35; 10:15a; 16:15a), Jesus reveals the Father and impart to his own the status of children of God. This status can only be attained through him (Jesus) (14:6; 17:25f) and can be received as a gift of divine love (1 Jn 3:1f; Jn 1:12) (Hofius 1986:620). We have alluded above to the fact that there exists between the Father and the Son a unique kind of relationship. We now turn our focus to examine that relationship.

4.6.1 The Father-Son relationship

The relationship between the Father and Son is established early in 1 John when it is said that 'our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 Jn 1:3). Here we explore this relationship further. Coetzee (1993:219) points out that the title 'Father', which is prominent in 1 and 2 John, is primarily and preponderantly used with the connotation of 'the Father of Jesus Christ'. Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father (God) and fellowship

with God is fellowship with Jesus the Son. After this initial association of the Father with the Son, expressions mentioning the Father (God) in conjunction with the Son appear repeatedly (1 Jn 1:7; 2:22, 23, 24; 3:8, 23; 4:9, 14, 15; 5:5,9, 10, 11, 13, 20).

1 John identifies Jesus closely with God (1 Jn 5:20). In fact speaking to his fellow believers, the author says, we know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true (τὸν ἀληθινόν). We are in him who is true - even in his Son Jesus Christ. This (οὗτός) is the ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴν αἰώνιος (1 Jn 5:20). The problem with this passage is that ἀληθινός in the first part of the sentence appears to be a clear reference to God. The problem arises with the second sentence. To whom does the 'this' refer? There are two possibilities here. First, it could be a reference to 'Jesus Christ' or second, to the 'true One' (i.e. Father). Brown (1994:183) asserts that the grammar favours the nearest antecedent, which here is 'Jesus Christ' who thus would be called 'true God'.

As is obvious from the text, just as God is from the beginning, Jesus is also 'from the beginning' (1 Jn 1:1), just as the Father is God, so also is the Son truly God (1 Jn 5:21). The Father cannot be separated from his Son. What the Father does the Son also does. The inseparable unity is mentioned in 1 John in the following passages,

- * αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντί χριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν (1 Jn 2:22)
- * πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱόν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα οὐδεὶς ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱόν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει (1 Jn 2:23)

* καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε. (1 Jn 2:24)

The inseparable unity between the Father and Son undergirded Jewish understanding as well as the general Mediterranean understanding of Son's relationship with his father as shown in our discussion of this institution above. John's Gospel records an incident when Jews wanted to kill Jesus because as they put it 'he not only healed on a Sabbath but also called God his own father, making himself equal with God'. (Jn 5:18).

The Gospel identifies Jesus with life and light (Jn 1:4), attributes, which in 1 John are both associated with God. In 1 Jn 1:1-2 and 5:11-12, life is associated with Jesus. Jesus, therefore, is not only the author of life; he is eternal life itself (1 Jn 5:20). He who has the Son has life (1 Jn 5:12). Reference to life in this letter, we think, is not to life in general but to life as was made manifest. John claims first hand experience when he says, 'and we saw it, and bear witness to it, and proclaim it to you' (1Jn 1:2). We may deduce from this that it is Jesus to whom witness is borne and who is proclaimed (Morris 1970:1261).

The pre-existence as well as the unity between the Son and the Father is also emphasised in the Gospel of John, where Jesus is described as the Word (λόγος) that was in the beginning with God and the λόγος that was God (Jn 1:1). Suggit (1993:29) points out that the word λόγος has more than one meaning, referring both to a person's thought, or mind, or reason and to its expression in speech and action. He further states that by using this title of Jesus, the Fourth Gospel helped the church recognise the unity between

Father and Son in the Godhead. Therefore just as God could never be thought of without his mind, or purpose (λόγος), so he could never be thought of without his Son, the Lord Christ, who became a human being on a particular day in the world's history (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 4:2).

Jesus is the full embodiment of God and has come to reveal God's will and character. The relationship between God and his Son Jesus Christ can be described in terms of closeness as well as interactional. Regarding what the Son does, 1 John describes him in functional terms. He is eternal life (1 Jn 1:2), He is righteous (1 Jn 2:2,29; 3:7); he is without sin (1 Jn 3:5) and he is pure (1 Jn 3:3).

Stott (1984:86) points out that the righteousness; purity and sinlessness of Christ's character are mentioned several times, directly or indirectly, in this letter (2:6,29; 3:3,5,7). It is self-evident that only through a righteous Saviour could humanity be cleansed from all unrighteousness. As the truth (1 Jn 5:20) he reveals (1 Jn 1:1) in order to give understanding (1 Jn 5:20) (Van der Watt 1999:502). He is also described as the παράκλητος (1 Jn 2:1), and the ἰλασμος (1 Jn 2:2).

The example of purity of Christ's life and his obedience to his Father beckons all the children of God to be obedient to God's command and ultimately to the command to love one another which is seen by John as a source of the believer's ethical behaviour. Emphasised in the previous chapter was the fact that obedience is a prerequisite to remaining in fellowship with God and the

rest of the community. It is also a criterion for knowledge of God and of correct behaviour for members of God's family.

Those of God's family ought to know that everyone who does what is right is born of God (1 Jn 2:29). Jesus is the one who reveals the true qualities of God and sets the example of how members of God's family should act and behave. Therefore, they ought to walk in the same way in which he walked (1 Jn 2:6). This statement already points to the kind of behaviour that is commensurate with belonging to God's family. The Father and the Son are the determinants of that behaviour.

In 1 John (3:8) Jesus the 'Son of God' is presented as someone who in this cosmos stands up for the interests of the οἶκος of his father. He acts as representative of this οἶκος. In the text where mention of the Son is made, this is linked with the metaphor of 'envoyship'. Jesus is in this world as Son of the οἶκος of the father-God, the envoy of his father (1 Jn 4:14) (Van Tilborg 1996:55). The purpose or reason for the coming of the Son into the world was in order that sin, which is the work of the devil, might be destroyed (1 Jn 4:8) and a fellowship with God be established. It is therefore through Christ that a fellowship in which there is common life has been established.

Pittinger's words (1970:142) are apt when he says, 'God's purpose was to accomplish through Christ, with his historical focusing of human existence at that point and under those circumstances which were his, the possibility and the actuality of a fellowship whose quality is precisely love-in-action'. Shorter (1973:95) puts it this way that the second person of the Trinity is the

imago patris, the symbol of the Father, who in the incarnation was not simply masquerading in human nature, but really made human nature a symbol of God. Christ's incarnation has revolutionised our humanity and broken sin's hold on us.

Another important feature of 1 John has to do with the status of 'Son'. If Jesus is the Son and all believers are children of God, how should the relationship between them be viewed? Do they enjoy equal status? In terms of 1 John the status of 'Son' is reserved for Jesus alone. He is τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ. Μονογενῆς distinguishes the Son from the rest of the children of God. A shift is observable when reference is made to believers. The word 'children' (τεκνία), which lacks the connotation of special rights and status implied by 'Son' (Hurtado 1992:271) is used. The status of 'children of God' can only be received as a gift of divine love (1 Jn 3:1) (Hofius 1986:620).

4.6.2 Fellowship with the Father and his Son

Κοινωνία (fellowship) is a symbol, which the author has used in relation to the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ and believers. According to Philip (1988:254) the word with the root κοιν- is variously translated in the English versions of the New Testament as 'fellowship', 'communication', 'contribution', and 'communion', 'having a share in', i.e. 'participating in' or 'giving a share'.

What does the author mean by this symbol? Painter (1979:119) argues that among heretics, fellowship was understood in terms of a subjective mystical experience lifting a person out of the tensions of historical existence,

dispensing with the necessity of the historical revelation in Christ and the necessity of ethical conduct. Schattenmann (1986:639), however, points out that *κοινωνία* in 1 John 1:3,6,7 does not refer to a mystical fusion with Christ and God, but to fellowship in faith. Kysar (1986:36-37) believes that ‘fellowship’ (*κοινωνία*) is the author’s word for the saving relationship between humans and God made possible in Christ (cf. 1 Jn 1:3). It is another form of the more frequent expression ‘to be in’ and ‘to abide in’ (1 Jn 2:5,6). Whether one uses fellowship, communion or community, we believe all embody the idea of participating in. For this reason these terms will also be used interchangeably.

In his prologue 1:1-4 (cola 1-3), which was dealt with in chapter three, the author presents as the ultimate goal of proclamation the *κοινωνία μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς*. But this *κοινωνία* is made real because the father takes its entire initiative, the initiative which finds its expression in the sending of the Son as life into the world (Panikulam 1979:134). The proclamation of what was seen and heard and touched brings about *κοινωνία* (fellowship) between the ‘we’ (the tradition bearers) and the ‘you’ (the community) (Brown 1982:185). Brown (1982:185) further points out two noteworthy suppositions by the author: the ‘we’ is already in *κοινωνία* with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:3) and the rest are not. *Κοινωνία*, like *ζωή* (*ζωὴν αἰώνιον*) belongs to the realm of God.

Believers, by responding to the message proclaimed to them are received into the new family of God and begin to enjoy the *κοινωνία*, which exists between the Father and the Son and the tradition bearers. The author claims

that the divine act brings about fellowship, cleansing, forgiveness and love among those who understand it. To embrace this has certain inescapable implications for the way one lives, the most important of which are continual reliance on God for forgiveness of sins and a loving posture towards other believers. The purification from sin gets a clear mention in relation to κοινωνία in 1 Jn 1:7 (Panikulam 1979:133).

Edwards (1996:71) believes that in 1 John the emphasis is on ‘community’, which she applies in the sense of ‘fellowship’ or ‘communion’. Moltmann (1983:98) sees ‘community’ as emanating from the unity that exists within the Trinity (1 Jn 1:3). He says that the divine community is shaped by the mutual relationship of the divine persons themselves. This is the foundation of community or communion.

Scott Peck (1987:59) suggests the restriction of the word ‘community’ to a specifically defined group. He says that if the word ‘community’ is to be used meaningfully it must be restricted to a group of individuals. These are individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other, make other's conditions our own. A community such as Scott Peck describes, is possible only within the divine economy, that is, a community in fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:3). It is this unity in community, which is sought by humans in their community with one another, a unity, which is anticipated and overshadowed in their love towards another. (Moltmann-Wendel and Moltmann 1983:98).

Furthermore, the fellowship which believers share with one another is dependent on the fellowship, which they share with God and Christ. It is also dependent upon their remaining in community or fellowship with God, their being forgiven of sin and walking in the light. Reference to the anti thesis of light and darkness was made in the previous chapter. Here we note that all this has been wrapped up so skilfully by the author in the package of light/darkness metaphor (Kysar 1986:51). Light and darkness represent two opposite poles. Light is a quality belonging to deity and therefore representing goodness and godliness. Darkness as an antithesis of light symbolises all that is contrary to goodness and godliness hence its association with evil and evilness.

To walk in the light, which in the context of 1 John means receiving God's revelation of Himself through His Son, and receiving eternal life and forgiveness of sins (Baylis 1992:222), to lead one's life according to the self revelation of God in love, to keep God's commandments, which include loving one's brethren, results in the true κοινωνία which is purified continuously (καταρτίζει) by the blood of Jesus Christ (Panikulam 1979:133).

Those who are of the devil and therefore walk in darkness have no such fellowship with God and cannot be in community with him and with other fellow human beings. Truth is of God and can only be realised if the believer lives in fellowship with God who is Light. God as the source of light determines the behavioural pattern that believers have to follow. They 'ought to walk as he (Christ) walked' (2:6) and that would affirm their claim of being in fellowship with God. According to Baylis (1992:220), walking in the light means having life, and walking in darkness death, due to rejecting the

revelation of Christ. The life, which is received by those who appropriate for themselves the teachings of Jesus Christ, is also associated with God.

4.6.3 God and eternal life

Mention was made in chapter three to the effect that Ζωή and ζῶην αἰώνιος, are themselves symbols which in 1 John are inextricably bound to the Father (1 Jn 1:2). These symbols are used to represent the nature of God. Both Ζωή and ζῶην αἰώνιος are spoken of as ‘having appeared’. Ζωή αἰώνιος ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη (1 Jn 1:2). Ἐφανερώθη, the aorist as stated above suggesting a manifestation in a precise moment in history. The appearing of ζῶην αἰώνιος, seems to suggest much more than the ordinary kind of life, which belongs to all people. Eternal life is a reality, hence the authors claim of a sensory encounter with this reality (Brown 1982:177) – we have seen and heard (1 Jn 1:3).

There is a sense in which the author speaks of eternal life in personal terms. The personification of Ζωή αἰώνιος was alluded to in chapter three and dealt with rather briefly. Here the intention is to unpack it further. The author says that Ζωή αἰώνιος appeared ἐφανερώθη to them, it was seen and heard by them. The author claims that what they proclaim is what they have seen and heard and touched with their hands and the object of their proclamation is that the hearers should κοινῶν ἀξίητε μεθ’ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ κοινῶν ἀδεῖ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ..

Whilst Goppelt (1976:627) on the one hand agrees with the fact that *‘auch ihm (the author) geht es um Augenzeugenschaft’*. On the other hand he argues: *‘aber das Sehen, von dem er spricht (1 Jn 1, 1.3), verweist nicht auf die konkret benennbaren Augenzeugen (autoptai) von (autoptai) Lk. 1:3; Apg 1:21f, sondern gewinnt einen eigentümlich übertragenen Sinn: “Gesehen” hat nur, wer das Gesehene verstanden hat (Jn 9,39; 19,35; 20,8)’*. So seeing amounted to understanding, so that the one *‘wer verstanden hat, der hat gesehen und kann bezeugen, auch wenn er Jesus nicht mehr mit leiblichen Augen wahrgenommen hat (Jn 20:29)’* (Goppelt 1976:627).

When the statement in 1 John (1:3) is viewed in conjunction with 1 John (5:11-13), eternal life then, represents a person (Stott 1964:73)– the Son of God in whom is eternal life (1 Jn 5:11). Jesus does not only bring eternal life, he himself is the true life (1 Jn 5:20) (Link 1992:482). Eternal life is a gift of God (1 Jn 5:11), which is embodied in his Son and mediated through his Son. The Son is therefore ζωή αἰώνιος and he shares this with all that believe in him (Kistemaker 1986:220). Therefore, having the Son is tantamount to having eternal life (1 Jn 5:12) and having not the Son is equal to no life (in the realm of God). If God is the ultimate and sole reality, then life with the Father simply means openness to God and to him who makes God manifest (Bultmann 1955:19).

The life Jesus bestows cannot be terminated by death as opposed to earthly life, which is temporal. Even though there is the eschatological side of this life demonstrated by the use of αἰώνιος, it is according to 1 John a present reality here and now (1 Jn 5:12,13). By bringing in the element of faith in (1 Jn 3:23 and 5:1), the author is alluding to the fact that this gift of eternal life

(1 Jn 5:13) can only be appropriated through faith in the name of the Son of God. Life as Van der Watt (2000:201) argues functions as a constitutive element for being a part of the family of God.

Since this is a command from God (1 Jn 3: 23), entrance into this new life requires obedience (Suggit 1993:58). It could be said that in 1 John God has made ζωὴ αἰώνιος inextricably bound up with the person of Jesus and the response which people are called to make to him. To respond to him in obedience is to believe in him, and so find life (Suggit 1993:145). Believing in the Son of God affords a person knowledge that he or she has eternal life (1 Jn 5:13), implying also an existence with God here and now (van der Watt 2000:206).

The life-symbol therefore suggests that God's family exists because there is life. Without life there would be no relationship with God and no belonging to His family. Those who belong to God's family walk in the light because God is light without any shadow of darkness in him. We shall now examine below these two symbols 'light and darkness', which are metaphorically used to explain the believer's relationship to God.

4.7 God is Light and believers must walk in the light

Whereas in the Gospel of John (1:4-5, 9; 8:12) the metaphor of light is used with reference to Jesus, in 1 John it is applied to God (1 Jn 1:5). This is not surprising in view of the unique and intimate relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. In the preceding chapter it was pointed out that the relationship between the Father and Son is established right at the beginning

(see 1 Jn 1:3). In 1 John the word 'light' appears five times in the first two chapters (1:5, 7; 2:8, 9, 10) and is never used in the rest of 1 John. The light and darkness motif plays a very significant role in the narrative progression of 1 John. We argued earlier in the previous chapter that this antithetical formula serves to accentuate the criterion for distinguishing who is in fellowship with God and who is not. In other words it is used to define boundaries within which good and bad behaviour is to be determined.

The assertion that God is light is not intended as a metaphysical matter, above the earth and above time, but as a revelatory fact in salvation history and a concrete religious reality (Coetzee 1993:220). Φῶς is inextricably bound up with life. Figuratively it refers to life, life, which is highly valued as something bright, and as being comparable with salvation such that the bringer of salvation can also be referred to as φῶς (Hahn 1992:490).

God as light provides illumination in darkness, which could be viewed as bringing salvation to those who live in sin (darkness). Those who live in fellowship with God, who are members of His family, do not walk in darkness. God, who is Light, illuminates them. Light is also employed here in the context fellowship and life, which are important life symbols within the family context. Treated together, these words seem suggestive of the kind of behaviour that should obtain among members of the family of God. Light also symbolises God's holiness (Marshall 1978:109). Darkness metaphorically stands for all that is opposed to God's character.

It is striking to note that in the same sentence in which reference to God as light is made, darkness, which as an antithesis of light, is also introduced.

Van der Watt (2000:247) points out in regard to the usage of this imagery of light and darkness in John's Gospel that in a world without electricity it was realistic. Nobody is able to walk in the night. Only in the light is it possible to walk and work sure of one's way. In the dark, man is blind and cannot find his way (1 Jn 2:11; Jn 9:4; 11:9f; 12:35) (Bultmann 1955:17).

Rees (1992:89) states that in many ancient cultures, the language of symbols had developed as a system of dualities or opposites, such as light/darkness, and others such as truth/falsehood, good/evil, of the world/not of the world, Christ/antichrist, God/Devil, life/death, as is evident in 1 John. These reveal a dualistic world-view in which everything is seen as black or white (Edwards 1996:12). Within the author's symbolic universe, arguing along antithetical lines seems to have been in line with existing boundaries. One is either 'in the group' or 'out of the group'. This therefore constituted an effective method for refuting as well as defining new parameters.

According to Kysar (1976:48), early Christianity inherited this modified form of dualism from its parent body, Judaism. Lieu (1991:20) believes that in many respects 1 John can now be set against a background in Judaism such as that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly in its dualism. Bultmann (1955) stressed that this 'dualism' is characteristic of the whole Johannine corpus. This dualism, we believe, is not surprising in view of the author's Jewish background (Henry 1979:261). What is unusual as Kysar (1986:49) points out is the prominence of these pairs in the Johannine corpus.

Dualistic thought tendencies could also be observed in other Jewish and New Testament writings, and in Gnosticism (Edwards 1996:13). These antithetical

word pairs as we pointed out earlier, are used by the author to make clear his theological and ethical orientation and to engender maximal reception in his readers and to force a guided course of action (Neufeld 1994:57).

Haas et al (1972:33) assert that ‘to walk’ (περιπατεῖν) is the author’s Semitic use of the verb in the sense of ‘to pursue a way of life’ or ‘to live’, ‘to conduct oneself’. Kysar (1986:37) has put it so succinctly that ‘to walk’ means to live out one’s life in concrete behaviour (1 Jn 1:7; 2:6,11). The introduction of the ethical metaphor of walking and the antithesis of light and darkness serve to represent good and bad behaviour in relation to members of the Johannine community (Hutaff 1994:413).

The combination of περιπατεῖν with light and darkness provides a pregnant imagery (Van Der Watt 1999:504). God as light does not only supersede the world’s light but He makes the world bright (in a spiritual sense) so that it is possible for people to see and walk (live) in the light. Simply recognising the light is not sufficient, we have to walk in it, for he who is light does not want mere admirers, but believing followers (Hahn 1986:494).

‘Walking in the light’ or ‘living in the light’ as has been mentioned above has ethical dimensions. Ethical dimensions are apparent also in 1 John 2:8-11 (Stott 1988:77), where darkness is said to be vanishing because ‘the true light is already shining’. To walk in the light, therefore, is to live out the implications of God’s character and action. With the Son of God, Jesus Christ, light has come into the world (Brown 1965:110) so it is possible for people to walk in the light because they have witnessed this exemplified in him.

Bultmann (1971:53) describes Christ as the proper, authentic light, who alone can fulfil the claim to give existence the proper understanding of itself. Believers have to be in a close relationship with the Father who is light. Here again is demonstrated the inextricable relationship between this symbol and those already discussed. The believer's actions should be in conjunction with those of God who is light. Professing a relationship with God while concretely living a life, which does not demonstrate that relationship, is a lie (*ψευδομοι*) (Kysar 1986:37). It is tantamount to living a life devoid of truth (1 Jn 1:6).

Since light and truth belong to God, those who live in fellowship with God know - οἶδατε the truth and that no lie is 'of the truth' (1 Jn 2:21; 3:19). The kind of knowledge that the author is referring to here is one that would exist among members of a particular symbolic universe. The symbolic universe being referred to is one the author has been desperately trying to build, or convince his readers that it now exists for members of God's family. 'Of the truth', therefore, is synonymous with 'to be of God' (1 Jn 3:10; 4:1f; 5:19 cf. Jn 7:17; 8:47) (Bultmann 1955:19). The author presumes that the Johannine Community understands that their being in fellowship binds up all that is good for them as the community with God. As was true of members of ancient Mediterranean families, people who are in fellowship with God who is light, who belong to God's family, are expected to act in a manner that does not negate or contradict 'being of the truth'.

Claims to relationship with God must be backed up with appropriate behaviour (Hutaff 1994:414). Appropriate behaviour is a prerequisite for communion with God and one another (1 Jn 1:7). Inappropriate behaviour

precludes ‘communion’ with God (Hutaff 1994:414). Therefore, being in fellowship with God (as his children) defines their ultimate social identity; it limits and motivates their behaviour (Petersen 1985:200-201).

4.8 The Children of God

Τεκνῶ α or τεκνῶ α θεοῦ - Children of God between cola 67 to 71 suggests a close relationship of believers to God. We mentioned that the status ‘of children of God’ is a gift of divine love, it is a gift, which is appropriated through faith. Faith describes a decision to accept Jesus leading to a relationship. Faith, in the context of this passage, means accepting the veracity of the claim that ‘Jesus is the Christ’, ‘the Son of God’ (1 Jn 5:1,5; Jn 6:69; 8:24; 11:27; 16:27; 20:31) (Dunn 1990:27). The author stresses the reality of Jesus’ humanity (1 Jn 4:3; 5:6-8; Jn 1:14; 6:51-58; 19:34f). It is clear that this emphasis was due to the changed circumstances and the secessionist’s challenge that they were facing.

Oepke (1992:653) makes the important observation that in the Johannine literature a consistent linguistic distinction is maintained between Jesus as the Son of God (ὁ υἱος τοῦ θεοῦ) and believers as the children of God (τα τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ) (as in Jn 1:12; 11:52 cf. 1 Jn 3:1-2, 10; 5:2) (in Burton 1992:103). By employing the genitive –τέκνα θεοῦ, the author identifies Johannine believers as belonging to God. They originate from God and are God’s possession by right because he has granted them the right to be his children (1 Jn 3:1). In John’s Gospel (1:12) the right to be children of God is dependent upon belief (faith) in his name. Becoming children of God is not effected through any human agency; it is solely the work of God (1 Jn 3:1; Jn

1:13). Through their believing in Christ they are united with him, and by a new and heavenly birth enter into the family of God (Bruce 1985:159).

Believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, leads to life (Dunn 1990:28) and thus to the constitution of a new family. There is a figurative movement from the earthly family to the heavenly family i.e. the new family of God. The movement, which is initiated through faith, is described in terms of passing out of death into life (1 Jn 3:14; 5:12 see also John 3:36; 5:24; 11:25f) so that those who stand opposed to God live in the realm of death than life. Being of the world means living in the realm of death and entry into God's realm symbolises salvation and life.

Even though ζωὴ αἰώνιος - life and earthly life can be found in the same person, eternal life is a quality of those belonging to the new family of God, to the children of God. In this new relationship, God is the Father and believers are his children. His children are defined in terms of being γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. To his children God gives the gift of eternal life (1 Jn 2:25; 3:14-15; 5:11-13), which he mediates through his Son (1 Jn 5:13). Let us explore a bit this notion of birth. What was the author's understanding of birth that he should employ this to describe the believer's new relationship with God?

4.8.1 Birth (γεννάω)

4.8.1.1 Birth in the ancient Mediterranean context

In order to provide background information to this notion of birth as reflected in 1 John, it is necessary to explore the understanding of birth in the ancient Mediterranean cultural context. Before any person becomes part of the larger social entity, one is born into a family, which is a microcosm of the larger whole-society. Γεννώω indicates the point where the life and status of a person as a 'child' starts within a particular family, giving him or her an 'open future' of life within that family (Van der Watt 1999:149). The child has no choice in the matter; it is so only by divine providence. Malina (1981:40) puts it so succinctly that one is born physically and symbolically into the group, and there is nothing one can do about it.

Birth is important in determining a person's identity as well as honour, that is one's position within a social reality (Van der Watt 1999: 140). One belongs by blood to the group and this obliges the person to respect, observe, and maintain the boundary lines, the definitions, the order within the group (Malina 1981:40). Through birth, one is placed within a social reality and his/her relation to other members of family is therefore well defined (Van der Watt 1999:494). As Malina and Neyrey (1991:28) state, birth indicated social position.

The father as head of the family was the point of reference. Everything else revolved around him and he was the embodiment of all that the family stood for (Malina 1981:40). Members of his household were obliged to honour and respect him. Any action to the contrary constituted a great offence punishable in a variety of ways. The Hebrew understanding embodied the idea that dishonourable action towards the father equals dishonouring God, who is represented in the institution.

4.8.1.2 Birth in 1 John

The discussion started in cola 67-71 in chapter three regarding children and their birth of God is pursued here. In the Johannine corpus, being born ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ indicates the source and manner of birth (Morris 1974:101). As stated in the previous chapter birth describes the act, which leads to membership of God's family. In 1 John (3:9) the author employs the 'birth metaphor' taken from family language to describe the new relationship between believers and God. The birth ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ indicates the figurative, but analogical nature of birth. What happens to a person when he starts to believe is associated with what happens to a person when he is born naturally (Van der Watt 2000:185).

Reference in chapter three above that the believer is 'born of God' (γεγέννημενος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) (1 Jn 3:9) punctuates this birth as being of course different from physical birth. Being born again (Jn 3:3, 7), or born 'from above' (ἄνωθεν, Jn 3:7) express essentially the same thing (Ringwald 1986:179). A question that should be asked is in relation to the usage of the genitive γεγέννημενος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. Could this be a reference to possession i.e. ownership by God or origin from God?

There is a sense in which both ideas are present in 1 John. By the usage of the genitive, the identity of the believers is firmly established. The identity and worth of each person is defined as part of the larger whole (Schofield 1964:96), the family of God. What this implies is that there is a direct link between God and the believer. The believer's origin is traceable directly from

God. The believer is by virtue of birth rooted and related to God as a child is to a parent (Kysar 1986:70). By using *ek*/from, the author indicates the nature of the person as well as the nature of his or her actions (Van der Watt 2000:185). The second idea of origin or source is also encapsulated in the use of *ek*/from. The believer, therefore, belongs to God and is God's possession.

Birth and acceptance into the family automatically means that the child stands in a specific, well-defined relationship to the Father of the family (Van der Watt 1999:495). As is obvious the author has metaphorically defined this relationship between God and the believer in terms of the most intimate social phenomenon in the ancient world, namely, the family (Van der Watt 1999:494). By so doing, he has managed to represent the new reality, that is, the reality of belonging to the heavenly family of God. Belonging to the heavenly family is God's gift; therefore, those who possess it must live by the moral way, which it demands (Houlden 1973:23).

Even though in 1 John (unlike in John's Gospel) faith is not stipulated as a condition for belonging to God's family, there is a sense in which faith is implied. In fact one cannot enact behaviour appropriate to one's membership, unless faith is the driving force. Faith here means accepting and acknowledging the veracity of Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh (1 Jn 4:2).

In 1 John, faith is also an imperative from God. Believers are commanded to 'believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ' (1 Jn 3:23). Obedience to this command leads to fellowship with God and his Son, the fellowship that was expected among members of the Johannine Christian community. Faith in Christ is basic for the child of God for that faith gives him or her victory in

opposing and overcoming the world (1 Jn 5:4) (Kistemaker 1986:219). Since faith and love are seen together in an indissoluble unity, it can be said boldly that his commandments are not burdensome (1 Jn 5:3) (Lohse 1991:168).

Believers have through faith become members of God's family. This is the case because it is of the nature of God to invite people into fellowship. The strength of the divine life does in fact reflect itself in true community and takes human community up into itself (Moltmann-Wendel and Moltmann 1983:98). It is because of this divine involvement within the community that there remains something about it that is inherently mysterious, miraculous and unfathomable (Scott Peck 1987:60).

God's children through birth have entered into a new reality, a new world, and a new family. They have acquired a new identity and a new motive for their behaviour hence our saying that identity and the close relationship between the Father and believers has ethical implications and issues in right behaviour (1 Jn 1:6; 2:3-4,5,29; 3:6,11,22,24; 4:20-21; 5:3,18). As Bruce (1985:159) rightly points out, those who belong to this family, bear the family likeness i.e. they reproduce the character of Christ, who displays the character of God.

Those who are 'born of God', who have the Spirit of God instilled in their hearts (Klauck 1991:194), who have a 'Godly identity' have communion or fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:6), know Jesus (1 Jn 2:4), abide in Jesus (1 Jn 2:6). They walk (live), in the light (1 Jn 2:10), love God (1 Jn 4:20), live righteously and do not commit sin (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:18); they believe that

Jesus is the Christ (5:1), and they are victorious over and guarded against evil (1 Jn 5:5, 18. Cf. John 1:13; 3:3-8; 8:39-44) (Kysar 1986:70).

What makes the view of the author of 1 John so distinctive is his insistence that it is the moral quality of one's life, which determines one's parentage (Kysar 1986:70). In the Johannine circle the distinction between believer and unbeliever is clear-cut (1 Jn 2:4,23; 3:6,9f, 14f; 4:5f). Acting in terms of right behaviour is not a matter of choice for God's children, it is demanded by their identity and it shows where they belong (1 Jn 3:7-10).

Kotze (1979:69), however, thinks that 1 John (3:7-10) describes dualistically, on the one hand the positive moral life of the one born of God and on the other hand the negative moral life of those of the devil - those who are not of God. Their behaviour is obviously incompatible with that belonging to the children of God. They walk in darkness (1 Jn 1:6), they fail to keep Jesus' commandments (1 Jn 2:4,6), they fail to love their brothers and sisters (1 Jn 2:9; 3:15; 4:20), which equals failure to love God.

Birth into the family of God, which is a God-given thing (Klauck 1991:195) as shown in chapter three above, defines their moral relation to God. The author can with absoluteness say that those who are 'born of God' (3:9), in whom God's nature ($\chi\pi\hat{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$) abides (Guthrie 1981:932) do not sin, by which he means that they will not live in a continual state of sin. Ladd (1974:614) believes that the meaning (which is brought out by the present tense - $\pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\hat{\iota}$) may well be that the one who is born again cannot continue to live in sin because a new principle of life has been implanted in him. Through this

divinely implanted spiritual rebirth believers enter into the family of God, so that they truly are children of God (Hiebert 1989:201).

Klauck (1991:195) points out that to say that those born of God do not even possess the ability to sin, is a bold hazardous statement, difficult to understand and in direct conflict with what he said in 1 Jn 1:8,10. Wengst (1978:140) asks whether the author is not describing an ideal knowing very well that it cannot be realised. His answer to this is that in view of what is said in verse 8 that Christ came to destroy the work of the devil, what the author is describing is not just an ideal or possibility, it is a reality. However this is a statement of faith by a believer who knows his or her identity and who remains in the fellowship (Wengst 1978:141).

The author can speak in such terms for he knows that all members of God's family know him as the Father and head of the new family. As head of the group (family) he is responsible for the honour of the group with reference to outsiders, and symbolises the group's honour as well (Malina 1981:40). Any honour on the side of believers is derived from the head. Their duty therefore is to act according to what the head approves. By virtue of their noble birth they owe him loyalty, respect, and obedience of a kind, which commits their individual honour without limit and without compromise (Malina 1981). In a culture where individual identity was defined in terms primarily of the household group to which they belonged, it was inevitable that allegiance to God or to Jesus as 'Χριστὸς' would have an effect on family ties and family life (Barton 1992:226).

The metaphor of birth, which on the one hand encapsulates the ethical demands of belonging to a heavenly family, serves also a vital social function of differentiating the children of God from those who are not. This metaphor therefore describes and defines the new spiritual relationship between the Father (God) and his children. God's children cannot sin. We shall now focus on what the author means by this expression 'God's children cannot sin' (1 Jn 3:9).

4.8.1.3 What does the statement in 1 John 3:9 mean?

In chapter three above (para 76-89) we saw that sin constitutes a dominant theme, and distinguishes those who are ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου (John 8:5) and not of God. Van der Watt (1999:497) says that a true child remains focused on acting according to his identity, he harbours no thought of acting contrary to his identity and thus harming or disgracing his family. The child does this out of gratitude because parents gave life to him/her and cared for the child (Malina et al 1996:28). Van der Watt (1999:497) further notes that it is in this context that the statement 'the child of God cannot sin' should be understood.

The enormity of the responsibility that one's identity places upon the him or her, to honour, obey, respect and be loyal, makes it difficult for the author to imagine how a person with this kind of knowledge could jeopardise his/her position within the family. He therefore, states his belief with such absoluteness. The child of God 'cannot' or 'will not' or 'does not want to' or 'does not think of' (Van der Watt 1999:497) because God's nature abides in him (Guthrie 1981:932).

The author appears to be absolute about the fact that children of God can no longer sin. According to the author this assertion of the impossibility of the child of God to commit sin holds true only with the condition that the Christian abides in him (Christ) (1 Jn 3:6) (Wengst 1978:141). According to Klauck (1991:195) '*tut keine Sünde*' in 9b implies a factual conditioning (*faktischen Zustand*) and if it is a factual conditioning, then Klauck argues that it is possible to resist sin and remain *sündenfrei*.

Kümmel (1973:297) points out that in spite of the impossibility for the believer to sin, 1 John does reckon with the reality of believers committing sin (1 Jn 2:1; 3:20; 5:16). In fact the problem of sin among believers is acknowledged very early in 1 John (1 Jn 1:8,10). He is aware that believers do sin thus acting contrary to the knowledge they already possess and that through such action the whole network of relationship is disturbed (Van der Watt 1999:498).

Given this human failure to act in accordance with what one knows, the author re-iterates what is already common knowledge within his symbolic universe. He is aware that they already know what he is saying hence 'I do not write to you because you do not know the truth but because you know it' (1 Jn 2:21). In view of the impending danger posed by secessionist groups, facts must be brought continually to remembrance. There must be a constant harping on the facts in order to refocus his readers on what their new identity means.

The repetition by the author of what they already know is meant to jog their memory. According to Malherbe (1992:280) objections were raised in antiquity to the paraenetic practice of addressing precepts to someone who

already knew what was being advised. These objections were countered by Seneca who stated that to point out the obvious is not superfluous, but does a great deal of good; for we sometimes know the facts without paying attention to them (in Malherbe 1992:281).

4.9 God is Love and believers must love one another

God apart from being light is also described metaphorically as love (ἀγάπη) (1 Jn 4:8). The author uses the love metaphor in almost the same manner as light to describe the nature and actions of God. Why did the author find this an appropriate image for describing God? What is love? The answer to the latter question is provided in the text itself. 1 John 3:16 says: by this we know love that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. God's love in this passage is described in functional terms i.e. in terms of what he has done in Christ for humanity. Love is not a virtue that human beings must achieve for themselves (Verryn 192:251). Shorter (1973:91) sees love as a symbol for something indefinable in our relationship with God, something that we shall not fully comprehend even when we enjoy the beatific vision.

In cola 130-133, the author's hortatory injunction is stated in antithetical terms. We pointed out above the author's fondness to argue in antithetical terms. This form of argumentation he follows throughout this letter. Here he emphasises that love has its foundation and origin in God, and that whoever loves is born of God and knows God for God is love. This injunction is grounded explicitly in the character of God and the relationship of the believer to God: for God is love and the one who loves is born of God and

knows God (Scholer 1990:310). Loving is linked to knowledge of God who is love. God's love illumines the believer when he obeys the command of God, for then he knows that he is in God (1 Jn 3:24) (Kistemaker 1986:218). Knowledge could also be seen in this context as emphasising the fact that one truly belongs to God's family hence the possession of knowledge. It is infact incredible that a member of God's family would be ignorant of God's true nature and character.

Obedience to this new commandment is the fundamental expectation and response of one who claims to love Jesus (Scholer 1990:311). Obedience belongs to those who are members of God's family. Obedience, we noted above is not the course but the proof of the fact that we dwell in God. Anyone whose behaviour is anti-social and who is disobedient to God's commandment will experience the wrath of God. The person who obeys this command loves his brother and lives in the light (1 Jn 2:10). He is the recipient of the love and light of God. The one who fails to show love but hates his brother (1 Jn 2:11) does not know God (1 Jn 4:8). Those who enjoy fellowship with God demonstrate their love and knowledge of him by showing love to the brethren.

The author of 1 John is profoundly convinced that our love is a gift from God (Schnackenburg 1965:322). It is God who lavishes his love on his children (1 Jn 3:1) and commands them to love one another (1 Jn 3:11, 14, 23). This does not refer to love for one's neighbours but - in contrast to those who have left the fellowship (1 Jn 2:19) – those who have remained in the church (Marxsen 1968:263). Love is central and the constitutive attitude of all who are members of God's family. The implications of loving one another as we noted

above have immense social dimension that just loving the brotherhood (Westcott 1966:110) The author encourages members of his sub-universe to 'love one another' (1 Jn 4:7). As stated in chapter three believers are called upon as members of God's family to reproduce in themselves God's character or family likeness.

As Marshall (1978:211) rightly points out, the author begins by grounding his appeal (to love one another) in the fact that love comes from God. It has its origin in God and belongs to the divine sphere. If love is a divine attribute and belongs to the divine sphere, then Marshall (1978:211) is right in saying that it follows that anybody who shows love must belong to that sphere and has been born of God. The child of God as a member of God's family knows God because 'He is love' (1 Jn 4:8, 10, 16). Hate as Kysar (1986:49) rightly points out is symptomatic of having one's orientation for life still within the realm of alienation from God.

Confessing to know God without appropriate behaviour is meaningless (cf.2:4) (Kysar 1986:49). Knowledge of God issues in loving actions hence the statement in 1 Jn 3:17 'But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him'. God's love is dynamic love. As Van der Watt (1999:509) states it is active not reactive love. Active love is prepared to sacrificially do things for the other person, thus expressing itself in definite outward action (Hiebert 1989:310). The initiative to demonstrate love to humanity is God's. It is God who sent - ἀπέστειλεν his only begotten Son to be an expiation for our sins (colon 136).

Love is therefore an activity, the essential activity, of God himself, so that when human beings love God and their fellow human beings they are doing (however imperfectly) what God does (Verryyn 1982:252). When love encounters a need, it is capable of determining the appropriate action that will offer genuine help (Lohse 1991:58). Loving one's brethren, therefore, means a willingness to lay down one's life for the brother or sister (Hiebert 1989:307). This willingness is equal to taking responsibility for other members of one's family (1 Jn 5:16). Christians therefore become their brothers and sister's keepers as would be expected even of members of an earthly family.

God's love which believers experience does not only transform them but it constrains them to love to one another. This command of familial love receives its specific character through its christological grounding (Lohse 1991:166). God's action in Jesus Christ serves as an example for all members of God's family not to be self-centred but to work for the well being of others (1 Jn 4:11). It is incredible that believers could experience the love of God and still remain unmoved by it to do the same. Those who love, abide in God and God in them (1 Jn 4:16). This mutual abiding between God and believers is confirmed by the presence of God's Spirit whom He gives to believers. We noted above the interrelatedness of familial terminology in 1 John, a factor which makes it difficult to discuss one concept without mentioning the other.

The above statement, that is, 1 John 3:17 also has ethical dimensions. God, who is love, has in Jesus demonstrated what love is. There is, therefore, no room for hatred among believers. Their loving disposition is the feature that distinguishes them as God's children. Those who live in love live in God and

love is made perfect in them. True love precludes fear of whatever kind because fear has to do with judgement (1 Jn 4:18) (colon 151).

The author sees the loving disposition of the children of God as a distinguishing mark between them just as hate is for the children of the devil (1 Jn 3:10). If the loving actions and will of the Father are demonstrated in the action of the Son, then, this example must be distributed among individual members of the family.

Loyalty and respect should mark the relationship and acceptance by each individual of his/her responsibility towards other members of the family. It is therefore incumbent upon each believer to think and act according to the principles of love taught by God and revealed through Jesus (Van der Watt 1999:503). The community is to be loving not only of God but also of one another (1 Jn 4:7). Christ's behaviour then, becomes a determinant and motivating force behind the believer's loving actions (see colon 136). The opposite of this is hate and hatred falls within the domain of what is described by the symbol 'sin'.

4.10 How do believers deal with the problem of sin?

4.10.1 What is sin?

Before we focus on how sin is dealt with in 1 John, it is necessary to define what is meant by the symbol 'sin'. People from various cultures use different words to define an act that deviates from the normal. Within Christendom the word 'ἁμαρτία' as a definition of any act which contravenes the will of God

or transgresses his commandments, seems to be commonly acceptable. In the context of this thesis, 'sin' is a symbolic term representing every act that deviates from that which has been objectivated as constituting 'normal or acceptable behaviour' within a particular universe.

Kysar (1986:36) defines sin as a failure to enact in behaviour one's relationship with God. Bultmann (1956:51) describes sin as disobedience against the demands of the here and now. Since those demands come from God himself, sin in the last analysis is disobedience against God. Neyrey (1990:108) defines sin not simply as a violation of rules but as pollution that invades the body and threatens to pollute its pure insides. So anything that is 'out of place' or wrong will be classified under sin in this discussion. Any action that deviates from the norm will be called deviant.

4.10.2 Sin according to 1 John

Between cola 76-86, sin is mentioned eight times thus constituting a dominant co-structural marker. We also showed that by using $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\omicron}$, the author is demonstrating the seriousness of the implications of individual belief and behaviour (Smalley 1984:158). It must be noted that in 1 John the author uses the word 'sin' without giving an explanation of what he means by it. In cases where no explanation is given, we think the author presumed the existence of a certain amount of knowledge among his audience. The author's Jewish background and the fact that as a Jew he was steeped in matters of Law had a major influence on the way he viewed sin. In fact he describes sin in such strong terms as lawlessness. In 1 John (3:4), he says that everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness (see colon 77). Sin is viewed as

ἀνομία (lawlessness) and something so insidious that it threatens the wholeness of the whole community. Because of its threatening nature to the wholeness of the community, it is as John states of the devil (1 Jn 3:8) (colon 85).

Sin is also a distinguishing feature between the children of God and those of the devil. The children of do not do-ποιεῖ sin. Sin has no hold on them ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγέννηται (colon 88.1). As children born of God they act in accord with God's law, the law of love, which stands contrary to any action that is sinful.

Anyone who sins or deviates challenges the symbolic universe as originally defined and constituted. When the symbolic universe of any society is being threatened, society devises a variety of ways by which it deals with sin and any kind of force that threatens its wholeness. In fact there are checks and balances by which sin and deviation are checked. But when a society is confronted with a problem sharper than its conceptual machinery can make sense of, it is presented with a challenge of setting in motion various conceptual machineries (Berger and Luckmann 1966:107) designed for maintaining or integrating the new viewpoint or isolating the deviant point of view.

The early church confronted with the problem of heresy had to move swiftly. It had to find ways of defining the parameters of what they believed and of developing conceptual machinery that was appropriate for the problem at hand, and capable of maintaining their symbolic universe. By maintenance of the symbolic universe we do not refer to keeping the status quo but a way of

making sure that reality is integrated, explained and legitimated. In a situation of confrontation, it is hard to remain uninfluenced by the challenging phenomenon. Usually there is a dynamic interaction of giving and taking which involves a systematic assimilation of that which can be integrated easily without causing an upset to the symbolic universe and an exclusion of aspects of the challenging sub-universe that would be out of place. There are however according to each culture of family a variety of steps that precede such a drastic step as exclusion. We discuss below one such step.

4.10.3 Ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν (1 Jn 1:9)

We noted in the foregoing chapter that each and every family has boundaries within which members operate. Malina et al (1996:47) state that in the first century Mediterranean world there were clear boundaries between group members and outsiders. These boundaries were necessary in defining appropriate behaviour for group members. A Jew had to behave in a manner commensurate with Jewish rules and customs. 1 John as we have shown in our discussion of the various symbols is about boundaries. Members of the family of God know the things that are appropriate for them and they do not step beyond set boundaries.

It is true also that in the New Testament boundaries are set aside in order to admit all who believe into a new and better group, the Jesus group, making them part of the family of God (Malina et al 1996:47-48). Whilst old boundaries were removed in order to be accommodative to new members, it is also true that new boundaries were erected to define those who belonged and those who did not belong. Above we mentioned that 1 John is about setting

boundaries and that is demonstrated by the author himself who devotes a lot of his energy defining new boundaries for members of the new family of God.

Sin, therefore is viewed seriously in 1 John. It was not an individual affair since it disrupted not only fellowship with God but with the family /community as well. By committing sin the wholeness of the family is put at risk. As a result the person who sinned is not only estranged from him or herself but from his immediate family, from the community and from God.

If relationships are disturbed due to sin, how is the situation remedied?

By using a series of six conditional clauses in 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, and 16 both the negative and positive statements are made vivid. Central to this section is the author's emphasis on confession and forgiveness. The solution to the problem as suggested in 1 John 1:9 ἔὰν ὁ μολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν (1 Jn 1:9). The solution is not to deny sin but to confess it (Painter 1986: 53), that is, acknowledging one's fault and declaring again one's loyalty to the will and commandments of one's Father and family (Van der Watt 1999:498). Sin disturbs the κοινωνία that exists between believers and God and must therefore be eradicated. In 1 John, κοινωνία is a favourite term to describe the living bond in which the Christian stands (Painter 1986:54). Therefore, if sin is confessed (colon 12), God acts according to his faithfulness, which lies in his adherence to his promises that he will forgive his people (Marshall 1978:114) (see also colon 12.1 and 12.2) and κοινωνία or holiness will be restored.

The Jewish socio-religio-cultural background provides a reservoir of knowledge, which may shed light on how sin and deviation was dealt with.

In the Old Testament the expiation of guilt and pollution was effected especially through blood sacrifices of the sin- (and guilt-) offering (Fryer 1979:9). The offering of a guilt offering is to afford the transgressor an opportunity for confessing his/her sin. John grew up within a culture that had highly developed machinery for dealing with sin.

On the great Day of Atonement, the High priest performed the ritual of expiation prescribed in Leviticus 16. He first had to sacrifice a goat for the expiation of his own sins and then conferred the sins of the people upon a second goat and sent it out into the desert (Heb 7:1 -10:18) (Lohse 1976:157). By placing his hands on the victim, man transferred his sins and life-principle to the animal (Ubruhe 1996:14). The idea of confession was therefore a well-established phenomenon within John's cultural context. There was vicariousness in the role assigned to the goat and that role the author transfers to Christ (1 Jn 2:2; 3:16).

4.10.4 The centrality of blood in the removal of sin

In the foregoing chapter we noted that the idea of cleansing with the blood of Jesus is mentioned in the context of fellowship. The blood of Jesus as we mentioned functions in a cultic sense, bringing obviously into mind as Westcott (1966:34) rightly points out the place occupied by blood in the Jewish sacrifices and the connection with the general conception attached to it throughout the Pentateuch. The idea of sacrifice is, therefore, central in both the Old and New Testaments. It is also central to most cultures of Africa.

What needs to be noted is that in sacrificing, it is the life (blood) of the victim that is made sacred by the consecration and not the flesh, which the sacrificers eat (Ubruhe 1996:14). Westcott (1966:34-5) claims that its atoning virtue lies not in its material substance but in the life of which it is the 'vehicle'. The idea of the cleansing of sin through blood was therefore, part and parcel of John's symbolic universe (1 Jn 1:7) (see colon 9).

In many cultures blood equals life. Blood is the substance of life, its spilling brings death. As a symbol 'blood' represents the place where life and death meet, and because it marks the frontier between life and death, it has often been a pathway of communication between people and God (Rees 1986:47).

The ideas underlying this statement are that blood is life (cf. Gen 9:4) and therefore sacred, have their background in the Old Testament (Lev 17:11). Release of life through death and by the sprinkling of blood the victim (and the sinners who identify themselves with the victim) is brought into the presence of God (Montefiore 1964:155,156; Ubruhe 1996:15). Sacrificing is an attempt to bridge the chasm between our world and God, to reach into the unseen world where God lives, where human words cannot reach far enough. The sacrifice is transformed as it crosses the boundary between the two worlds (Rees 1986:47).

The idea of cleansing with blood is used by the author without questioning it (colon 9). He presumes the availability of this common stock of knowledge among members of his community as he draws from it and applies this knowledge to the new situation. The imagery of cleansing with blood in 1 John reflects sacrificial terminology from the Levitical practices of Israel. In

accordance with the typical teaching of the Levitical ordinances the blood of Christ represents Christ's life (Westcott 1966:35).

The present passage, however, does not specify the circumstances under which the cleansing takes place (Brown 1982:203-204). What is obvious is that the role of the victim that had to be slaughtered is now attributed to Jesus. It is his blood that cleanses from sin (1 Jn 1:8). Marshall (1978:112) contends that mentioning of 'Blood' is a symbolic way of speaking of the death of Jesus. In many ancient cultures including those of Africa, blood seems to have played a very symbolic and significant role within each universe. Its significance in spite of the influence of Christianity does not seem to be waning.

Other attestations to the usage of blood in the New Testament other than in 1 John or the Gospel abound. All of them bear witness to the sacrificial or redemptive understanding of the blood of Jesus. We will mention just a few: To him who has loved us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (Rev 1:5). For you were slain and by your blood you ransomed men for God (Rev 5:9). They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb (Rev 7:14). In the letter to the Hebrews (9:22), the writer states that under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

4.10.5 Confession of sin

The link between confession and the idea of cleansing with blood is not only pertinent within the context of 1 John but also prevalent in many cultures.

Confession and the cleansing of the sinner with blood (1 Jn 1:7-8) were two sides of the same coin. Confession as Marshall (1978:113) points out is not merely to admit that one is a sinner, but to lay one's sin before God and to seek his forgiveness. Confession of sin presupposes a relational foundation on which a confession can be made. The aim of confession is to mend or restore broken relationships. God's faithfulness is such that when sins are confessed, he forgives and cleanses from all kinds of unrighteousness (1 Jn 1:9). God's verdict is that all are sinners, and any claim to the contrary, suggests that God is a liar (1 Jn 1:10). The process of our being cleansed from sin continues within the context of fellowship with God, his Son and one another (Williams 1965:20).

The attention given to sin in this letter may probably be due to the struggle with secessionists over this question (Brown 1982:204). According to the author, believers, as children of God (1 Jn 3:1), had to obey God's commands (1 Jn 3:4-10). They had to love him and other believers (who were now their brothers and sisters), in word and deed (1 Jn 3:11-18; 4:20-21). But if they neglect to put the interest of the family first, but hate one another or refuse to share their belongings, that was, according to John, a sin, because the basic standard of the family were then ignored (1 Jn 2:9-11; 3:17-18) (Malina et al 1996:54). The picture in 1 John is not of gloom and doom. If the children of God fail in any way they are promised the help of Jesus their advocate (1 Jn 2:1).

4.10.6 Jesus the Παράκλητος (1 Jn 2:1), and the ἰλασμος (1 Jn 2:2).

There are in 1 John a number of solutions offered to the problem of sin, one of them being the promised help of the παράκλητος. Παράκλητος in 1 Jn 2:1 which represents Jesus' role in functional terms. In case believers fail to live up to the high ideal of staying without sin and they sin, they have a παράκλητος, i.e. an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, who is the ἵλασμος for our sins. Failing to live up to the high ideal is not the end of the road. In Jesus Christ believers are given another chance, He acts as their παράκλητος and ἵλασμος.

The word παράκλητος is found once in 1 John where Jesus is described as 'our Paraclete' or our heavenly intercessor with the Father (1 John 2:1).

The word itself, formed from παρὰ-καλεο, 'call to one's side/appeal to/exert/comfort/ encourage,' is variously translated as 'advocate', 'counsellor,' 'intercessor,' 'protector,' 'comforter,' or 'helper' (Brodie 1993:465), all of which are functional terms. In both Latin and Greek it literally means one 'called alongside' to the assistance of another. Marshall (1978:116; Westcott 1966:42) rightly states that 'in the present context the word undoubtedly signifies an 'advocate' or 'counsel for the defence' in a legal context'. Whether the idea of an advocate was fully developed at the time of the author's writing is a matter of debate. But we do think that something that came close to representing the role as we know it today existed.

His help was needed especially when one belonging to the family of God had sinned, the advocate pleads on his/her behalf to the Father. Stott (1968:86) states that whereas the Holy Spirit pleads Christ's cause before a hostile

world, Christ pleads our cause against our 'accuser' (Rev 12:10) and to the Father who loves and forgives his children. Ladd (1974:614) states that Jesus is our παράκλητος in heaven in the presence of God. He stands before the Father both as intercessor and defending advocate: not only does he plead for sinners, but he points out that as believers in the Son they are children of God and have a right to be forgiven by God who is their Father (Brown 1982:217). According to the letter to the Hebrews (7:24-25), Christ intercedes before the Father as priest, whereas in this letter he does that as παράκλητος (1 Jn 2:1).

Jesus is not only the παράκλητος but 1 Jn 2:2 states that he is also the ἱλασμος περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. Propitiation and expiation render ἱλασμος the Greek word alternatively. Ἰλασμος in the Septuagint is the translation of the Hebrew word for 'mercy seat' (in the temple). Scholars do not agree on the meaning of ἱλασμος in the context of 1 John. For instance the Revised Standard Version (RSV) prefers 'expiation' to 'propitiation'.

The Reader's Digest Oxford (1993:1222) defines the two words as follows: 'propitiate' trans. as to appease (an offended person); to make amends, to placate, answer, compensate, 'Expiate' as to pay the penalty for (wrongdoing); to make amends for. Fryer (1979:8) argues that the proper object of the word propitiate is a person. The term has to do with the putting right of personal relationships. It conveys specifically the idea of the averting of anger by the offering of a gift. Whereas the object of expiate is not a person, but a wrong, or sin, or a crime.

Stott (1968:89) points out that the main objection to the vocabulary of 'propitiation' is theological. It is said to conjure up notions of an irritable and capricious deity who needs to be appeased with bribes. This notion is said to be inconsistent with God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Wescott and Dodd both argued that, while in secular Greek the corresponding verb takes as its object the god who has been offended, in the Old Testament the object is the offence itself. From this they concluded that the scriptural conception is not that of appeasing one who is angry, with personal feeling, against the offender; but of altering the character of that which from without occasions a necessary alienation, and interposes an inevitable obstacle to fellowship (in Marshall 1978:117). Stott (1968:91) maintains that the ἰλασμος changes man not God; it annuls his sin and thus removes the barrier to fellowship with God.

Leon Morris who holds a contrary view, argues on the basis of linguistical constructions that in the many instances in which ἰλασκεσται is used in the LXX, it carries the meaning of propitiation. He says that the same is true in the New Testament. Therefore, if the author had in mind the idea of expiation, of which our sins were an object, he would have used a simple genitive 'the expiation of our sins'. Instead he used the preposition 'περὶ'. For that reason, the need for a ἰλασμος is seen not in our sins by themselves but 'concerning our sins', namely in God's uncompromising hostility towards them (in Stott 1968:92). Morris (1986: 289) says that like Paul, John is saying that there is a terrible thing, the wrath of God, exercised towards sinners, and that Christ's death was the means of turning that wrath from us.

If sin causes alienation and estrangement from fellowship with God, Jesus Christ's expiatory work serves to restore the sinner into fellowship with God.

Jesus the ἰλασμον is the payment required for rectifying the wrong, which had been committed. The forgiveness and cleansing of sin, while it requires the sinner to confess, is also dependent on the paraclatory and expiatory role of Jesus Christ. Without it there can be no true forgiveness. When the action or sin is too outrageous, society resorts to witchcraft accusation. The branding of the secessionist group in 1 John as the ἀντί χριστοι falls under the same category.

4.10.7 Witchcraft accusation

Witchcraft accusation is dealt with here because the author in his argumentation uses it both implicitly and explicitly. Societies have set boundaries that must be respected by every member. Every individual or group in order to ensure the support of society has to act in ways that conform to its norms and values and operate within set boundaries. If their demands or actions become too outrageous or they contravene society's set rules, they run the risk of alienation. One of the ways in which society dealt with such situations was by accusing the dissenting group of witchcraft. Neyrey (1990:182) points out that it was common practice in New Testament documents for people regularly to accuse another of sorcery and witchcraft. He further notes that such accusations occurred on the lips of the outsiders speaking of Jesus and John the Baptizer and also from the lips of Jesus and his followers.

Klauck (1988:63) states that the safeguarding of identity by a group whose existence is threatened almost necessarily goes hand in hand with highly developed internal communication and cutting oneself off from the world.

The accusation technique is another way the group protects itself and this occurs in cases where there are social tensions that cannot be handled by normal means. Society or individuals resort to witchcraft accusations in order to repress the party regarded as the source of the conflict. This is a serious accusation because a witch was regarded as a cancer in the social organism, a cancer that must be excised in order to preserve the society. Another way was that of demonising the beliefs and teachings of the deviant group or society systematically withdraws their support and love from the individual (or group) until the break is final (Malina et al, 1996:39).

Witchcraft accusation functions to denigrate rivals and pull the opponents down in the competition for leadership. If the accusation is successful, the person accused of witchcraft will be expelled or the accused might withdraw from the group. Neyrey (1990:186) contends that if the accusation does not succeed in expelling or causing the person to withdraw, the accusing parties would continue to live in close and unavoidable contact, in a state of intense competition and rivalry. The threat of witchcraft accusations is therefore an effective deterrent against the excesses of deviant groups or individuals (Wilson 1980:75).

That there was a deviant group within the Johannine community is a matter less disputed among scholars. Klauck (1988:62) points out that the author of 1 John applies this (tactic) to his opponents and condemns them by turning them into little devils. He has determinedly driven this process of demonising them to a pitch. He represents the deviant group as the 'ἀντί χριστος' because they denied the basic tenet of the teaching of the family of God that Jesus was the Christ come in the flesh (1 Jn 2:18f). Calling the deviant group in 1 John

2:18 the ἄντ̄ χριστος was tantamount to accusing them of witchcraft (colon 47.1).

This group posited a serious threat to the Johannine community in that it challenged the reality of their symbolic universe. As it appears the deviant group was insisting upon its sinlessness, an issue which the author confronts head on in colon 10 above. First, he refers to the importance of blood for cleansing sin, the idea, which he introduces in the context of fellowship. Second, Jesus becomes the sacrificial lamb whose blood is used in the cleansing of sin.

There is a view that understands the claim to sinlessness as a Perfectionist's claim - those who were so perfect that they never have the slightest inclination or lapse into sin. Another view sees this as a Libertine claim - those who in trying to assert their freedom from worldly powers, claimed that they were without sin even though they had actually sinned (Brown 1982:205).

1 John states categorically that those who make this claim delude themselves and are guilty of self-deception, and have no share in the fellowship, which believers share with God. As Smalley (1984:30) rightly points out, Sin is a fact of life, and characteristic of those who are Christians, as well as those who are not, however, complete victory over sin is the Christian ideal (Ladd 1974:614). Witchcraft accusation is a common deterrent, which groups or individuals use in situations where their symbolic universe is threatened because of the existence of a deviant viewpoint. The author of 1 John employed it to refute as well as demonise the claims of the deviant group. It

was in the face of onslaught from the antichrist that the author reminded members of his community that they possess the God-given $\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$.

4.11 The Holy Spirit

$\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$ in colon 51 has been construed by some theologians to be references to the Holy Spirit (see Bruce 1970:76; Marshall 1978:153). The first allusion to the Holy Spirit is found in 1 John 2:20, (colon 51) where the author states that believers ‘have the anointing ($\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$) from the ‘Holy One’, and (they) know all’ ($\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$) (1 Jn 2:20). The anointing dwells in them as a continuing endowment, equipping them to stand firm against the deceivers (Hiebert 1989:90). Could ‘ $\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$ ’ be construed as a reference to the Holy Spirit? Marshall (1978:153) points out that the majority of commentators think that the ‘anointing’ here is the Spirit who comes to teach believers and to guide them into all truth (see also Hiebert 1989:91).

Scholars also identified $\sigma\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\mu\alpha$ in 1 John 3:9 with the Holy Spirit. Dodd identified both $\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$ and $\sigma\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\mu\alpha$ with the gospel whereas Findlay regarded them both as allusions to the Holy Spirit (in Stott 1964:134). The discussion over the meaning of $\sigma\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\mu\alpha$ has occupied scholars for some time and there does not seem to be any agreement. Brown (1982:411) has rightly pointed out that the bulk of evidence favours identifying God's seed ($\sigma\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\mu\alpha$) with the Holy Spirit (see Hiebert 1989:213).

In dealing with the Holy Spirit in 1 John, it is important to note that the context closely links the Holy One of verse 20 with the father and the Son (cf.

vv. 22ff.) (Brown 1986:231). Spirit and knowledge in verse 20 are also closely associated. Knowledge, which believers possess is 'knowledge' of the truth (1 Jn 2:21). In verse 26-27, the Holy Spirit's function is spelt out clearly as that of 'teaching' the believer about all things, thus providing him or her with knowledge. That 'teaching' is the function of the Holy Spirit is confirmed in Jn 14:26. The gift of the Spirit determines also one's 'abiding' in God (Christ) as well as God's abiding in the believer (1 Jn 3:24) (du Rand 1994:168).

A great variety of meanings are attached to the word 'knowledge'. Drane states that knowledge is a prominent theme in the Old Testament, where knowledge of God is the prerogative of those who live in close covenant fellowship with him. In the Qumran scrolls 'knowledge' is the possession of the religious elite of the community. In the writings of Philo and the Gnostics, 'knowledge' (γνῶσις) is something secret that can be obtained only by the soul to which esoteric religious truths have been revealed (in Marshall 1985: 120).

In 1 John, the theme of knowledge is related to the Old Testament one, where knowledge is the prerogative of those who live in close covenant fellowship with God. In colon 114.1 it is the Spirit whom God has given to believers, who helps them to know that God abides in them, he gives believers the assurance that they are in God. Brown (1982:482) states that on our part abiding is conditional upon keeping the commandments given by God; but on God's part our abiding stems from His giving the Spirit, which is not conditional. Those who are born of God and who live in fellowship with him

and who have been given the Spirit 'know the truth' (1 Jn 2:20f) and have no need that anyone should teach them (1 Jn 2:27).

In order to bring about an understanding to members of his symbolic universe, the author introduced once again the Johannine dualism. Through this form of argumentation, he is able to draw their attention to the fact that there exist two kinds of Spirits, good and bad ones representing two opposite poles. The phrase 'Spirit of truth' which is also found in 1 John belongs most characteristically to the writings of John in the New Testament (1 Jn 5:7; Jn 15:26; 16:13), although it also occurs in Jewish literature of the time including the Dead Sea Scrolls. Both the First Epistle of John and the Rule of the Community (among the Dead Sea Scrolls) draw a contrast between the 'Spirit of truth' and the 'spirit of error' (1 John 4:6; Rule [= 1QS] 3:17ff; cf. Testament of Judah 20:1) (The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England 1991: 115). Appropriate to the designation 'Spirit of truth', the Spirit's activity consists in teaching all things (Jn 14:26, 1 Jn 2:20) and 'guiding them into all the truth' (Jn 16:13) (Bultmann 1955:88-89).

Regarding the dualism of the spirits, 1 John states there exists two kinds of spirits so that all claims to be inspired should be submitted to examination and tested (The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England 1991: 115) in order to establish whether the inspiration is of God or the Antichrist. The testing of the Spirits was not a new phenomenon. Deuteronomy 13:2-6 (1-5) and 18:15-22 make a distinction between the prophet-like Moses who speaks the true word of God and so must be heeded, and the prophet who speaks a word that God has not commanded and so must be purged from the midst of the people' (Brown 1982:488). Also in Jeremiah (28:9) the test is well

articulated as Jeremiah utters in the hearing of the people ‘when the word of that prophet (who had prophesied peace) comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet’.

The presence of many false prophets made it incumbent upon the writer to warn against any person who claims to be inspired. The claim to have the Spirit, however insufficient, must be tested on the basis of the true christological confession that Jesus is really the Messiah who became man (1 Jn 4:2) (du Rand 1994:168). Any claim to inspiration must, therefore, be tested. The specific point of the test is to determine the source of the spirits in whose power the speakers present their message, ‘to see whether they are from God’ (εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν) (Hiebert 1989:422).

Brown (1982:488) says that in 1 John 4:2-3 the key to whether a person is inspired by the true spirit of God or not, is what he/she says about Jesus. Stott (1968:155) asserts that the Spirit of God manifests himself objectively in our life and conduct, it is he who inspires us to confess Jesus as the Christ come in the flesh, whereas that of the antichrist denies the incarnation of Jesus.

The Spirit of truth according to John's gospel will guide believers into all truth (Jn 16:13). This is a promise of trustworthy guidance to the Christian community for the task of understanding Christ and the implications of the gospel message (The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England 1991: 115). Therefore, a true confession of faith in Jesus as the incarnate Son of God is evidence of inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Neyrey (1988:203) affirms this by saying that the Spirit symbolises and replicates what was signalled in the confession of Jesus who is equal to God.

Apart from teaching the believer and thus giving him or her knowledge, that the Spirit also bears witness is clearly expressed (Guthrie 1981:535). The Spirit equated with 'the truth' (1 Jn 5:6; Jn 15:26) is cited as the witness (Hutaff 1994:414). The citation of the Spirit as witness occurs in a passage dominated by forensic language (1 Jn 5:6-11). Of the witnesses to the true humanity of Jesus, the Spirit is cited as the first witnesses. This witness according to the author transcends mere human conviction or opinion (1 Jn 5:8ff).

What the author emphasises to members of his symbolic universe is that the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit constitute the basic determinants of what true character should be within the Johannine universe. Where the Spirit abides, truth must reign because the Holy Spirit and falsehood do not go together (Guthrie 1981:535). All the characteristics attributed to these role players have to be reflected in the life and actions of the children of God.

4.12 Summary

Our aim in this chapter has been to elaborate or discuss systematically the themes or symbols that were identified in the foregoing chapter. We noted that the author's presentation of his teachings is within the basic framework of family. The dominance of family language in 1 John is suggestive of the fact that family occupied a central place within that particular symbolic universe. Symbols such as father, son, birth, children, love, life, and many others, which are common social conventions are in tandem with family, and used abundantly in 1 John by the author. The author's aim in using family language is to move members of his universe to seeing and fully embracing his view of reality. This view is not just his own but the view he shares with those whom Brown (1982) calls the tradition bearers.

The father-symbols provide the focal point of the whole family. Within the social universe of the Mediterranean world the importance of the father symbol cannot be underscored. Whereas in the Gospel of John Jesus is central. For instance, in John's Gospel Jesus is the light, in 1 John God is the light, eternal life is with Him and He is love. So everything in 1 John revolves around the Father.

In a universe where Sons were very important, the 'Son-symbol' occupied a very important place within the social universe of the Mediterranean world. It is therefore possible for the author within this particular symbolic universe to underscore the centrality of the Son. The Son is the envoy of the father. In his character he embodies all the norms and values of this own family. Like the Father, he is the normativising symbol within the Christian cultural context.

No differentiation can be made between him and the Father. Whoever fails to pay due homage to him is in no position to do so to the Father because the Son is the complete embodiment of the Father. Within the Mediterranean world this role of the Son stands unquestionable.

Family is also reinterpreted and therefore presented under a new name—fellowship. Those who should belong to God’s family or fellowship are called children of God. In order to enter into fellowship with God, they must be born into it. Birth marks the beginning of one’s life within a defined and specific social environment. Birth defines one’s specific role and privileges as a member of a family. This symbol is in line with what obtained within the Mediterranean social world. Birth links up with the whole notion of ‘children’. Children are children because they have been born into that family. Because they are born, they have all the right and privileges that accrue to all members of the family. By virtue of being children, they know all the norms and values of their family. Consequently John is able to claim that they walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7) and love one another (1 Jn 3:11).

Within their symbolic universe, loving one another was the trade-mark of each and every family or else it was not a healthy family. The call, therefore, to love one another was just a reiteration of that which was known within the social convention of family. The example of Cain serves to demonstrate hatred, which is the opposite of love. Those who love prove their belonging to God’s family, and as a matter of fact they have been born of God. (1 Jn 4:7). The norms and values of the family are exemplified in their lives. Believers have to imitate Christ by laying down their lives for their brothers and sisters (1 Jn 3:16).

Mention was made earlier of the fact that the author grew up in a world in which boundaries were clearly set. This is obvious in the manner he presents his understanding of the Gospel. His thoughts circulate between two spheres or polarities. God's sphere is represented by light and love and the sphere of humanity is represented by sin hence darkness. God is the source and origin of all good things. Positive virtues such as love, light; eternal life and fellowship belong with Him. They are qualities prevalent only in God's sphere. The sending of the Son becomes a demonstration of God's love (1 Jn 4:9). God sends his Son with a mission i.e. to bring about the destruction of the work of the devil (1 Jn 3:8) and to usher in salvation (1 Jn 4:14).

To describe the entry of Christ into this dark world, the author uses such a beautiful imagery: the darkness vanishing because the true light (Christ) is already shining (1 Jn 2:8). In Christ God's light and love have broken into the world of sin and darkness.

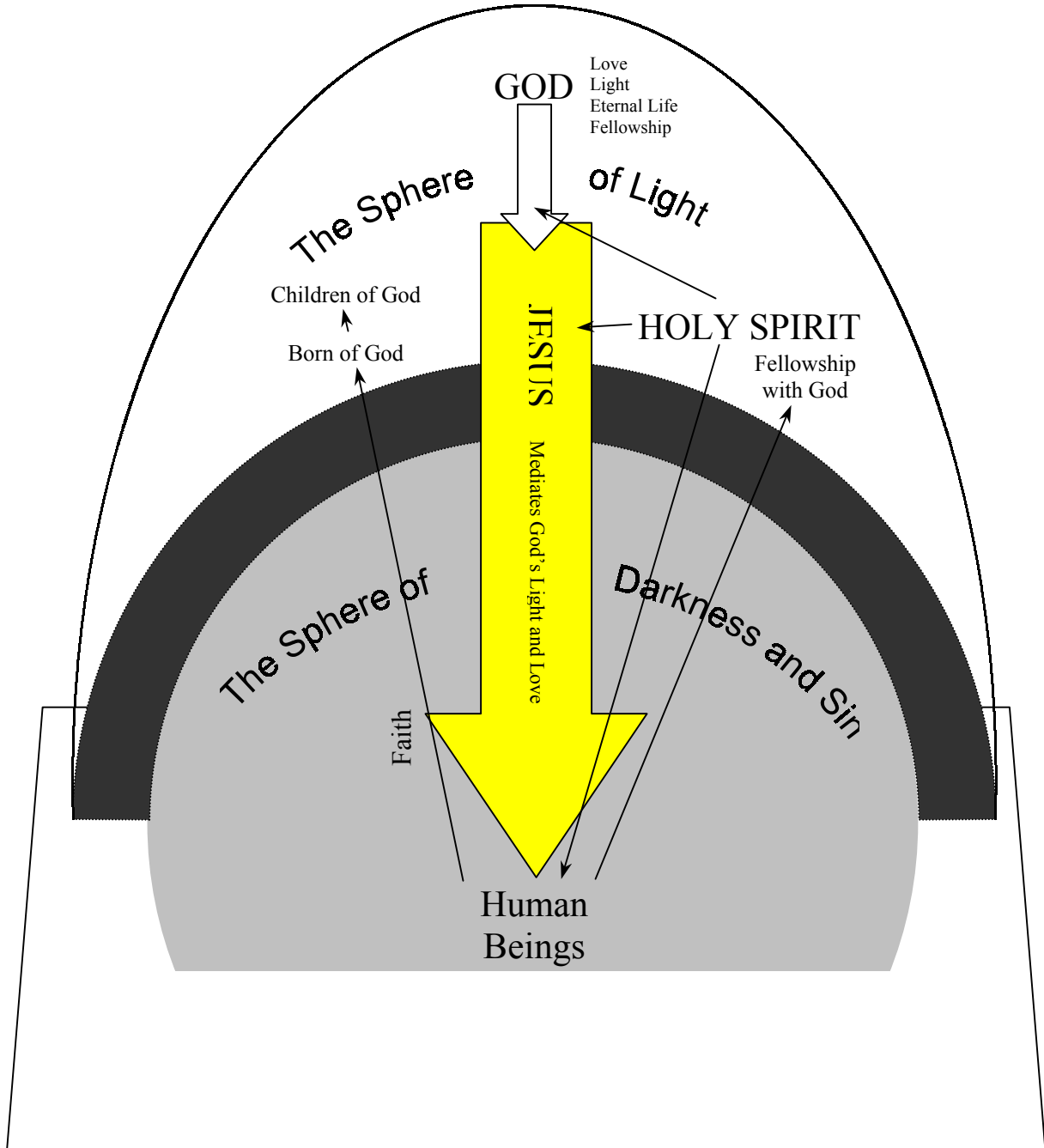
Sin within the author's symbolic universe represents the opposite of God's goodness and is a threat to the wholeness of God's new family. Sin constitutes the chasm between God and humanity, the chasm which can only be bridged if those who stand in opposition to God accept the offer of forgiveness and of a παράκλητος (1 Jn 2:1). The παράκλητος does not only plead their case before God but is also the ἰλασμος for the community' sin and those of the whole world (1 Jn 2:1-2), is made. In Christ God's love for humanity is openly demonstrated. Through his love, which God lavished on those who respond, they become children of God (1 Jn 3:1). By responding to this invitation made in Christ, humanity is enrolled into fellowship with God and Christ and with one another.

In Christ humanity is invited to become part of new reality, which is exclusive, because one both accepts the new interpretation belonging to it and becomes part, or one is out. This is the only legitimate way of becoming a member of God's family. This response means a figurative transference from the sphere of darkness into God's sphere of light. This is described by the usage of metaphors such as the 'birth metaphor' and 'walking in the light'. They have been born of God. All this has serious ethical implication for the new members of God's family. Their birth has given them a new identity defined in relation to the parent – God.

The symbolic universe, which the author proclaims, determines and regulates the members' ultimate orientation and behaviour so that it easy to differentiate them from those who stand opposed to God's people or family. The antithetical mode of arguing serves to accentuate the differences so that there is no mistaking of person as to their orientation. Those who have a metaphysical sphere's orientation cannot dishonour the Father by living continually in sin. They love one another, walk in the light. On the whole God, Jesus, and the Spirit, in the symbolic universe of the author and his community, reflect in themselves the basic determinative 'characteristics' of the family of God, characteristics that must be reflected in the lives and actions of believers (Van der Watt 1999:502). As bearers of the family likeness, they are expected to reproduce and display this in the world. Any thing to the contrary is evidence that they belong to the sphere of darkness. The Antichrist, who represents the sphere of darkness, is an embodiment of the opposing forces to God's goodness.

Having explored the text, the symbolic universe of 1 John, and identified symbols that are central in the author's communication of the new reality to his community, it is time now to shift our focus to the African world to discover something of its characteristics. The African context or symbolic universe cannot be narrowed into one. The Zulu symbolic universe, which is the focus of this dissertation, is but one part of the whole scenario. This therefore will not be a detailed description but an attempt to paint in broad strokes some of the contours common to all.

4.12.1 The summary above could be represented schematically as follows:



CHAPTER FIVE

Sketching briefly the contours of what might be called the symbolic universe of Africa.

5.1 Introduction

Most scholars who have entered the African scene for research have done so wearing Western spectacles for viewing reality. Much as they tried to be open to this world, they were hampered by their basic scientific theories, which constitute their psychological assumption that the world is as accurate as their scientific theories have described it. Westerners perceive the African reality in terms of their preferences, focuses, biases and other preconditioning their world might have brought to bear upon them.

All of us are members of particular communities and therefore, beneficiaries of their symbolic universes. The manner we conceive reality is in terms of our universes. It is important that those seeking to research the African world coming from outside it, approach it with an open mind. Also there needs to be some kind of paradigm shift or a transformation of the way they perceive reality. This does not mean abandoning the tools they gathered from their world but is a call to openness and a willingness to learn from the other world.

Having endeavoured to paint the symbolic universe of 1 John in the above chapter, it is necessary to attempt to draw the symbolic universe of Africa. The topic for this chapter is therefore, in a sense misleading in that it talks about an African symbolic universe as though there is a single universe. Pato

(1997:54) rightly points out that cultural diversities (in Africa) preclude any generalisation regarding an African perspective, let alone a symbolic universe.

Even though there are various sub-universes of meaning, of which the sub-universe of Zulu people is but one, it is our contention that there is much that is common among African people. This chapter will attempt to paint a broad and general African scenario, making references where necessary to specific aspects of the Zulu symbolic universe.

Anthropologists find that contemporary primitive cultures also have worldviews that interpret their experiences and guide their activities (Holmes 1983:3). Any discussion of the world of Africa must begin by offering a definition of culture since the symbolic universe operates within the sphere called culture. It is essential therefore that we offer definitions of what we mean by culture. Culture has become a buzzword for many Africans hence the importance of commencing any discussion on the African universe, including Traditional Religious beliefs, with some definitions of culture.

5.2 What is culture?

5.2.1 Definitions of culture

According to Vatican Council 2, the word 'culture' in the general sense refers to all those things which go to the refining and developing of man's diverse mental and physical endowments. He strives to subdue the earth by his knowledge and his labour; he humanises social life both in the family

and in the whole civic community through the improvement of customs and institutions; he expresses through his works the great spiritual experiences and aspirations of men throughout the ages; he communicates and preserves them to be an inspiration for the progress of any, even of all mankind (Flannery 1975:957).

Hiebert defines culture as the integrated system of learned patterns of behaviour, ideas and products characteristic of a society (in Gibbs 1981:73). According to Hiebert, culture has to do with everything that human beings learn in the society within which they are born.

Niebuhr (1951:33) defines culture as a human achievement. He further states that it is the work of men's minds and hands, it is that portion of men's heritage in any place or time, which has been given us designedly and laboriously by other men.

For Nida, culture is the non-material traits, which are passed on from one generation to another (in Gibbs 1981:83). Nida's definition displays a narrow view, which regards the material as not part of culture. An African definition that excludes the material would not be dealing with culture as understood by Africans.

Paul Tillich sees culture as a meaning system, a mechanism expressed through symbols by the human spirit, which emerges in the creativity of person's quest to interpret his world (in Moila 1987:4).

There is another popular way in which the term culture is becoming more prevalent in the media. This is evident in the use of the phrase 'culture of...' when attempting to describe the process of attitude formation, which is going on in society (Bate 1995:210). For instance, people talk of the need for religions and peoples of various cultures to develop a culture of tolerance and for teachers to instil a culture of learning to pupils.

Apart from the above, many and varied definitions of culture can be given but the above-mentioned will suffice for our study. Culture, it must be noted constitutes one of the most divisive phenomenon ever to be found among the peoples of the world. Its divisiveness arises from the fact that each society feels that its culture is holding something, which is very precious, which perhaps needs to be shared with humankind (Moila 1987:8).

The belief that one's culture has something, which others do not have, has led to the tendency to evaluate other people's cultures through one's own cultural perspective. If other people's culture does not fit within categories drawn by one's own culture, it is dismissed as barbarous and primitive. Kraft (1979:48) calls this tendency ethnocentrism.

When dealing with other cultures other than our own, we need to realise that we are entering a world different from our own. Kraft suggests ways of curbing ethnocentrism. He emphasises that the outsider should be careful to evaluate a culture first in terms of its own values, norms, goals and focuses, before venturing to compare it with any other culture. This he calls cultural validity (Kraft 1979:49).

Ethnocentrism, unless we guard against it, will continue to cause problems among the peoples of various cultures in the world. Examples in our own time include the apartheid philosophy in this country and the situation obtaining in Kosovo where the Serbs have engaged in what is called ethnic cleansing. The driving force behind this dreadful act is the strong belief in the superiority of the Serbs over the Kosovians. Ethnocentrism as Moila (1987:9) points out can lead to the isolation of a group or society, thus impeding cultural interchange and interaction.

In this study cultural validity will be the measuring rod of our work since it places cultures on an equal basis for the simple reason that they are all able to provide meaningful answers and meet the needs of their members.

5.3 The Zulu conception of God

For a description of how Zulu people conceived God, we will make use of documented research. Qualitative research will be done later on, the results of which will be tested against these to show which of these beliefs and ideas are still prevalent and how the symbolic universe has been adapted according to needs of modern people.

The belief in, and worship of, one Supreme deity, as Father Schmidt of Vienna states is universal among all really primitive peoples; that the 'High God' is found everywhere among them sufficiently prominently to make his position indubitable; that he is not a late development or traceable to missionary influences. He goes on further to assert that the belief in God encircles the whole earth like a girdle and is an essential property of

whatever ancient human culture existed in the very earliest times (in Dickson and Ellingworth 1969:18-18).

Many books that were written earlier reflected the ethnocentrism with which Western writers viewed cultures other than their own. The feeling of superiority with which they approached other cultures and religions blinded them to their own ignorance. Primitive cultures have always known of and worshipped God.

Marshall (1982:13-14) argues that every person is born with an insatiable desire to give homage to something or someone greater than him/herself. He goes on further to say that worship is the basic, fundamental instinct within every creature: an instinct more basic and more lasting than our sexual instincts and yet an instinct scarcely heeded in the ordinary daily conversation and concerns of the twentieth century man. He elaborates by saying that like all basic instincts, if it is neglected it does not evaporate or just go away: it wounds, perverts and corrupts, because human beings, if they are made for worship, will demand expression, in one way or another of that compulsive drive.

It is assumed here that this insatiable desire to worship has not by-passed the Zulu people. In the development of their traditional religious systems and practices, like all people, they have felt this human need for a relationship with someone greater than themselves and have expressed their response in a variety of ways. Their responses are contained in their belief systems , rituals and practices, culture being the vehicle and the premise within which

this enduring need is expressed and the symbolic universe intergrating and legitimating them into a meaningful whole.

For traditional rural Zulu people, the reality of their symbolic universe included a universe inhabited by the material as well as spiritual forces (Fleming 1986:24). It is a universe integral with a supernatural dynamic power pervading all aspects of it (Thorpe 1991:34). The way they can make sense of and explain it is through symbols, which they develop and legitimise as expressive of what they are describing. The symbolic names, which they use for the creator God, are diverse and full of meaning.

There is a need to point out that even though language runs bankrupt when it comes to describing the supernatural reality, the names Africans have used and given to describe the 'God reality' are quite revealing for a people who were said to be without any idea of a deity. The Sotho - Tswana, for example, call him Modimo, the Xhosa, uQamatha, uThixo, Mudzimu or uDali, Zulu people used many names such as : uNkulunkulu -the Great, Great One, uMvelinqangi – the First Comer-Out the First Essence of existence (Colenso 1982:xvi; Hexham 1987:188), the Pre-existent one (Fleming 1986:24), uMdali – the Creator, Simakade – the long-lived one, uBaba – Father, Umenzi – Maker (Crafford 1996:13) and uSomandla – the Powerful one. The Venda use, Raluvhimba or Mudzimu (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:xx).

Zulu people understood God in a diversity of ways in which he manifested Himself. Within the stock of symbolic religious terms, they described the symbol they perceived to constitute the ultimate reality as uNkulunkulu 'the Great, Great One' or uMvelinqangi as the maker of the earth and of

everything that is in the world (Vilakazi 1964:87; Colenso 1982:xvi; Maimela 1985:66).

The second name uMvelinqangi is a word with the roots: vela - meaning to appear, to come forth, come into view. The second root: nqangi has a double-fold meaning. The first meaning is that of 'the first' or 'the origin'. The second meaning of 'nqangi' refers to something mysterious and hidden. In the creation of the male sexual organs, there is what is known as 'ikhingqe'. Some call this part 'inqangi'. This part of the body according to the creation plan should stay covered and protected. Damage to this part could have serious consequences, it could mean no offspring. Inqangi therefore refers to the hidden aspect of this part that works in a mysterious way. Therefore, the name 'uMvelinqangi' reveals the mysteriousness in the way God came into being. He is not known where he came from.

Berglund suggests that the former interpretation of nqangi falls short of an essential understanding of the term. He says that nqangi as correctly pointed out by Bryant and Doke Vilakazi, refers to the first born of the twins. He says that the idea of the first one was not just simply the first one but always the first of the two which are twins. Therefore the sky and the earth go together. They are one but the one is above the other. The sky is the first-born of the two, but they are the same kind. That is why the one that lives in the sky is called the first born of the twins. He is the first to come forth then the earth (Berglund 1976:34). We think that Berglund's interpretation of 'nqangi', while it has some merit does not cancel the first, instead it adds to it.

According to some creation myths, it is said that uNkulunkulu broke off (wadabula) the nations from uthlanga. The use of the word 'wadabula' necessarily implies the pre-existence of something from which the division took place (Callaway 1868:2). God as well is said to have broken off. The question is, He broke off from what? In an attempt to answer this, there is a play on words displayed by Zulus. They speak in the case of God as someone who appeared from the reed i.e. 'owavela ohlangeni' or one who 'sprang from a bed of reeds' and who created all wild animals, cattle and game, snakes and birds, water and mountains, as well as the sun and the moon (Magubane 1998:62).

The word uthlanga is of deep mythical significance as it refers not so much to 'royal blood' as to the original stem or stock from which uNkulunkulu (the 'Great Progenitor') emerged, bringing with him mankind and nationhood (Bourquin 1986:5). Observable is a difference exhibited by the usage of the two words. God appeared (wavela) as opposed to human beings that broke off (badabuka). God was not created but he emerged full-blown from the reeds (Vilakazi 1964:87) whereas human beings share God's being by virtue of having broken off from the original reed or stock.

UMvelinqangi is the 'First Appearer or Exister (Thorpe 1991:35). He is the uthlanga from which all men broke off (Callaway 1868:7; Sundermeier 1998:18), so that when black people say uNkulunkulu or uthlanga or the Creator they mean one and the same thing (Hexham 1987:195). The name uMvelinqangi, therefore, reveals the transcendental aspect of God, the one who is mighty- uSomandla, who is above all things- oPhezukonke, the one

who caused all things to come forth - *owenza izinto zonke zaba khona*, including the ancestors (Ndwandwe 1982:5).

The second way in which God was understood is related to the actions of uNomkhubulwana-Inkosazana yeZulu-the Princess of heaven. UNomkhubulwana was regarded as the mouth of God or a type of earth mother associated with agriculture, spring rain and fertility (Thorpe 1991:37). During the season of drought or floods or when worms had eaten mealies, (Berlund 1976:64), uNomkhubulwana was asked for rain, so that when people went for the second time to plant, they spoke of '*ukuyokhubula*'.

During the *ukukhubula*, oxen were taken for sacrificing. These were burnt together with incense, something that was an essential part of *ukukhubula* (Ndwandwe 1982:6).

The third way in which God manifested himself was through the actions of uHlathelinganxanye. Bryant (1949:667) is tempted to regard uHlathelinganxanye as uNomkhubulwana. He speaks of uNomkhubulwana as one who moveth with mist (...rain), on one side a human being, on one side wood, on one side a river, on one side overgrown with grass. It is possible here that the similarity of the tasks confused Bryant into thinking that uNomkhubulwana and uHlathelinganxanye are one and the same.

Zulus conceive of God as far away and remote and playing little part in everyday life (Fleming 1986:24). This conception pertinent among Zulu people, is general among Africans and has exerted some influence on their worship (McVeigh 1974:109). The belief that God in African society is viewed as far and remote has led Crafford (1996:13) into contending that the

Supreme Being in African religion is usually vaguely defined as *Deus otiosus*-uninvolved divinity, which is not directly concerned with everyday life. He further points out that God is also understood as *deus absconditus*-the concealed, remote God who is approached mainly through mediators. From where does this idea of the remoteness of god stem? Let us briefly look at African mythology. Hopefully we may be able to get some helpful hints.

5.4 God in African mythology

Johnson (1999:13) asserts that a myth does not refer to false stories but to narratives that seek to clothe transcendent realities with language and, by so doing, express the meaning inherent in the structures of shared life. Zulu mythology was such an attempt by primitive Zulus to clothe with language the transcendent reality and why that reality was experienced and perceived as distant and aloof.

Apart from the Zulu myth concerning death, there exist in abundance a variety of myths accounting for, and seeking to provide answers for, every facet of life. Mention is made below of such myths. One African myth has to do with a black 'Eve' at work, who pounding maize raised her pestle so high above her mortar that it touched heaven, exciting the anger and subsequent withdrawal of the deity (Crafford 1996:13).

The Yas myth tells us why God separated himself from human beings and this world and established himself on the sky with the help of the spider's thread over which he climbed: because man was sinful. He always burnt fire,

destroying God's vegetation and burning animals, which were His closest friends.

The Ituri pygmies of Zaire say that when man and woman came every day to feed God, who was living in a clearing in the forest, they were not allowed to stay and see him take the food. Woman was curious and stayed to see God come out of his hut. God was angry and retired from the world (Shorter 1973:65).

These and many other myths show that originally God was a social, free and outgoing person who, however, withdrew from the company of human beings because of their sin. Opoku (1993:73-74) argues that the 'withdrawal' of God from the world or the separation between God and man, as many African myths narrate it, do not tell of a physical separation of God from man, but that they allude to the otherness of God. It is as a result of this withdrawal that a yawning gap was created and human beings have found themselves in a poorer situation.

According to Zulu people, the yawning gap created by the withdrawal of God necessitated the creation of a bridge between God and the living. The ancestors who were seen as part of the reality of African people, but who operated from the world of the ancestors, constituted this bridge. As ancestors began to occupy the centre stage, it was believed that they sustain and nurture the interests of their descendants, and were an important bridge between the physical and the spiritual worlds (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:xx). It is believed that they move between God and the living (Ndwandwe 1982:22-23). In general when prayers are made, the living do not go to God directly.

Only in critical circumstances was God approached in prayer (Crafford 1996:13; McVeigh 1974:111). The reality of the universe of Zulu people included ancestors who occupied centre stage as part of the community.

5.5 Community

5.5.1 The basic importance of the family

Human beings exist within a vast and complex system of interrelationships. At the core of the symbolic universe or worldview, Congdon (1984:37) contends, was the symbiotic relation of each Zulu with the ancestors and the resultant interdependence of all members of the tribe (see also Sundermeier 1998:18). Neither individual, nor all of us together, can exist in isolation, for both individually and collectively we originate and draw sustenance from outside ourselves (Holmes 1983:107-108). Therefore, fullness of life for the individual is not attainable in isolation and apart from one's fellows because life is something communal and is possible only in a network of mutual interdependence (Maimela 1985:66). Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole community to which he belongs, and whatever happens to the community happens to the individual as well.

Sundermeier (1998:17) puts it succinctly that the whole is represented in the individual, and the individual stands for the whole community. For instance a Zulu person would say: '*Nginguzulu*', either meaning 'I am a Zulu', or 'I am the Zulu people', its representative. His life and that of the community is one and cannot be separated for it transcends life and death. Hence he can say: 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am'. This is the

significant point in the understanding of the African view of personhood. A person's existence is corporate existence (Goba 1974:68). Therefore, any discussion about the community or society cannot be complete without focusing on the family, the reason being that family is the microcosm of society and the arena within which individuals learn something of the symbolic universe.

In the words of Mohammed Hassan, a Muslim, the family is one of the stones of the whole building - indeed, it's the whole building: without these stones of family life, you can't build house - the whole society (in Bowker 1983:184). For Jews there is an equally strong emphasis on the family. It is seen as a chain of continuity that links the living and the dead, and a chain that ensures the continuity of the Jewish way of life and traditions (Bowker 1983:184-185). The African understanding of family can be described in similar terms as the above Jewish description provides. Continuity of this chain is dependent upon the birth of children who have to perpetuate and carry forward family traditions.

5.5.2 Birth and belonging

The original context of birth within any symbolic universe is obviously the most critical one for all of us. We are what we are because we were born these things. I am a Zulu because I was born into a Zulu family and so is the fact that I am a Christian. Choices and decisions in our lives follow later. When we reach adulthood and are confronted by other realities then we make many choices and decisions that determine the direction our lives will follow, but the original context of birth still plays a critical role. The basic reason why people become fully integrated members of society must be

traced back to the strong family background, where they were moulded and shaped to view things as they do.

The family is the arena where all people learn most things in this life. According to Twesigye (1987:111) the family or community is the context and focus of all human activities, as it is thought to be the arena and grounding of human existence, particularly at the family level in its indefinitely extended broad scope. People learn how to behave, how to love and how to be charitable from their families. It is therefore the field within which they are humanised (*benziwa abantu*). As stated above families are a microcosm of society. Strong communities develop from strong families and they constitute a unity of life. Participation within family circles and the community facilitates the integration of individuals and ensures that the reality around them is meaningfully explained.

The perception of life as a unity enhances and strengthens the view that it cannot be terminated even by death. Those who have died are seen as having moved on into another world, which is part of the whole reality. To ensure continuity, various ceremonies, such as '*Ukubuyiswa*' are performed with the view to integrating the newly dead into the hierarchy of family spirits (Ngobese 1981:11).

If the family or community is the arena within which people are humanised, then to be truly human means to belong to a family or community. Muzorewa as cited by Opoku (1993:76) confirms this view by saying that one's humanity is defined by a sense of belonging, for it is not enough to be a human being unless one shows a sense of participation in community.

Undergirding the community is the principle of interdependence since the human individual is not self-sufficient to the extent that all his/her needs could be met single-handedly, one needs the assistance of others in order to realise one's full personality (Opoku 1993:77).

Kalu (1993:112) cites Schapera who in dealing with the subject of social control, contends that life in a primitive community involves every individual in specific obligations to others, who in turn are similarly duty-bound to him. Those obligations he fulfils partly because of early training, and partly because of public opinion and self-interest. It pays him in various ways to do as he should, and if he does not he suffers loss of material benefits and of social esteem. In other words, life for the individual is grasped as it is shared.

What this means is that the member of the tribe, the clan, or family, knows that here he/she does not live for himself or herself, but for the community. He/she knows that apart from the community he or she would no longer have the means of existence. Living for him/her is existence in community, it is participation in the sacred life (and all life is sacred) of the ancestors; it is an extension of the life of one's forefathers, and a preparation for one's own life to be carried on in one's descendants. (Dickson & Ellingworth 1969:139).

The fact of having been born into a particular family, clan or tribe plunges us into a specific vital current. It incorporates us into it, fashions us according to this community, 'ontically' modifies our whole being, and turns it in the

direction of the community's way of life and behaviour (Dickson & Ellingworth 1969:139).

Descartes' dictum '*Cogito ergo sum*' 'I think, therefore I am' (in Pillay and Hofmeyr 1991:176) which seems to be the basis of Western thinking about a person would be alien to Zulu people. Zulu people are deeply influenced by the experience of community. They view themselves as deeply rooted in the community. They are persons because they live and participate in the community. This experience is expressed in the popular African saying: '*Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu*' (Zulu) 'motho ke motho ka batho' (Sotho). An individual cannot be truly human in isolation. One's full humanity is realised in and defined within the bound of community.

The role, which the family and the community play in the formation and moulding of individual behaviour, cannot be underscored. It is the intensity with which this process is carried forward during socialisation that ensures the adherence, respect and execution of one's duties in a manner that benefits not only the individual but the community as well. In other words this is the way the community ensures that the behaviour of its members is well regulated and controlled.

Osthathios (1979:91) rightly points out that the very birth or conception of the person is by participation of the parents in the most intimate manner. Similarly a person can grow as a person only if love is poured into the person by others and by the society of the family, neighbours, the church, the nation and even the world. The very question, which is posed by the individualism of the West as to who is prior, the individual or society does not arise at all in an ideal African home.

Kalu (1993:112) suggests that society controls the behaviour of her members in four different but co-ordinated ways. Firstly, she enunciates and inculcates acceptable values. Secondly, society endeavours to restrict members from flouting those values. Thirdly, the society punishes those who break acceptable norms and values, and fourthly, she congratulates and rewards those who affirm salient norms and values.

Twesigye (1987:111) has put it so aptly that the community being primary over the individual imposes over the individual a system of norms, codes of behaviour and obligations. He further argues that the community acts as the divinely appointed custodian, police and court for human ethics and morality (Twesigye 1987:112). Included into this network of family relationships are a host of ancestors who play a very significant role in African or Zulu society.

5.6 Ancestors - the Living dead

In Zulu society, individuals exist because of the community. The community extends in time beyond the bounds of the present era, backward to the ancestors and forward to the future generations (Sundermeier 1998:17). This point of view is not peculiar to Zulus. Mbiti (1971:129) referring to the wider context, points out that for Africans, death does not mean annihilation but a departure to the spirit world. People used symbols to explain as well as represent what they perceived of the reality of death. Ancestors are a symbol representing continuity of life. Reference to them is an attempt to explain what happens to our loved ones when they die. In fact according to Zulu people, they do not die but move to the world underneath –*baya kwelabaphansi* (Vilakazi 1965:89).

According to one myth, uNkulunkulu sent a Chameleon (*Unwabu*) to say that people should not die. The Chameleon loitered on the way and as it went, it ate *ubukwebezane* –the fruit of a tree. Then uNkulunkulu sent a lizard (*intulo*) to say that people would die and the lizard ran and made great haste and reached the destination before the Chameleon (Hexham 1987:187). This story of creation is a wonderful attempt to try and explain this predicament of death. Incidentally all cultures do have mythological stories about the reality surrounding life, how it came about and how come people die. According to this story, God's original intention was that human beings would live forever here on earth. They would go on existing like rocks only changing their skins like snakes to renew their lives. God sent a chameleon-unwabu to declare that human beings would never die. The chameleon loitered on the way. Meanwhile God sent a lizard-intulo to declare that people would die and the lizard moved swiftly hence people die (Mdletshe 1997:5).

An ancestor as defined by Zahan (1979:49) is first of all, a man who has reached a great age and who has acquired along with longevity a profound experience of people and things. Ancestors are sometimes called 'the Living dead' because it is believed that they are not dead but continue to live in a different state and in another world (Vilakazi 1965:89).

Opoku (1993:75) says that there is an indissoluble union between the living and their dead relatives; the dead continue to be members of their families, communities and societies and to interact with their living relatives. Since their spirits were considered to be ever present within the confines of the family, living members of the family and the spirits constituted the unbroken united family. The death of the father (head of the family) did not therefore

mean the loss of contact with him or loss of guidance and help in family matters (Song 1989:116). In fact, this view was commonly held by the Greeks who also believed that the dead continue engaging in the same activities as on earth (Ferguson 1987:118).

If ancestors are alive, where do they live? The answer to this question has in a sense been alluded to above. It is believed that the world where ancestors are leans upon the divine realm where uMvelinqangi is. As people who have changed their physical mode of being into a spiritual mode, and live in a spiritual domain, they are in close proximity to uMvelinqangi. The fact that the 'living dead' are near God, qualifies them to be mediators between God and the living (Ndwandwe 1982:17).

Mbiti (1971:137) asserts that they can assemble before Him or be sent by Him, which is something that the living do not experience. Van der Watt (1999:144) mentions that even though ancestors are in another world, they continue to be part of the family (the living-living) and are still intimately involved in the lives of their children, both in matters of joy and sorrow, health or disease, prosperity or adversity.

5.6.1 Respect in Zulu society

Respect among Zulus was and still is general; everyone must be respected irrespective of age or sex. But respect was also hierarchical in accord with their social structure. The highest one to be accorded respect being uNkulunkulu/ uMvelinqangi and the next on line, in a retrogressive order being the living dead, especially those who had occupied highest positions

such as kings and leaders of families (Ngobese 1981:2). Sawyerr confirms this in his suggestion that the African's attitude to God is a reflection of the experience of his relationship with his chiefs, influenced in certain respects by his attitude to the ancestral spirits (in Nyirongo 1997:17).

Regarding the king, there is an aura of sacredness that attaches to him, requiring that he only be approached through mediators and that he be regarded with reverence and his authority unquestioningly obeyed (Crafford 1996:17). The mediatory chain was also modelled according to the prevailing social and religious culturally established procedure of observing the seniority of persons (Twesigye 1987:95). Among the Zulus seniority came with age and also if you belonged to the right hand side of the family line (*Iqadi*), you always had more respect than those on the left hand side of the line (*Ikhohlo*) (Ngobese 1981:5).

Kings and Leaders of families also performed priestly functions in their families. These two offices, i.e. leader and priest were not under normal circumstances separated, and they did not terminate when the holders of them died. It is held that in the land of the living dead they re-assumed them. As has been pointed out, the living dead are revered because of their success and power (Ngobese 1981:4).

It should also be noted that respect does not originate from void space, it is born out of a situation of life. The elders are people who were experienced in life. Age in Zulu culture means experience in many areas of life (Ngobese 1981:6). Zahan (1979:12) speaking about the importance of social hierarchy in Africa says that here all men have their determined place in society, each

has a function to perform or a role to play, and they arrange themselves in strata according to the order of their coming into the world.

This hierarchical order was respected and observed very strictly especially during celebrations or the performance of any ritual affecting or involving the living dead. The same order of seniority was observed even among the women. This is so true among the Zulus that in the hut they would arrange themselves according to the hierarchical order on their side of the hut and so likewise the men on their side of the hut (Ngobese 1981:5). Seniority meant a lot in Zulu culture. For instance a young man would not feel able to approach a senior man. Instead he would ask the man next to him to approach the senior man on his behalf. Being a young man he has no reason to approach a senior man directly, let alone call him by his first name (Ngobese 1981:6).

What Zahan (1979:49) states holds true among Zulus that an ancestor is also distinguished from people less advanced in age and whose credulity and inexperience in life classify them with children or youths. He further points out that the latter are never given elaborate funerals and are never the focus of a cult. People lamented for men who died young but for those who died having attained a mature age, a sense of celebration and joy surrounded their funerals. These are people for whom the '*ukubuyiswa*' ceremony was held.

Shorter (1973:60) argues that respect or reverence given to them is not related to their ethical behaviour. Whilst this may be true in other African cultures, among the Zulus, ethical behaviour plays a significant role and is considered seriously. What Mbiti (1971:129) says holds true for Zulu people that personality traits are not affected by death but continue in the spirit world.

This is further confirmed by Zahan (1979:50) who asserts that the whole notion of ancestors seem to rest on two key ideas. (1) The purity of a type of man conceived by the group as a social and religious model to which individuals must conform in order to avoid their destruction; and (2) the concern for the continuity and identity of the group over time and despite the vicissitudes of existence.

What is morally bad is what brings misery, misfortune, and disgrace (Motlhabi 1986:95). For instance, adulterers, murderers, thieves, those who commit incest, witches and wizards and all those who do not contribute anything or whose behaviour is anti-social, or are a danger to the wholeness of society. It is believed that when they die they go to the unfortunate realm of dark spirits. These spirits are a source of all evil like sickness, drought, famine and many other disasters. This realm is outside the community of the living dead because these people can never be integrated into the family spirits because of the potential to be instruments or messengers of disaster to the family.

The point we have made above to the effect that personal traits count, is supported by various scholars, who point out that not everyone (who has died) qualifies to be an ancestral spirit (Crafford 1996:14; Skhakhane 1995:107). People who are polluters, invaders or a threat to the wholeness and purity of the society (Neyrey 1990:108) would never qualify for this role. What this strongly underlines is the fact that life was seen as a continuing phenomenon which even death could not terminate, and that one's behaviour was very significant in determining who could approach

uMvelinqangi. God being king of the universe could not be approach by humans directly hence the need for human intermediaries.

5.6.2 A need for an intermediary/mediator

Two factors exacebated the need for a human intermediary: First, the fact that God, being the king of the universe, could not be approached directly by the living. This was in line with Zulu social structure where the king was not directly accessible to anyone but could only be approached through an *inceku*-a servant. In the case of God, it is believed that the only persons who could perform this function were the ancestors.

Second, the belief that God for reasons mentioned in African mythology moved away from this world and now operates from outside of it has enhanced the desire for human mediation. The fact of dependency upon God for Africans is unquestionable (Ngobese 1981:4). Even though dependent upon God, they however feel (at times) that forces of chaos and non-being or annihilation (Twesigye 1987:95) radically threaten their life.

People experience their powerlessness in the face of the evil in the world as it manifest itself in disease, pain suffering poverty, evil spirits, wars, death, barrenness, and natural disasters (Ngobese 1981:8). Tempels contends that it is when the Bantu are faced with the predicament that they are meaningfully oriented to God the Creator as the source of life (in Twesigye 1987:95).

Twesigye (1987:95) further points out that the problem of divine radical transcendence presents the dialogue between God and the Abantu hence the

need of intermediaries between God and the human beings. The need for an intermediary was developed so as to bridge the great gap between the transcendent God and human beings.

The intermediators between human beings and God are usually many, and vary depending on occasion but in most cases among the Zulus they included heads of families. These are people who after death would be integrated to other family spirits. Twesigye (1987:96) argues however that if mediation did not produce the desired results, then the worshippers and petitioners often petitioned God directly themselves.

5.6.3 The creation of the ancestor cult

The gap of approach that results from the observance of seniority in Zulu culture, which has been discussed above, makes the role of the ancestors necessary. It has already mentioned that the gap is not only between the living and the living dead but it exists also between the living and God. As is also evident in African mythology this gap is due to people's sinfulness. God being the first to appear as well as the custodian of all life, the gap is not in terms of age but of being and nature. God is different from human beings. God does not die like human beings and this marks the line of difference between the living and those who are dead but still living. The living see the latter as being better placed and in a more advantageous position than they are.

It was therefore this yawning gap that necessitated the creation of a bridge between the living and the dead. Zulu people believe that ancestors constitute this bridge. They move between God and the living (Ndwandwe

1982:22-23). The Ashanti believe that they pray to god as well as to the ancestors at the same time (McVeigh 1974:114). The belief that ancestors are mediators between God and the living represents in reality a common conception in Africa (McVeigh 1974:115). It is a symbolic representation of reality that people perceive to be real and needing answers.

Goody sees the ancestor cult as a projection of social relationships in a perfectly concrete and meaningful sense (in Ray 1976:145). Ray (1976:145) holds that what makes this projection possible in some African cultures is the symbolic substitution of the deceased by a physical representation. The word 'cult' suggests worship. The word worship suggests two dimensions of approach to that which is being worshipped. The first dimension is that of giving worth to somebody or something that is being worshipped. This dimension involves praising, or giving recognition to the one being worshipped for who s/he is. The second dimension is that of being docile and fawning before, and asking favours from that which is being worshipped (Ngobese 1981:10).

The former dimension is not limited only to the living dead but to the living as well. The living have praises by which they are known by society. In fact it is society that attributes these praises to them. Actions of valour and wisdom, and powers of right judgement and kindness and prompt actions, and all other virtues, are recognised and then poured out to the person who has got them in praises (Ngobese 1981:10). These praises are sung for kings and for ordinary men as well.

The question that plagues one's mind regarding ancestor worship is who is being worshipped? Is it God or the Ancestors? Crafford (1996:15) believes that it is quite mistaken to speak of ancestor worship since the ancestors are not worshipped as if they were gods, rather they are revered as members of the community having greater status and power. During sacrifices, God may be mentioned and his help invoked explicitly. Sometimes he is not mentioned at all but whether he is mentioned or not, he is generally believed to be the ultimate recipient of offerings to lesser gods, who may be explicitly referred to as intermediaries (Dickson & Ellingworth 1969:37) . Shorter (1973:58) agrees that the Supreme Being was mentioned in prayer to the family spirits as the ultimate addressee of the prayer.

Callaway holds a contrary view to Crafford's. He says that people in fact worship the ancestral spirits because they claim to have been told to by uMvelinqangi (in Vilakazi 1965:89). We would like to concur with Callaway and Vilakazi who says that in his experience as a Zulu, living among the Zulu carriers of the culture, he cannot remember a single instance when he heard a prayer by a traditionalist offered to uMvelinqangi. Prayer is seldom addressed directly to the Supreme Being (Thorpe 1991:36), it is to the ancestral spirits that prayers are made, in cases of sterility in women, in cases of illness or when the cattle are dying unaccountably (Vilakazi 1965:89).

Mbiti (1971:93) says that in cases where sacrifices are being offered, where the object is other than God, the recipient is often regarded as an intermediary through whom man establishes a link with God or with the spiritual realm. If this is what obtained at the beginning, then we think that the practice got corrupted along the way. Instead ancestral mediation has

tended to become a barrier to communication with the Supreme Being (Shorter 1973: 58). Kwenda (1999:4) alluding to the deification of ancestors says that ancestors, far from being seen as needing redemption themselves, have invariably been absolutised as demigods who wield socio-jural authority, which entitles them to demand worshipful obedience from their afflicted descendant. Their role as legitimate mediators required ritualisation of some kind to make it real in the minds of the living. The ceremony of *ukubuyiswa*, which is discussed below served this purpose.

5.6.4 The ‘ukubuyiswa Ceremony’ (The integration of the spirit into the family spirits)

According to Ray (1976:140), at death, especially the death of a senior member, a significant moral and social gap occurs. Ray further notes that at this time the family and other kinsmen must close the gap and reconstitute itself through a series of ritual and social adjustments, whilst at the same time the soul of the deceased must undergo a series of spiritual adjustments if he or she is to find a secure place in the afterlife and continue to remain in contact with the family left behind. In Ray's statement there is already an allusion to the ceremony, which Zulu people call ‘*Ukubuyiswa*’, that is, ‘bringing back’ (Congdon 1984:25; Vilakazi 1965:89).

Africans believe that the spirit of the dead person does not become an ancestral spirit immediately (Crafford 1996:15) but that the spirit betakes itself to the nearest veld after the death of a person (Vilakazi 1965:89). The Shona people of Zimbabwe hold that the dead are doomed to eternal

wandering unless they are called home to the lineage spirits through a special ceremony (Shorter 1973:60).

Zulus call this special ceremony '*Ukubuyiswa*', that is, when the spirit of the dead person is being integrated with other spirits and made to join the ancestral world (Vilakazi 1965:89; Crafford 1996:15). Magubane (1998:62) sees the *ukubuyisa* ceremony as the bringing home of the spirit of the dead person. Only when he has been *buyiswa'd*, can the dead person re-assume his duties.

The *ukubuyisa* ceremony is performed by a specially appointed person who is trained to do it, being usually an heir or an oldest man in the family. Sometimes the most senior woman in the kraal or family could be appointed to officiate at the sanctuary (*Ofindo*) if there is no capable man available to do so (Ngobese 1981:4). Princess Mkabayi kaJama, a woman, for instance, occupied this office a number of times when her brother king Shaka suddenly died through assassination and during the exile of king Dingane. Princess Mkabayi did not only perform these functions, she also acted as regent.

The views of the church regarding this practice are varied. The Protestant tradition rejects ancestral veneration as idolatry and superstitious, a transgression of the first commandment (Crafford 1996:16). However, the Roman Catholic Church has made a bold attempt towards indigenisation or accommodation. Mngadi (1981:146) who relates his experience in a Roman Catholic Service in Soweto, where an attempt at christianising the *ukubuyiswa* ceremony was being made, corroborates this point.

5.6.5 The role of the ancestors

McVeigh (1974:29) states that the cardinal fact of African life is that the living and the dead form one community whose members are mutually dependent upon each other. The role of ancestors is bound up with the human experience of evil and suffering, of misfortune and well being, of illness and health, in short, it is tied up with the destiny of members of specific lineage group. In a sense, ancestors are nearer and more concerned with the fate of their own family members than the clan and other tribal spirits. The living depend on the 'living dead' because they are both more knowing and more powerful than the living (McVeigh 1974:29). The living therefore, expect help of the departed in their fight against the evil forces that pervade the world and threaten them at every turn.

The role of the departed is seen as more of blessing than cursing. They are concerned about the family and the community and are dedicated basically to its well-being (McVeigh 1974:29). Crafford (1996:15) says that their role is to mediate between God and the tribe, bind the community together, take care of the daily needs of the tribe by sending rain and fertility, preserve the customs and traditions of the family, clan and tribe, and attend the rite de passage of each individual, lending help at times of birth, initiation, marriage and burial.

Ancestors are looked at as the guardians of individuals, families and the community as a whole, hence the centring of so much attention on them in African society (McVeigh 1974:103; Skhakhane 1995:109). They are the official guardians of the social and moral order (Ray 1976:146). While they are generally described as being well disposed towards members of their

own descent group, they are also attributed with inflicting suffering (on the living) either due to their capriciousness or due to wrongdoing or neglect on the part of their descendants.

Zulus also recognise that the ancestors can behave arbitrarily and unpredictably (Crafford 1996:15), or irresponsibly and foolishly, hence they are sometimes called 'Izithutha', that is, 'fools' (Vilakazi 1965:89-90). It is also believed that the ancestors or living dead offer protection to members of their lineage (Hexham 1987:22-23). They may also withdraw their protection and in such a situation they need to be appeased.

5.6.5.1 Ancestors as Mediators

Mediation is a familiar concept that enhances the importance of the one being addressed (Shorter 1973:57). The African idea that kings and important people cannot be approached directly has enhanced the importance of mediation. Because of the relationship that exists between the living and the dead and the fact that the living dead are near God, they are considered well placed and best suited to be mediators between God and the living. The African belief in the survival of human personality after death (McVeigh 1974:26) cannot be underestimated. Vilakazi (1965:89) states that the idea of mediation, where the ancestral spirits (amathongo or amadlozi) are mediators between uNkulunkulu and men, is very imperfectly developed.

5.6.5.2 The significance of blood in the ancestor cult

Sacrifice to the ancestors continues to be a very common practice among Africans (Tlhagale 1995:53). Sacrifice to the ancestors continues to be done in moments of great sadness such as when someone has died or in moments of great joy such as in the case of marriage. These are not the only occasions when slaughtering is done.

Sometimes, when it is perceived that there is a dark cloud hanging over the family leading to various difficulties for members of the family such as unemployment, or illness, an animal suitable for this purpose would be slaughtered. Also in times of celebration, such as the birth of a child, slaughtering would mark the occasion. The ritual of slaughtering is also prevalent among Christians, which thing may suggest that a dichotomy is not perceived at all.

5.6.5.3 The symbolic use of blood as a means of effecting communication

Zulus believe that the blood of a slaughtered animal also effected communication with the living dead. The blood of the sacrificial animal is offered to the ancestors because blood is the symbol of life. It represents the place where life and death meet. Rees (1986:47) states that because it marks the frontier between life and death, it has often been a pathway of communication between people and God.

Blood symbolises in its fullest extent the life of the individual (Tlhagale 1995:55). He further argues that the ancestor cult is at the heart of an African

religious experience, and that it is time to lift the banning order and welcome them (the ancestors) openly into the Christian family of the living and the dead (1995: 58-59). Tlhagale's point of welcoming ancestors openly into the Christian family requires further discussion, which we will not delve into since at the moment our discussion is centred on the significance of blood.

In dealing with the significance of blood in the ancestor cult, two opposite views are expressed by various scholars. On the one hand, there is a view, which completely denies the fact that Africans ever worshipped ancestors (Mbiti 1971:9; Berglund 1976:43). On the other hand, there is a view that is expressed by Geifand, that, it is safe to assume that Africans who have not yet adopted the Christian or Mohammedan faith believe and pray to their spirit elders or relatives or ancestors (in Mngadi 1982:115). One may take this further and say that some Christians still pray to their living dead. Here are some of the uses of blood among Africans.

5.6.5.4 The Blood of Reconciliation.

Reconciliation has a central role in African religion and practice (Oduyoye 1979:113). Within Zulu cosmology, the concept of reconciliation is known and was well attested for long before the advent of the Christian message among them. Reconciliation suggests the mending of relationships that have been strained or broken. Broken relations are never allowed to go unhealed (Oduyoye 1979:113).

Within the symbolic universe of Zulu people, anything that disrupted the harmonious co-existence of members of a family or society was taken

seriously. The misunderstanding therefore that suggests that Africans had no conception of sin, needs to be rectified. Africans did have a conception of sin but they did not conceive it the same way as in Western culture (Mnyaka 1995:92).

An important subject such as reconciliation would not be known in a universe where the inhabitants had no conception of sin. Sin within the Zulu symbolic universe represented a threat to the wholeness of family. It could therefore, be described as that which disrupts or destroys the mutual and harmonious co-existence of a family or society. What is clear from this definition is that sin is never defined in isolation. It is defined in terms of community because that is the arena where the interplay of human relationships and behaviour is manifested. The community is also the arena for serious personal and group challenges, tension, conflicts and sin, as well as the context for the human quest for forgiveness and the expiation of the torment or guilt and broken relationships (Twesigye 1987:113).

Sin can also be conceived in terms of breaking the rules of society. Any person who acts contrary to the norms and values of family or society, or who threatens the well being of society, such as a person who practices witchcraft, does not only sin against society but weakens and harms its unity. When one commits sin he/she is actually alienating himself/herself from the community, and if he/she persists, this leads to self-destruction (Mnyaka 1995:93). A sinner also jeopardised the good name of the family, the tribe and nation. Just as sin is viewed with such seriousness, reconciliation within the symbolic universe of Zulu people also plays a fundamental role as a means of restoring broken relationships. The pursuit of

reconciliation requires that at some point it be effected through slaughtering and spilling of blood, which are essential in this process. Without blood there can be no proper reconciliation.

5.7 Dealing with sinners

The seriousness of transgressing or sinning against family or society has already been intimated above. Depending on the nature of the sin, society has devised various options for people who have committed acts of transgression. First, the person would be confronted and made to see how disruptive his actions are to the well being of the family or society. If he or she shows co-operation and humbleness, he or she would be asked to make the necessary reparation aimed at achieving catharsis and reconciliation (Mnyaka 1995:94). There are many ways of effecting this. Either the person would be asked to publicly apologise or to pay a prescribed fine. The aim of the fine, as Mnyaka (1995:95) argues, is not to discredit a person but to uphold community values and restore the dignity of the sinner.

If the person refuses to show penance, he or she is either ostracised or stigmatised. Wilson (1980:75) describes this act as ‘witchcraft accusation’. Witchcraft accusation could lead to the expulsion of the individual concerned. Among the Zulus, people who were accused of witchcraft were expelled ‘*babedingiswa*’ from that particular society.

Because sin is an act against the well being of the collectivity named family or society, reconciliation is never an individual affair. If it was a feud between two individuals or families, it was expected that in order to reconcile, it was incumbent upon them to seek and call for a third party, who

would act as mediator so that the end result would be '*ukuthelelana amanzi*', i.e. 'to pour over water'. Berglund in his *Zulu Thought-Patterns and symbolism* (p, 232 -235, 1976) discusses this rite in detail.

In cases of serious offences, it was necessary that blood be spilled to effect reconciliation. The sacrificing and spilling off of blood is usually performed in some Traditional Religion after due consultation with the diviner and confession of sin (Ubruhe 1996:15). The offering of blood secures reconciliation not only among the living but also with the living dead. Mngadi (1982:144) contends that Africans believed that without the shedding of blood there could be no reconciliation.

5.8 The role of Izinyanga and Izangoma

The symbolic world of Zulus perceives the countryside as filled with supernatural powers, with demons or spirits inhabiting mountains, forests trees, stones, rivers and fountains. Within the framework of such a world-view, the reality of demons, spirits and powers is a phenomenon that needs to be taken seriously. It has to be taken seriously as well as life directing forces in the first century world-view (Botha & Craffert: 17).

All the above play an important role in legitimating reality in the life of people in African villages and communities. In Africa sorcery and witchcraft are stamped out as an anti-social evil because they are a threat to people's health and well-being and disrupt social relations, especially within the extended family (Lagerwerf 1987:18).

In traditional African communities, a variety of traditional healers (Crafford 1996:16) exist for the purpose protecting society against these forces. There are medicine men i.e. traditional doctors 'Izinyanga', diviners 'Izangoma', and mediums. These perform functions according to their categories. There are some nyangas and zangomas who function both as healers and diviners. All of them rely on the counsel, wisdom and power of the ancestral spirits to reveal to them the secrets of what they have to do. Izinyanga specialise in the use of medicines extracted from plants and animal products for the treatment of illness and protection against sorcery and disaster (Crafford 1996:17).

Vilakazi et al (1986:15) contends that divination is part of Zulu religion (in Kitshoff 1996:27). The diviners 'izangoma' stand between the living and the dead. Through them messages are received from the land of the departed and they are able to tell of the difficulties that are to befall the living. According to Mnyandu (1993:107) the duties of the diviners include the following:

- to diagnose illness in his or her clients
- to prescribe methods to heal them
- to establish cause of misfortunes
- to settle conflict
- to predict future events
- to warn clients/community about problems to come
- to mediate between community members and their ancestors
- to intercede for the community to the ancestors
- to give counsel to the chief of the area.

The diviners in most cases are able to function in this role only when the spirit possesses them. In the case of sickness, the diviners are able to give information regarding the disease, the nature and also prescribe the treatment for it. In cases of theft, they are able to direct people to where the stolen article is. In matters affecting the tribe, they act as priests for the tribe. They officiate at official ceremonies and give direction as to how sacrifices are to be offered.

There is another view, which sees izangoma as vehicles of ancestral spirits whose power is perceived to be in opposition to or in competition with the power of Christ, or alternatively they are seen as the only interpreters of the wishes of the ancestors (Tlhagale 1997:1). According to Crafford (1996:16), mediums are usually women who specialise in contacting and calling up ancestral spirits, enabling communication with them (cf. 1 Sam 28:8-25). Crafford (1996:17) states that through their contact with the spirits and their supernatural skills, their ability to ensure health, wealth and fertility, their reconciling and protecting work, traditional healers wield great influence in the community. The perception of reality in Zulu society is not complete without giving due attention to spiritual forces and the role Izinyanga and izangoma play in stabilising and creating equilibrium in Zulu symbolic universe.

5.9 Summary

We mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that having endeavoured to draw the contours of the symbolic universe of 1 John, an attempt to paint an African scenario or symbolic universe even though difficult is necessary. In the context of Africa it is difficult to speak of an African perspective or symbolic universe because of its many and varied cultures. Our contention and conviction, however, is that on a higher level of abstraction, there exist enough similarities among cultures that obtain in Africa to enable an undertaking of such a venture. There is an abundance of literature which disputes the old idea that African people had no conception of God hence our beginning with the conception of God in Africa to show how clear their view of God was.

Africa also exhibits a strong sense of communality, a factor, which operates on the triad footings of the family, the clan (or extended family), and the total community, the family being the microcosm of the bigger whole. Within the symbolic universe of Zulus as that of Africa individualism has no place since identity and self-worth depends on being in tune with one's family and community. The family is central within it individuals are socialised and discover the meaning of true humanity. The family therefore acts as the legitimating institution in the life of each individual. Individuals have to be obedient and in their lives exhibit all the good values that the family stands for. Any action, which is contrary to *ubuntu*, i.e. socially validated norms and values, threatens the well being of the family/community. Such an action could have serious consequences for the family/community as well as the offending individual. If it is not quickly

attended to and remedied, could spark the wrath of the ancestors, whose role is seen as that of being custodians and protectors of the family as well as the go-between God and the living. Even though ancestors are departed the network of family relationships is never broken by death. Any offence against family is offence against them. This means that reconciliation to be achieved and properly validated, the ancestors have somehow to be involved.

The structural dynamics of traditional social organisation are also evident within Zulu cosmology, with ultimate authority being attributed to God, and then followed in subsequent order by ancestors, leaders or heads of families and the rest of the membership of the family. This order is in accord with Zulu hierarchical system, which is based on respect. God is viewed along the same lines as kings and therefore accorded the same respect resulting in the need for a go-between. The living dead who perform this function, even though they occupy their own world, are believed to be involved and continue to exert enormous influence over members of their families. The belief in the influential role played by ancestors is so strong among Zulus that even some of the people who profess to be Christian still cling tenaciously to this belief.

In terms of Zulu symbolic universe the world is full of supernatural powers. Their reality has to take into serious consideration the presence of evil spirits and demons that make life in the human world extremely precarious. The precariousness of life has forced African societies to have a tightly organised cosmology. The precarious spiritual elements compel people to find ways of combating their threatening presence. Consequently, they have come up with elaborate manipulative rituals designed to harness the good favours of the

ancestors as well as ward off or placate evil spirits. Ritualisation is effected in a variety of ways designed to help people come to terms with what has happened or to re enact their beliefs. The Nyangas and Zangomas occupy a very important place in Zulu society and play a significant role in helping people cope with threatening forces and offer explanation designed for the lessening and integration of the impact of these upon the established reality.

CHAPTER SIX

Method of data collection, discussion and synthesis of findings.

6.1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

6.2 Why has the qualitative approach been chosen?

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

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

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

6.2.1 Population size and delimitation of the study

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

6.2.2 Sampling procedure

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

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

6.2.3 The method of data collection

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.2.4 The instrument

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

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

6.2.5 A questionnaire

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

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

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

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

6.2.6 Permission and ethical considerations

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

6.2.7 Pilot study

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

6.3 DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS

6.3.1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.A FAMILY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ROLES

6.4.B FATHER

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.B.1.1 Education of the children

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.B.1.2 The protection of children

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.B.1.3 The priesthood of the family

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.C - CHILDREN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.C.4.1 Children and their responsibilities towards parents

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAINTENANCE OF SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE

6.4.D - DEALING WITH DEVIANTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.D.5.1 The problem of sin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.D.8.1 Salvation in traditional Zulu society

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

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

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

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

6.4.E- AMADLOZI/ABAPHANSI/ABAXHUMANISI

6.4.E.1 Who are the ancestors?

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.E.4 What are they to you?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.E.6.1 Christian participation in ritual sacrifices

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

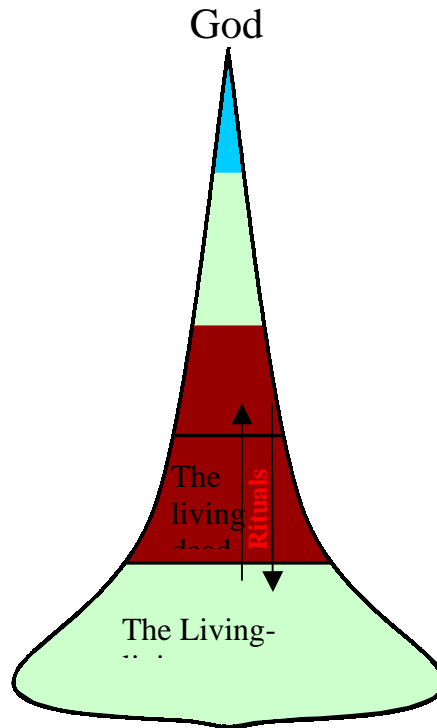


Diagram 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.F GOD

6.4.F.1 Who is God to you?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.F.8 Who is Jesus to you?

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.F.9.1 The Black Messiah

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ngiyakholwa kuYise
Naku Moya oNgcwele
Nenhlango yabangcwele base Nazaretha

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

(in Lwandle 1996:13).

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

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

(in Lwandle 1996:87).

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

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

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

6.4.F.9.2 The Elder Brother

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.F.9.3 Christ as proto - ancestor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.5 A nagging question

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.6 Some preliminary observations on the two symbolic universes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10) Constant reference was made to the fact that inhabitant of the Zulu world sees the universe in concrete terms. Rituals therefore play a significant role in concretising reality for them. How do we concretise the reality cast in abstract terms for Zulu people to relate to? The symbol of the ancestors, blood proper in the Eucharist, and other rituals connected to birth could be explored in our search for concretising reality.

11) Finally, we noted, that the symbols we discussed relate to two different families, the earthly and heavenly. With regard to 1 John these symbols are reinterpreted and imbued with new meaning thus defining the new spiritual world and new reality as perceived by the author. The difference between the two families means that great caution has to be exercised in the reading process. The purpose of our reading is to engenderer maximal acceptance of the message of 1 John by Zulu people. As common threads are pulled together and a merging of worlds takes place, a process we have been referring to as the building of a hermeneutical bridge, a transition from one symbolic world to another will be enhanced.

6.7 Summary

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER SEVEN

Hermeneutic issues raised by our reading of 1 John in the Zulu context.

7.1 Introduction

Hillman (1993:31) rightly points out that all people exist only in limited historical periods, and within concrete cultural contexts, all with their respective symbols system of communication, symbols which would convey no meaning to anybody, unless a society of people agreed on what the symbols stand for, as far as they were concerned (Verryn 1982:2). Hillman further states that God's dynamic self-communication always has an incarnational tendency. There is an indispensable need for fleshly visibility, audibility and tangibility in particular historical and cultural forms capable of mediating the meaning of God's message in the respective times and contexts of each distinctive people (Hillman 1993:31).

Any reading of the Bible presupposes the interpretation of the very text that is being read. The interpretation also depends on the inter-action between the text and the reader (Suggit 1997:77). A valid hermeneutic therefore is dependent on the following condition being met. First, awareness that no one approaches the text from a neutral standpoint. We all come to it already (culturally) programmed (West 1994:18). Our cultural programming, which gives us our cultural identity, is imposed upon us.

Cupitt (1990:161) explains how this programming takes place. He states that everyone is and has to be a member of a language-group because a person's

own identity is bound up with her mother-tongue; because culture is undeniably intimately linked to language; because language is never a neutral communication-medium but is very highly ideologically loaded, and because we learn language in idioms, in language games and in cultural practices. All these play a significant role in constituting each person as he or she is. Therefore, as Bosch (1980) rightly points out we all involuntarily read from within a specific socio-historical context, and then we project our own convictions back into the Bible (in Mouton 1994: 359).

What is emphasised by these scholars is the effect of context and identity on individuals and groups in their reading of the Bible, something that warns us of the danger of assuming that one can adopt an absolute view of 'what the Bible says'. We read the Bible through the windows shaped by our own culture, our education, and our social and financial situation. The danger begins when we start to assume that our own particular lenses are the only ones that are valid.

Second, readers or hearers must at all times be prepared to examine and reconsider their beliefs and attitudes in response to the text (Suggit 1997:77). Readers must be committed to critically analysing and examining their own culture and the subjective conditionings it imposes upon them. The difficulty that will be faced by each reader relates to what he or she takes as his point of departure. If, as Ukpong (1995:5) points out, the reader consciously takes his/her socio-cultural context as a point of departure, this then would be reflected in the outcome of his/her reading. If his/her point of departure arises from his/her Christian orientation, that as well would reflect itself in the end product of the reading process. One has got to come clear why one identifies

two points of departures. The researcher is not naïve to the fact that we are all culturally conditioned. The question the researcher wants to raise is towards which of these are we strongly oriented? That in the last analysis is what determines our approach and the outcome of our reading. Having discussed above the two preconditions for reading, an important hermeneutic question we need now to consider concerns the reader.

7.2 Who is the reader?

Botha (1992:25-6) mentions that the active and creative role of the reader in any act of interpretation and, subsequently, a renewed emphasis on the importance of context, is widely recognised by scholars in literary criticism, rhetorical studies, and biblical studies. Who is the reader? is a very apt question that needs to be clarified before we proceed. Botha et al (1998:8) raise the following questions, which are being asked in reader-response criticism. (1) Is reading primarily an individual or social experience? (2) Which dominates the reading experience, the text or the reader? (3) Is ‘the reader’ an expert reader or an ordinary reader?

Before venturing to answer these questions, let us note what Mgojo (1986:114) says that the community has to act as the formulator of theology, and Cochrane (1994:13) emphasises that it is from the base (community) that the living force of contextual theology will have to come. What these theologians say underline the importance of reading and theologising in context.

The purpose of this study is to reflect on what it means to read 1 John in a Zulu context and the hermeneutical issues raised by this kind of reading. Who

is the reader? Three kinds of readers are envisaged in the context of thesis. Apart from discussing here the possible advantages and disadvantages of these readers due to their varying vantage points and background, we will in the ensuing discussion narrow ourselves to one reader. These readers represent the various perspectives from which contextual reading could be undertaken.

First, the reader could be an expert or a trained person who shares to a certain degree the symbolic universe of Zulu people, a category that fits the researcher. Second, the reader could be a trained reader from outside the context, who attempts to read the text ‘with the people’ (West 1994:20). Third, the reader could be an ordinary Zulu person endeavouring to make sense of the text of 1 John in his/her context.

7.2.1 Reader One (the theologically trained Zulu person)

It has already been pointed out that the researcher fits in the first category, that is, of a trained reader within the context of Zulu people. This reader has to be understood as the reader-in-context (Ukpong 1995:5) in that he shares the socio-cultural context and world-view of the Zulu people within whose context he seeks to do the reading of 1 John. This reader also shares tensions and opposition within himself, as he does what Long (1994:402) calls the crucial act of self-disclosure.

The reader is first, a Christian, a priest, a teacher of the faith, a counsellor, a person of prayer, a fervent believer in evangelism, and a leader of a

congregation. Second, an African, to be precise, a Zulu, who has been equipped with various skills for reading and interpreting the Bible. This raises a very serious tension for the reader. The tension arisen from the fact that even though he shares in the symbolic universe of Zulu people, the core of what constitutes his universe is legitimated by his new orientation and Christian identity and all that goes with it.

Another source of constant tension arises from the suspicion he has of the western garb with which texts of scripture are usually clothed and the hegemonic control (Draper 1998:3) that those who have been trained in western methods of interpretation think they have over others. The reader is at the same time suspicious of the cloak with which African theologians are uncritically attempting to re-dress and obfuscate the text of scripture, under the guise of Africanisation, inculturation, indigenisation, and contextualisation.

The reader is rather encouraged by the fact that by belonging to the wider circle of theological thinking, he has a tinge of that influence which frees him from the shackles of contextual bondage and minimises his biases. But he is also aware of the hegemonic attitude and position with which he approaches the text and the condescending manner that might have on his context.

7.2.2 Reader Two (the trained reader ‘reading with the people’)

Reader two has a dual problem. Not only is she/he seeking to read the text of 1 John, which originated from a different context from her/his but also she/he is trying to read this in another context foreign to his/hers – the Zulu context. The world of the text can to a certain degree be hypothetically worked out with the help of the bulk of information that has been made available but the Zulu context is a living organism influencing people here and now.

One is not suggesting that it is impossible to read the text if one is from a different context. Reading in another context other than one’s own requires time, an attitude of openness, a willingness to be partially constituted (West 1999:45), a willingness to learn, and a willingness to be transformed by what one discovers.

A reader from outside the context has to guard against the danger of ethnocentrism (Kraft 1979) and a condescending superiority, which can only further her/his estrangement and biases. The training, which this reader brings to the task, whilst it places her/him in an advantageous position, can also pose serious problems to being open to new ideas and perceptions. Theologians know the golden rule given by C.E. Braaten (1968), that is, to be self-conscious about their own presuppositions (in Stanton 1977:61).

West (1994:19) has outlined one of the temptations of trained readers as having a tendency to read for the people without hearing them. This tendency shows itself in the temptation to interpret for ordinary readers or in simply and uncritically accepting the interpretations of ordinary people. In order to

avoid pretending to be hearing what ordinary readers are saying in the process of reading, West (1994:20) suggests that the trained readers should engage in the process of reading with the people.

This kind of reading means that trained readers acknowledge the privilege and power their training gives them in the group. It also means that trained readers must empower ordinary readers to discover and then to acknowledge their own identity and the value and significance of their own contributions and experiences (West 1994:20). In this process of 'reading with', West points out that all are active and all are subjects.

While one finds West's approach laudable because of one's inclinations towards it, a concern should however be voiced. A trained reader reading with ordinary people will always find himself or herself in a difficult position. The expert /trained reader stands in a hegemonic position over the people he is reading with. Without meaning to superimpose his/her knowledge over the ordinary reading she/he will in very subtle ways do just that.

In fact, what causes suspicion in the researcher is admitted by West himself when he says the trained reader should acknowledge the privilege and power their training gives them (West 1994:20). This is not like dealing with presuppositions, where awareness assists in keeping the theologian close to being objective. The situation here presents itself, or should we say superimposes itself on the trained reader. The end result is that a condescending kind of attitudes surfaces as the trained reader begins to assume the role of empowerer. One may be unfairly critical in this because

the process, which West describes, is closer to what the researcher is wrestling with.

In the process of 'reading with', especially when the trained reader is from outside that particular context, two very different symbolic universes are brought together. What is likely to happen is what the Comaroffs call the symbolic transfer whereby those of a weaker culture will appropriate symbols from the imposing culture into the belief system of their own (Balcomb 1998:9-10). Would they be appropriating symbols emanating from the text or from the world of the reader? Reading of the text by an outsider to a particular context provides a situation of confrontation. Such a confrontation even though unequally executed is never a one-sided venture, which touches one and leaves the other. Both are equally and transformed by their contact with each other (Draper 1998:3). The extent to which transformation takes place would be determined by the extent of the influence exerted by one over the other.

7.2.3 Reader Three (the ordinary Zulu reader)

The third scenario involves 'real readers' embedded in their own concrete social location. The statements that all theology is contextual theology (Mosala 1985:104), rooted in the community's experience of faith (Mgojo 1986:114) emphasise the importance of 'real readers' in the process of formulating a contextual theology. In contextual theology, interpretation and meanings are shaped within communities.

This is also an apt reminder as West rightly points out, that it is not only the professionally trained theologians that do theology and Biblical interpretation (in Botha 1994:293). This leads us to focusing on our third reader/s. We suggest untrained Zulu reader/s venturing to read 1 John, a document which is ideologically pregnant. These readers have no other conditioning except that of their culture, and they bring with them variety and a vast range of experiences to the reading of the Bible (West 1955: 66). In their reading they are bound to come up with variegated interpretations, which are informed by the angles from which they approached the text. The host of difficulties in their regard outweighs the apparent advantages. 1. The text being read is foreign in origin. It was conceptualised and concretised outside their culture almost two thousand years ago. That on its own constitutes a huge hermeneutical barrier. 2. Without knowledge of the background and symbols the author of 1 John employs, they are bound to read into the text their own interpretation and claim them to be what scripture is saying. 3. The lack of interpretative skills also impoverishes their reading venture. 4. In this kind of reading the text can easily be compromised to individual interpretation.

If a trained reader is involved reading with ordinary readers, to ensure that the text is not mutilated and contextualised in an arbitrary manner, it is incumbent upon the trained reader to enter as an equal and then bring his/her critical skills to bear upon the reading process. Our approach differs slightly in that our reading within a Zulu context of this dissertation is with the view to establishing congruence so that a hermeneutical bridge between the two symbolic universes may be established. We do however share the same convictions with West that a reading of this nature needs to be critically conducted, a task that can only be executed by the trained reader.

7.3 Hermeneutics in context

Reading understood in its proper perspective embodies interpretation, that is, when we read, we are engaged in hermeneutics. The focus of this study is therefore on practical hermeneutic issues emanating from the perspective of the reader, in this case a Zulu person embedded in his concrete cultural context. Smit (1994:309) points out that it is an illusion to think that we are ‘innocent’ readers without presuppositions. David Tracy puts it even more succinctly when he says that there is no innocent interpretation, no innocent interpreter, no innocent text (in West 1992:4). The Zulu person brings his/her baggage to the reading process. The text which she/he reads, that is, 1 John, is itself a communicative device from the past, first intended for the original readers and therefore ideologically loaded but which by divine permission has come to address the modern reader as well.

We think that Wink is right in saying that the texts of the Bible speak to practical issues about life, especially life in the community (in West 1995:61). Therefore, a theological hermeneutic that is required is one that will speak meaningfully to the concrete situations of the readers or else it will be rendered irrelevant. The issues raised by this study are not so much on a literary but sociological basis, that is, what lies ‘behind the text’ (West 1995:18) one is reading.

In chapter four and five of this study it became clear that the same dynamics that obtained in the original reading or construction of the text, apply in the reading of the same in a new context but with some variation. The modern reader attempts to understand this text within his own situation, which is very

different from the situation of the original readers. His or her reading of the text, then, as Croatto points out is done from a given situation - from and in a context that is no longer that of the first addressees of the text. The reader interrogates the text from and in the reader's own being and concerns - not in order to impose an extraneous meaning, but in order to interpret the text itself (in West 1995:157).

Croatto's discussion of the Bible as the text upon which we focus regardless of the context we find ourselves in, is very important. By saying this Croatto does not mean to disregard the fact that the very text from which re-readings flow (in West 1995:162) is full of very implicit assumptions, which are not at the disposal of the modern reader.

It is these implicit assumptions that force the reader to search behind the text with the hope of finding more information that sheds light on the text as it stands. Whilst it is important to note the difficulty of trying to get what is 'behind' the text, we believe also that it is not easy to understand the message without attempting to get a slight glimpse of (into) the socio-historical world within which it was first conceptualised and constructed. The past should be sought for in order that it may inform the present. If that does not happen then Croatto's critique that the historical-critical method and other such like it run the risk of shutting up the message of the Bible in the past by clinging to the intention of the author or redactor as the sole meaning (in West 1995:163), is justified.

A relevant hermeneutic we propose will be one that is deeply rooted and incarnated in the context of the readers. Draper like Schillebeeckx points out:

incarnation is inconceivable in the abstract: it can only be incarnation into membership of a specific and particular community and world-view; into a network of human and material relations (in Cochrane 1994:11-2). A deeply incarnational approach is bound to be effective in that it will be based on concreteness rather than abstractness.

If the reader is a professional reading with the people, it is incumbent upon him or her to begin from the known and proceed to the unknown (Mijoga 1996:61). The known here stands for the life situation of the people. This kind of reading requires some understanding of the symbolic universe of the first readers of the text as well as that of the present readers of the text and the situation obtaining at the time of reading the text. These are all relevant in the reading exercise for they exert influence upon each other.

The reading of the Bible cannot be seen as a one-way process, but a dialectical one. Draper (1999:14) referring to the missionaries' entry with the Bible into Africa, points out that the reception of the Bible must be seen as a dialectical process, an unequal one in many respects to be sure, but nevertheless a more intricate, contested and mutual process than has usually been recognised.

Voelz referring to the impact of context on readers (receptors) says that they themselves are complexes of beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, experiences, and so on. When they engage in reading which is an interpretive venture, these factors are activated and brought into connection with a text, as (reading) interpretation proceeds, they become part of the very matrix for textual interpretation (Voelz 1999:159). For genuine reading to take place, one must

begin with the culture of the receiver and imagine a dialectical approach to the relation between text and context (culture) in which the reading process of the text is gradually disengaged from its previous cultural embeddedness and is allowed to take on new forms consonant with the new cultural setting.

7.4 Describing the process

We have attempted in the previous chapters to explore the various contours discernible in contextual reading. ‘Reading’ conjures up a number of expectations among readers. There will be those who see the text as the monopoly of academicians who possess exegetical and hermeneutical skills. As Botha (1994:293) rightly notes, it is no longer only the professionally trained theologians that do theology and Biblical interpretation. There are other important role player in the production of meaning – the ordinary readers.

If the text is dealt with in the academic echelons of university, reading becomes rather an easier exercise because in that context it would probably mean tracing the accumulated legacy of the nineteen hundred years of reading (Smit 1994:315). But the pragmatic reading of the text within the situation of a particular people poses enormous challenges. How then do we read an ancient document in a new social context with ordinary readers? This in the reading venture becomes an important hermeneutical issue. We will therefore offer a description of the reading process as we see it.

Reading in the context of this thesis refers not to an individual venture but a reading with people embedded within a particular social location and reality-

the Zulu context. Therefore, reader and receptor belong together; they are the reading core, that is, those who are involved in the actual reading of the text of 1 John. The researcher will not offer a detailed description of the actual reading process but what he envisages as steps to be followed by those who read with others.

As reader/receptor their aim is to make sense of 1 John and to discover what message it has for them. Without participating in some context, it is virtually impossible to make sense of the Biblical message. Esler (1994:22) is right in pleading for the piercing of the veil of familiarity with which the text has been wrapped. He goes on to state that if we do not recognise the cultural gap and seek to bridge it, we are like boorish and uncomprehending visitors to a foreign country who make no attempt to understand local customs and institutions. An important hermeneutical question is: Which context should dominate in this process?

7.5 Which dominates the reading experience, is it the text or the reader?

Texts are essentially a means of communication. They convey thoughts and stimulate reactions within the (readers) receptors with a greater or lesser degree of intentionality (Voelz 1999:157). During the process of interpretation, the reader is hardly passive. Vorster (1991) rightly states that the text ‘operates’ on the reader, which causes him to respond (in Le Roux 1994:12).

As the text of 1 John is read in a Zulu context, the reader activates certain signifiers whom he or she detects in the text. An interactive (Vorster 1991) or dialectical process (Draper 1999) is envisaged as signifiers within the reader's own context are activated and as each begins to engage creatively with the other. As a result, the reader is in a real sense, constructing (and not only re-constructing) the text which is being read (Voelz 1999:159) but he or she is also being remade by the text he or she is reading. The dialectical relationship between the symbolic universes of the text and that of Zulu people will provide vital clues to a theological hermeneutic which respects the plurality of readings of the text.

The interaction between the text and the contextual readers (i.e. readers embedded in their social context) will begin at a very slow pace as the latter try to decipher meanings encoded in the text. The process is accelerated as certain symbols are triggered in the process. However, where inadequate symbols are simply affirmed, distortion takes place, and the more inadequate the symbol, the greater the distortion (Macquarrie 1977:162)

This raises a hermeneutical issue since symbols or words cannot be interpreted independently of their context. Every symbol belongs within a stream of history. What needs noting is that no symbols have exactly the same meaning in any two cultures. The context determines the meaning given to each symbol. In the case of symbols activated in the text during the reading process, readers should look for correlative symbols activated within their cultural context. The correlativeness of these should be critically examined before a claim can be made that the symbol concerned embodied the same meaning as the one encapsulated in the ancient text.

The text of 1 John and its context are inextricably interwoven, constituting an indivisible phenomenon. For that reason, we have got to 'read context' if we want to read the text adequately (Botha 1994:292). As it crosses the cultural boundary and enters into a Zulu context, it encounters a context, which is significantly different from its own. As a result a plurality of readings and interpretations are made possible. Both the text and the reader play a significant role in the production of meaning (Ukpong 1995:10).

The plurality of interpretations cannot be divorced from the contexts from which they emanate. The hermeneutic significance of particular contexts would therefore lie in the correlation between contemporary interpretations and classic interpretations of the text (Cochrane 1994:12). The involvement of trained readers reading with people should ensure that the faithful commitment to the critical mode of reading the Bible (West 1992:6) is not lost in the reading process. A critical hermeneutic that recognises and takes seriously the significant understandings emanating from local contexts, would facilitate the appreciation and integration of local thoughts, experiences and traditions into their foundational theological statements.

If criticalness is divorced from the reading process then obviously the resultant meaning will be completely foreign and divorced from the intended meaning of the text or the meaning of the symbols in the new context. The only time it is possible to transfer meaning from one context to the other is when the words and symbols used in the ancient document have meanings consonant with theirs in the new context. In such cases easy access is granted. Even this should not be taken for granted. The reader should constantly

engage his or her critical skills to ensure that a valid hermeneutical significance of these symbols is established.

Some of the symbols that were investigated in this study show that between the universes of 1 John and Zulu people, there exist symbols whose meaning is almost consonant with each other. But where cultural specific meanings have to be derived, it is necessary that a critical search for such meanings within that specific culture be conducted. Finding conventional symbols which appropriately express the meanings embodied in the text will enhance reader understanding.

The recognition given to the reader's embeddedness within a social context means that the text has to be presented, interpreted and integrated in such a way that the reader can truly claim to have met God in Jesus Christ and in the unity of the Holy Spirit in his/her own context. Therefore, a hermeneutic that ignores the influence of the reader's culture on the person's attempt to understand scripture, is seriously deficient (Kraft 1979:143). But a proper hermeneutic should involve a process whereby there is a dynamic interaction between the reader or readers and the text and context.

Kraft (1979:144) has aptly expressed that a concern for the contextualisation of Biblical message is a concern that scriptural meanings get all the way across what might be pictured as a 'hermeneutical bridge' into the real-life contexts of ordinary people. In a 'multi-contextual reality' (Vergeer 1994:391) such as obtaining in the present day South Africa, a 'hermeneutics of dialogue' is the only logical approach when endeavouring to read ancient documents within a new cultural context. There is nothing condescending

about the approach suggested, all it seeks to do is discover and integrate as well as create a new reality with fresh insights and interpretations of scripture. Berger and Luckmann (1966:37) state that understanding of language is essential for any understanding of everyday reality. Since language plays such a key role in the process of reading, understanding of the language of the local people within which such reading takes place becomes then a hermeneutical requirement.

7.6 Language as a hermeneutic requirement

According to Cupitt (1990:163) the whole of our life is lived inside the influx of language and history, language preceding history. For people to communicate, language is required. Therefore, as Tlaba (1995:66) states language whether written or spoken, whether in gestures or symbols of one kind or another, all of which are intended to signify something to others which one experiences internally or externally, is the principal means of communication between people.

Language comprises a system of signifiers that are designed to evoke conceptual signifieds in the minds of receptors. Such signifieds, according to Voelz (1999:157) which are embraced by a given community and learned by its members at various stages in life, are called forth as people attempt to express conceptual signifieds, which themselves arise in their minds as they interact with their environment.

If two speakers belong to the same language group, and the same language that pervades their entire social world runs through each one's head, then the

capacity for mutual understanding is secured by the public character of linguistic meaning (Cupitt 1990:161). Language enables people to make symbolical statements to represent that which they perceive to be reality, which in fact represents reality for the people in that context (Sanneh 1993:144). Language therefore makes one feel one has an inside (Cupitt 1990:159). If language is the vehicle through which people are allowed to have the inside of a particular culture, then language becomes an important hermeneutical requirement.

If one does not possess this feeling of having the inside, then a hermeneutical question is raised: how can one be sure that the thoughts and feelings that one encoded into the language one has just transmitted are being faithfully reproduced in the other thoughts and feelings into which the receiver at the far end decodes one's statement (Cupitt 1990:161). This statement assumes that the text is read and communicated by someone from one culture into another culture. If no attempt has been made to acquaint oneself with the culture and the dynamics of the culture as they are embodied in the language, then one can be sure that miscommunication is bound to take place (Schreier 1994:16).

It is therefore becoming increasingly clear that to penetrate a local culture, there is a need to learn not only the language but also the social values, which language embodies and in which it is written. A living language is always cultural in that it is freighted with a set of local valuations and practices. Learning the language, we learn the local customs and assumptions. So the programming within which our identity is constituted is in effect our linguistic programming, our induction into the framework of human

communication (Cupitt 1990:161). If language is so central in understanding a culture of the people then, Berger and Luckmann (1966:37) are right in contending that in the process of reading in the context of a particular people, learning the local language is a hermeneutical requirement essential for an understanding of the reality of everyday life.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion and recommendations

This study in particular sought to investigate, from one particular angle, why there is an apparent failure on the side of Zulu people to embrace the gospel wholeheartedly, and to discover what is involved in reading in a Zulu context an ancient document which was conceptualised and reached concretisation in another cultural environment, with the view to pointing out hermeneutical issues that are raised by this kind of venture. Our contention as stated in this dissertation is that in order to understand any document one has to take a hermeneutical trip to the world or context within which a document such as 1 John, arose. Biblical writers were also persons who belonged to particular contexts and wrote to address issues pertinent to their context.

In order to provide the necessary background to our reading we started by first conducting a discourse analysis of 1 John in order to discover the main themes and the basic framework within which the author's thought and argumentation operated. We also offered brief comments on how the text hangs together. In order to put this research into perspective, we moved on to reading 1 John using insights gleaned from Berger and Luckmann's theory of the symbolic universe. Our examination of 1 John revealed that the author employed conventional symbols taken from familial language to express his understanding of the gospel and the new reality within which his community found itself.

The abundance of symbolic language in 1 John, made it necessary to examine some of the symbols and why the author found them to be suitable vehicles

for conveying his thoughts. Familial symbols, which dominate in 1 John include the following: father, son, children, fellowship, love, sin, forgiveness, and mediation.

We noted also that it is against the familial background that 1 John should be understood. As Shorter pointed out symbolic language is the only way of expressing the divine reality. We became aware also of how the author had imbued with meaning some of the above symbols for God, and applied them metaphorically, as well as express the new reality obtaining as a result of the believer's relationship with God.

The author represented God as Father; Jesus as Son and believers as children of God. The new relationship that exists is expressed in terms of fellowship; being born of God, and being children of God. Being members of the family of God has profound ethical implications, that is, it brings discontinuity to the believer's inclination to committing sin, it results in obedience to God's commands especially the command to love and in imitating Christ, that is, walking as He did (1 Jn 2:6).

Chapter five covered in a broad way a number of aspects of African culture. This was necessary in order to provide the necessary background for our discussion in chapter seven, where a synthesis of some aspects covered in 1 John, in chapter five and the responses from interviews is done.

For the purpose of this dissertation and in order to deal with people's present day perceptions, it became necessary to conduct interviews. A qualitative method was employed for that purpose. People were interviewed using the focus group interview method. Their responses were written in Zulu and later

translated into English and have been included as annexure three. The sample constituting focus groups was carefully brought together so that it is represented of a wide spectrum of Zulu people in Empangeni. The participation of more people than the number envisaged was viewed as a bonus factor. We are therefore confident that the results and views of the participants are representative of a wider spectrum and could therefore be generalised.

In formulating questions, we were directed by the picture that emerged from our reading of 1 John especially family language. In order to place 'reading' in context, we explored similar symbols within Zulu cosmology as those found in 1 John. The research confirmed the fact that community of which the family is but a microcosm, is still central in Zulu society.

Personhood is still defined in terms of who your parents are and what your family's standing in the community is. The comparison we drew with regard to symbolism in 1 John and Zulu society revealed that some correlation existed in a number of areas as well as differences. The symbols that are referred to here are those that get triggered as the reader encounters the text and a dialectical process of interaction gets underway.

Essentially we sought the following through focus groups:

- 1) To discover current understanding of the various themes and symbols we put forward for discussion.
- 2) To identify differences as well as similarities between the world of 1 John and that of the Zulu people, and
- 3) to determine whether any measure of congruency exists between the two worlds.

In this dissertation we also wanted to investigate the influence of symbolic universes on a people's perception of all reality around them and the way they interpret anything conceptualised outside their universe. Our contention is that understanding of the dynamics of a people's symbolic world enables one to discover whether any measure of congruency exists with regard to symbols within both worlds. Establishment of such congruency enhances the construction of a hermeneutical bridge leading to greater interaction of cultural scripts of each with the other and a rich and informed reading of 1 John within the Zulu context. Any attempt to read a document from the context of one cultural group and milieu to another context that does not seek to understand both contexts will lead to an arbitrary reading of scripture and the attribution of meanings contrary to what the text seeks to convey.

Our hypothesis was that there exists a measure of congruency between the worlds of 1 John and Zulu people, which if properly identified, investigated and exploited could enhance a smooth construction of a hermeneutical bridge of understanding of 1 John's message within a Zulu context. This study has

been able to confirm our hypothesis that there exists a measure of congruency between 1 John and the world of Zulu people, which if properly identified and exploited could enhance a smooth construction of a hermeneutical bridge of understanding.

Our investigation revealed that some of the conventional symbols, which closely correlate those in 1 John have already been identified but we believe that there is a need for serious theological discussion regarding their suitability to represent biblical symbols and concepts obtaining in 1 John. As Verry (1982:3) asserts, for symbols to work it is necessary for the society which will use them to accept a set of rules of meaning. A discussion of this nature should engage not only those with theological skills at their disposal but also rich information bearers from within Zulu society. In fact a quest for meaningful symbols that appropriately correlate biblical symbols encapsulated in the text is deemed a matter of urgency.

There is also a need, however, to admit that there is a bankruptcy and handicap weighing upon the stock of images and symbolical expressions we use in expressing the divine reality. With regard to divine reality, there is always an element of mystery surrounding the symbol, an opacity, a surplus of meaning, an enigma, which no interpretation should attempt to eradicate (Wright 1988:139-140). In most cases conventional symbols lack the mysteriousness that surrounds the divine reality.

Conventional symbols belong to the historical realm and enable to explain the divine in existential terms. The attempt to explain the divine in terms of conventional symbols is an old one. Conventional symbols are a necessity on

the existential level but once they are employed to define transcendent reality they are imbued with new meaning. For instance with the rise of dogma in the early church, concrete and existentially significant symbols tended to be edged out in favour of an abstract vocabulary of 'substance' and 'nature' and the like (Macquarrie 1977:185), a vocabulary which though useful tended to obscure and complicate what was being explained.

All conventional symbols that have been tried in this study to represent God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, that is, Father (God); the Black Messiah, the Elder Brother, and the Ancestor (Jesus); and ancestral spirit (Holy Spirit), do express something of the reality we seek to represent. However, as it has been admitted above, language (whether symbolic or otherwise) is inherently inadequate and religious truth ultimately, if not immediately, transcends human words (Sanneh 1993:143).

Having said this we would like to emphasise that there are no other symbols available at present that best represent the biblical symbols as found in 1 John than these symbols, inadequate as they may be. Until a new indigenous terminology comes into being, these symbols will remain useful vehicles for communicating the Gospel for generation to come. This raises a very serious hermeneutical dilemma: Are we suggesting that symbols should uncritically be employed because of lack of symbolic stock from which to draw? Definitely not! What we are calling for here is a hermeneutic of dialogue in the broadest sense (Combrink and Muller 1991:45). In order for our reading venture to be truly incarnated and yield relevant result, serious dialogue is the only possible way forward. However a differentiation has to be made here regarding the symbol and what it stands for. One is not interested so much in the symbol per se and what it stands for but in its communicative significance,

that is, is the symbol able to convey the basic meaning of divine reality, which we seek to communicate? Our contention is that if the symbols have the capacity to do that, they should be used. This should not be done arbitrarily, without due and critical discussion. Clarity as to what is being conveyed through the symbol can only enhance our reading venture rather than hinder it.

Another area, which merited comment in this thesis, concerns the identity of the reader. Who does the reading becomes an important hermeneutical question in the context of this dissertation. We believe we have been able to point out the advantages and disadvantages regarding each of the three kinds of readers identified and how each reader could enrich the process. The disadvantages with regard to each reader are very serious. If each reader fails to exercise his/her role in an objective way, he/she could compromise the whole process. Criticalness should undergird the whole process, without it we are prone to sacrificing the wealth of centuries biblical scholarship. Understanding a people's language, especially the language of the recipients is a hermeneutical requirement for reading in a different context. No one can claim to have communicated sufficiently if one is not sure whether people have understood one's message.

This study has also been able to confirm that a sufficient understanding of a people's symbolic universe, including their language as well as symbols that appropriately correlate with biblical ones enables one to feel that he/she has the inside of that particular world. It also gives one the confidence to know that he/she has done sufficiently to make his/her communication easily accessible.

This study has also affirmed our belief that especially in a country like South Africa, it is possible to reactivate and reinforce biblical principles that will have a strong bearing on the country's morality. Each individual has to be understood in terms of the world from which each comes. The influence of all our great great great mothers and fathers is with us and continues to exert pressure on us without our knowing it.

8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrated that congruency of some kind exists between the various symbols found in both the world of 1 John and the Zulu world. As we explored some of the symbols, problems began to surface with regard to their appropriateness in representing or encapsulating the meaning inherent in biblical symbols. Also the fact that automatic transfer of meaning of symbols across the cultural divide is impossible since each culture attaches to each symbol meanings pregnant of their whole understanding of reality. Hence we believe further comprehensive research or even a theological symposium to investigate this area in depth is necessary.

Further study on the paradigm shift that has taken place among young Zulu women and men regarding the roles at home and in society, is necessary, that is, how does their understanding of democracy impacts on the Zulu cultural context as well as on their understanding of the bible and what are the hermeneutical issues raised by this emerging self discovery.

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Annexure one

QUESTIONNAIRE

A- FAMILY

- A.1. How would you define a family?
- A.2. What influence does the family have on the lives of its members?
- A.3. What are the functions of a family?
- A.4. Do you think it is important for people to belong to a family? If yes or no why?
- A.5. How does one become a member of a family?
- A.6. There is a Zulu saying that "Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu". What does that mean in terms of an individual's position in the family or community?

B- ROLES

FATHER

- B.1. What is the role of the father in a family?
- B.2. What do you think are the duties of the father toward his family and his children?
- B.3. Do you think the Father's role could be associated with being the light?
- B.4. What are the implications of seeing the father as light?

C- CHILDREN

- C.1 What role do children play within a family?
- C.2 What if any, are their obligation as children?
- C.3. What do you think would be expected of children or any other member of the family regarding family norms and values?
- C.4. Within a family, is anyone allowed freedom to differ? If Yes or No, Why?

MAINTENANCE OF SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE

D- DEALING WITH DEVIANTS

- D.1. How do families deal with those who are disloyal and do not act within the set boundaries?
- D.2 What word would you use to describe a ‘disgusting action’?
- D.3 What would be required of a member who wants to be restored into the fellowship?
- D.4. Why would the confession of sin/deed be required of him/her?
- D.5. What is the value of confesion?
- D.6. If an offence was of a very serious nature, what would be required of the offending party?
- D.7. What is the significance of the blood of a slaughtered animal in the restoration and mending of broken relationships?
- D.8. How do you understand salvation in your society?

E- ANCESTORS / MEDIATORS

- E.1. Who are the ancestors?

- E-2. What was/is their role?
- E.3. Some people call the ancestors their gods "onkulunkulu bethu", what do you think of this view?
- E.4. What are they to you?
- E.5. Are there special occasions when they get involved with the living or do they do that on a continuous basis?
- E.6. Do ancestors play a mediatory to the ancestors?
- E.7. What role do ancestors play in the forgiveness and restoration of one who had sinned?
- E.8. What kind of behaviour would be expected of those who are to become ancestors?
- E.9. What is the place or role that the following play in your culture and to you as an individual?

Diviners (Izangoma)?

Traditional doctors (Izinyanga)?

F -GOD

- F.1. Who is God to you?
- F.2. If you believe in the existence of God, what qualities in Him would you associate with the conventional symbol represented by the Father's role in the family?
- F.3. What significance does seeing God as Father holds for all humanity?
- F.4. Why do you think people associate God with love?
- F.5. What are the implications of viewing God as love?
- F.6. Why do people associate God with light?

- F.7. What are the implications of viewing God as the light?
- F.8. Who is Jesus to you?
- F.9. What conventional symbol(s) do you think would represent Christ adequately within your culture?
- F.10. Who is the Holy Spirit to you?
- F.11. What conventional symbol(s) do you think would represent the Holy Spirit within your culture?

Annexure two

QUESTIONNAIRE TRANSLATED INTO ZULU

INHLOLO-MIBUZO

A- UMNDENI

- A.3. Iyini imisebenzi yomndeni na?
- A.2 Ungawuchaza kanjani umndeni na?
- A.3 Unamfundisoni (influence) umndeni ezimpilweni zamalunga awo na?
- A.4. Ucabanga ukuthi kubalulekile yini ukuba abantu babe ngamalunga omndeni na? Uma uthi 'yebo' noma 'qha', usho ngazizathu zini na?
- A.5. Umuntu uba yilungu lomndeni kanjani na?
- A.6. Kunesisho sesiZulu esithi 'Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu', kusho ukuthini lokho ngendawo yomuntu (position) emndenini nasemphakathini na?

B- IMISEBENZI

UBABA

- B.1. Unandawo yini (role) uBaba emndenini na?
- B.2. Iyini imisebenzi (duties) kaBaba emndenini kanye nasebantwaneni bakhe na?
- B.3. Ngabe ucabanga ukuthi indawo kaBaba emndenini inokufaniswa nokukhanya na?
- B.4. Kunamthelela (implications) mini ukumbuka ubaba njengokukhanya na?

C- ABANTWANA/IZINGANE

- C.1. Iyini indawo yabantwana emndenini na?
- C.2. Kuyini, uma kukhona, okubhekeke ezinganeni zomndeni na?
- C.3. Ucabanga ukuthi kulindeleke ini ezinganeni nasemalungeni omndeni maqondana nezimiso namasiko-mpilo omndeni na?
- C.4. Ikhona yini inkululeko emndenini yokuba kube khona ilunga elingahambisani nezimiso namasiko-mpilo omndeni na? Uma uthi 'yebo' noma 'qha' shono izizathu zempendulo yakho.

D- UKUBHEKANA NEZAPHULA-MTHETHO

- D.1. Imindeni ibhekana kanjani nabantu abangalaleli futhi abangakwazi ukuhamba phakathi kwemingcele emisiweyo na?
- D.2. 'Isenzo esenyanyisayo' ungasichaza ngaliphi igama na?
- D.3. Kudingekani kulelo lunga elifuna ukubuyiselwa ebudlelwaneni bomndeni na?
- D.4. Kudingeke ngani ukuba owonileyo asivume isono noma isenzo sakhe na?
- D.5. Ibaluleke ngani imvumo na?
- D.6. Uma icala lofuna ukubuyiselwa ebudlelwaneni lilibi kakhulu, kudingeka enze njani lo owonileyo na?
- D.7. Linakubaluleka kuni igazi lesilwane esihlatshiwe ekubuyisweni nasekuphiliseni ubudlelwano obulimele na?
- D.8. Ngokwesintu, ungaluchaza kanjani usindiso na?

E- AMADLOZI/ABAPHANSI/ABAXHUMANISI

- E.1. Ngobani abangamadlozi na?
- E.2. Iyini indawo yamadlozi empilweni yabantu na?
- E.3. Kukhona abathi amadlozi 'onkulunkulu babo', ucabangani ngalombono na?

- E.4. Ayini amadlozi kuwe na?
- E.5. Ngabe kunezikhathi zimbe yini lapho amadlozi ethintene nabaphilayo noma ahlala esebenza futhi ethintene njalo nabaphilayo na?
- E.6. Kungani abanye abantu bathi amadlozi angabaxhumanisi na, abaxhumanisa nobani na?
- E.7. Banaqhaza lini abaphansi odabeni likubuyisana nokubuyiselwa emndenini kwalabo okade bonile na?
- E.8. Babhekeke ukuba baziphathe kanjani labo abangahle babe ngamadlozi ekufeni kwabo na?
- E.9. Liyini iqhaza lalaba abalandelayo na?
Izangoma
Izinyanga

F- UNKULUNKULU/UMVELINQANGI

- F.1. Ungubani uNkulunkulu kuwe na?
- F.2. Uma ukholelwa ebukhweni bukaNkulunkulu, mpawu zini ongazifanisa nezendawo luphawu olumelwe nguBaba emndenini na?
- F.3. Kubaluleke ngani ukubuka uNkulunkulu njengoBaba kithi sonke na?
- F.4. Ucabanga ukuthi kungani abantu bemfanisa uNkulunkulu nothando na?
- F.5. Kunamithelela mini (implications) ukumbuka uNkulunkulu njengothando na?
- F.6. Kungani futhi ukuba abantu bamfanise uNkulunkulu nokukhanya na?
- F.7. Kunamithelela mini (implications) ukumbuka uNkulunkulu njengokukhanya na?
- F.8. Ungubani uJesu kuwe na?
- F.9. Ungamfanisa naziphi izimpawu (symbols) ozejwayele uJesu n
- F.10. Ungubani uMoya oNgcwele kuwe na?
- F.11. Ungamfanisa naziphi izimpawu (symbols) ozejwayele uMoya oNgcwele na?

Annexure three

A- FAMILY

A 1 Definition of family

Focus group number one concentrated on questions dealing with family. Members were asked to define a family. The following are definitions that were given. The definitions from participants in the focus group exhibited diversity in their understanding of what a family is. A great number of participants still hold the traditional African view of family as being inclusive of a number of individuals bound together by blood relationships and under the leadership of Inkosana (heir) or head of the family, usually a male.

There was also within this group those who defined a nuclear family in terms of a father mother and children. They added that this unit is one brick that makes the bigger entity-society. A lot of discussion centred on this definition since it points to an emerging trend. The exponents of the view argued that modern families especially in town situation are now constituted in this manner.

A.2 The influence of families on the lives of her members

Having provided definitions of a family, the discussion then moved on to the influence that families have on individual members. Participant's responses were unanimous in identifying the following influences that families have. Families create a sense of identity and belonging for the individual thereby engendering unity and security. They inculcate values and norms and

behavioural standards expected by each family and society; they are responsible for traditioning their members i.e. passing on the religion, customs and cultural heritage of the families through teaching.

Notwithstanding the varied definitions of family given by participants, One point that has surfaced so clearly is of the centrality of family as the basic social framework within which people first learn the symbols they use to interpret the reality around them, where person is humanised through participation. It is within the family environment that each person learns to make sense of the reality around him or her. As the discussion progressed participants emphasised the importance of keeping families strong. It was stated very crudely that decay of families spell disaster for society and the nation.

A.3 The functions of a family

In discussing the third question, a whole range of functions was attributed to the family. A family is responsible for bringing children up, feeding, loving, and educating them. A family has to create an environment conducive to the health and wholeness of their members. A home or family is also a place where training of good citizens takes place. From birth, respect of other members of society and of human life is taught. People learn to take care for each other within the protective and nurturing atmosphere of the home; and where they learn the importance of belonging. From birth the child was surrounded by domestic piety. His earliest recollections would be of all that went on around him/her in the home.

A.4 Do you regard belonging to a family as being important?

The fourth question sought to find out whether people still regard belonging as important. It was striking to discover what other participants called “a modern tendency” that regards families as unimportant. As further questions for clarification were asked, it became evident that those exhibit this “modern tendency” have either not had good experiences within their families. The negative influence of their early years has affected their views of the importance of belonging to a family.

It was also a fascinating discovery to find out that at the time when the individualism of the west is creeping so fast into the African world, there are still Zulu people who regard belonging to a family as very important and still treasure it very highly. Most participants saw the family as providing a support system necessary for the well being and survival of many in this fast changing environment in which many people find themselves. Belonging to an especially strong family provides the individual with a strong basis upon which to build future relationships.

A.5 How does one become a member?

This question was designed to elicit information as to how one becomes a member of the family. Participants identified three ways in which one becomes a member, i.e. by marriage, birth and by adoption.

Birth in Zulu society defines one’s identity and status and situates one within a network of family relationships. Members of the family are in most cases

referred to as Children of so and so – the head of the family. It also means one is entitled to all privileges and emoluments available within the family.

In the Zulu community marriage plays a significant social role. It is a rite of passage from one stage to the other. The ritual process begins from the moment the man sends to the father of the bride to negotiate the “lobolo”. Its culmination is the day of marriage, which is the joining of the wife to the husband’s family. A lot of other rituals connected with the official introduction of her to family ancestors follow. Marriage in the Zulu culture as a public and communal event effects a change in the status and relationships of the couple both to each other and to the community as a whole. The participation of both families intensifies the ritual significance and formalises the marriage.

A.6 ‘Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu’ What does it mean in terms of one’s position in the family/community?

Participants regarded this Zulu saying: ‘Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu’ in relation to the individual’s position in the family or community as very important. Many pointed out that it emphasises that the wholeness of the individual can only be guaranteed within the network of family and community relationships. Outside this network framework, the community runs the risk of being infested with imbalanced people. Reference was made to so-called “street children” and how this is becoming a fountain of crime in most towns and cities. This was attributed to the fact that street children grow up without the support network of family that ensures their development into whole persons.

Regarding the importance of the family unit in their culture, the participant felt that what they had said above emphasises how important a family is viewed in their culture.

B -ROLES

The second focus group dealt with issues relating to roles within families. The discussion was limited to two specific roles relevant for this study, i.e. the role of the father and that of children.

B.1 The father's role in a family

The father is seen as the head and leader and as both head and leader, he exerts greater influence in the socialisation and education of his children. Another point relating to the father's role, as leader was that he leads in conjunction with his wife. This introduces a new dimension in the role that has traditionally been assigned to the man. The role and influence exerted by women in families, is beginning to be recognised. He is the ultimate authority for the family; a symbol of unity and security and a provider of direction and guidance for the family. His role is described as that of being a priest in his household and a role model for all members of his family. The term "priest" has biblical connotations but the participants used it to describe the role he played at the family altar, offering sacrifices to the ancestors. "Family altar" will be explained later.

Some members disagreed with the above stated view, claiming that it is the source of all the suffering and abuse that women and children experience. That most families without the presence and indispensable input would not survive.

B.2 Duties of the father to his family

The father's duties are to provide shelter, material and spiritual needs for his family. He gives love and care to his family, educates his family, he provides discipline, he is a mediator, he co-operates with his wife in the teaching and nurturing of their children, he is a reconciler and protector his family.

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

Most participants answered yes and then stated their reasons. Here are some of the reasons, that by virtue of his position he is expected to be exemplary thereby allowing those he leads to emulate him; that as leader he provides direction for his family and his actions can never be misconstrued. The father is the embodiment of all that the family needs to know and do.

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

Participants felt that the implications of seeing the father as light are vast and would have far reaching effects. First it means that no member of his household will ever walk in darkness because of lack of knowledge. They will not participate in anything that is contrary to light. In their lives they

exemplify all that the light stands for. The father is never seen in isolation from his family, he can only be described in terms of his family

C- CHILDREN

C.1 The role children play within a family

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

The elder brother is the head of the home in waiting. So a lot of things including family secrets are entrusted to him. His role is not particularly evident until the death of the father –the family head. It is only then that he come to the fore and plays an active role.

C.2 What are the obligations of children?

As to their obligations or duties, it was pointed out that theirs is to obey, respect, listen and do what they are taught to do. As children they must be teachable and must report to their parents what they are doing, that wherever they are, they represent their family values and norms. Other participants pointed out that in a world which is becoming individual oriented, it must be emphasised that children are expected to love cherish and honour their parents. Children also are to help with all chores pertaining to their home. On the whole, it is their duty to reflect the good image of the family.

C.3 Expectation on children and other family members regarding values and norms

Concerning children and all family members regarding the values and norms, there was unanimity among participants that all are expected to know family values and norms. They are expected to keep them because these are a reflection of all that the family stands for. These it was felt are not negotiable so compliance is the only way for all members of the family; finally, it was stressed that they need to mirror these to the community.

C.4 Are they allowed freedom to differ with family values and norms?

As far as the question of freedom to differ with family norms and values, opinions differed very widely. There were those who cherished the traditional view that no one is allowed to differ. The matter of differing with family values and norms they viewed in a very serious light. Family values such as neighbourliness led to solidarity and mutual helpfulness, which were central to the value of humanity, i.e. 'ubuntu' or 'botho'. The concept of 'ubuntu' placed emphasis on the person as of the highest and intrinsic value. They stated that this as far as they were concerned was tantamount to rebellion. The exponents of this view held that what matters is not what the individual thinks or feels but what the family stipulates. For an individual who feels different, all she/he can do is comply.

There were others even though they are Christians, who claimed that there is nothing wrong with participating in your African traditional feasts. Differing on the grounds that you were a Christian did not have any substance in it.

Others stated that being a member of a family does not take away your freedom of choice. They stated that being a Christian is what makes the difference. If they feel their conscience is violated by what the family stands, then one is allowed to differ. This can only happen after engaging in discussion with the elders of the family. An example of such an instant is when is sacrificing in honour of the ancestors. Many Christians have raised objection as a matter of conscience and families have allowed them not to participate.

Yet among participants in this focus group, there were those who felt that we now live in a democratic situation one is free to differ. We have only been a democratic country for six year, and this is a fairly new view that has not stood the test of time.

MAINTENANCE OF SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE

D-DEALING WITH DEVIANTS

D.1 Dealing with disloyal members

We pointed out above that there is still a strong view that regards disloyalty in a very serious light. Families therefore, have various ways in which they deal with their disloyal members. First, members who step out of line are called to order and on admission of guilt, they are fined. If an offence is extremely heinous, initially they are called to a council of elders and given advice. In some cases, corporal punishment would be administered and if this and repeated advice fail, then they are ostracised by members of the family.

D.2 What is a Zulu word for a ‘disgusting action’?

The words that people use sometime to describe the act that has been committed tell you how serious that particular act is viewed by society. Any action that is disgusting would be described by such words as ‘ichilo, ihlazo, and amanyala’. The word ‘sin’ which is commonly used in the Bible or Christian literature is foreign and difficult for Zulu people to understand. May be describing ‘sin –isono’, as ‘amanyala’ would convey the seriousness of the act to traditional Zulu people.

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

The question sought to find out what would be required of a person who had been cut off from the family, if that person wants to be restored into the fellowship? In order for the estranged person to be reinstated, it would be required of that person, first, to accept responsibility for the action that led to the estrangement, then confess the terrible act committed and ask for forgiveness.

D.4 Why would confession of sin be required?

Confession demonstrates that the person accepts full responsibility for what has happened. In order for this to happen the family would need to be assembled together. Before forgiveness and restoration is granted, the estranged person after the confession would be taken to the family altar –

eAltarini lasekhaya, which is usually in a hut called kwagogo. There the ancestors would be notified that this person is sorry for having broken disgraced the family. Then the goat would be slaughtered. It is not the goat that is essential here but the blood that brings about reconciliation. Apart from the goat that is slaughtered at the family altar, a beast would be slaughtered. The slaughtered beast is for celebrating the restoration of this member into the family fellowship. The Biblical story that comes close to this is the story of the prodigal son. We are not given any details of what went on but the whole act of restoration is sealed with slaughtering of a fattened calf and celebration.

There were differences of opinion as to the process of reinstating a member into the family fellowship. Some of the participants claimed that due to their Christian orientation they believe that there is no need to slaughter any animal. The blood of Jesus is sufficient for cleansing sin and bringing about true forgiveness and restoration. Both exponents of these views held one view in common i.e. the significance of blood in this whole process. For Christians, Jesus is thus the Lamb of God that was slain for the sin of the world. His blood supersedes any other blood as attested in the letter to the Hebrews (9:22).

Other participants, who also have a Christian background, still cling tenaciously to their old customs belief that there can be no true reconciliation without slaughtering and inviting the ancestors to accept what is being done. They believe that ancestors are to be asked to re-admit him/her into the family. The slaughtering and the spilling of blood are an important aspect of the admission or cleansing ceremony. Some families believe that without slaughtering and blood, there can be no real forgiveness and restoration.

D.5 What is the value of confession?

Confession is a demonstration that the repenting party is truly sorry for his/her offence. There is obviously common ground between 1 John's understanding of sin and reconciliation and that demonstrated by participants as well as how sin is dealt with. The linking in 1 John of the idea of confession with cleansing with blood is an allusion to the sacrificial understanding of blood, which constitutes both the Old (Lev 16) and New Testament understanding of how sin was dealt with.

D.6 What would be required of the repenting party if the offence of a serious Nature?

If the offence was too great, the offending party would be required to approach the family elders, intimate his/her desire to be restored and the fact that she/he is aware of the seriousness of the offence and express his/her willingness to do reparation for the offence. It is in cases such as this that slaughtering is required. The beast for slaughtering has to be provided by the penitent member for offering to the ancestors as a way of saying sorry to them.

D.7 The significance of Blood

Regarding the significance of blood, it is believed that the blood is the means through which forgiveness and cleansing is asked from the ancestors.

Ancestors only understand the language of the living when that is enacted in blood. Views were diversified on this point. Apart from the view already

stated above, others believed that only through Christ's blood can sins be truly forgiven and reconciliation achieved. Christ's sacrifice on the cross supersedes any other that could be offered.

D.8. How would you define salvation in your traditional Zulu context?

Salvation among Zulus has to do with the well being of society. If there are threatening forces, the harnessing of them means the achievement of salvation.

E- AMADLOZI/ABAPHANSI/ABAXHUMANISI

E.1 Who are the ancestors to you?

To the question, who are the ancestors, participants gave the following answers. Ancestors are dead members (asebelele i.e. those who have fallen asleep) of the family who, when there are problems in the family are consulted. Consultation is done through slaughtering in order to appease them especially when it is believed that they are responsible for what is happening. Others defined ancestors as old male members of the family who passed away. This probably is the traditional definition among Zulu people.

E.2 What is their role?

Regarding the role of the ancestors, participants stated the following views; their role is to be intermediaries/mediators between the living and God. They

take messages to God because they are believed to be near Him. They protect the people from sickness and danger and bring luck to members of the family.

E.3 Ancestors as ‘onkulunkulu bethu’, what do you think?

Are the ancestors gods ‘onkulunkulu’? Participants unanimously disagreed with this view. To them, ancestors were just mediators and nothing more. Some pointed out that those who believe in the role played by ancestors do treat them as gods; they are much more feared by the living than God is. Moreover the living hardly talk about god but their ancestors.

E.4 Who are they to you?

Participants were then asked a very personal question, What are they to you? The responses to this question were diverse. Some because of their Christian standpoint believed that they are and remain grand parents or parents that have passed away, they are not mediators because Jesus is mediator. They are deceased grandparents whom they respect and love but who are awaiting judgement.

Others held the view that they are members of the family who once lived but who since their passing away have nothing to do with their lives (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6). Still others felt that these are deceased members of the family who now and again are remembered, but by remembering they do not mean that they are worshipped.

E.5 Do they get involved with the living on special occasions or on a continuous basis?

Asked whether ancestors get involved with the living on special occasions or on a continuous basis. Two opposite views were expressed. Some of the participants accorded them a central role. They believe that ancestors are involved with the living all the time, that they are there all the time protecting and giving guidance to members of their families and that they communicate their wishes to the living through dreams and visions. Others held that death meant the cessation of their influence over anything.

E.6 Why do people ascribe a mediatory role to ancestors?

Asked why people ascribe a mediatory role to ancestors, participants felt that it is because of their closeness to God/UMvelinqangi that they are believed to perform this role. It was also stated that God being the Supreme Being has an aura of sacredness that attaches to him requiring that he only be approached through mediators. Only the ancestors are in a position to perform this mediatory role.

E.7 What role do they play in the forgiveness and reconciliation of sinners?

It is believed that ancestors play a significant role in the forgiveness and restoration of a member. Any act of disobedience by any member of the family, is disobedience to them because they never cease to be part of the family. When ties are severed with the rebellious member, he is also cut off

from the ancestors. Therefore when reparation is being made, ancestors need to accept the sacrifice made on behalf of the repenting party.

E.8 What kind of behaviour is expected of those who are to become ancestors?

Most participants think that behaviour is very important for those who are to be ancestors. They believe that if their behaviour was not good while they were still alive, they will make bad ancestors. Morality plays a very significant role in determining who becomes an ancestor. What is good morally is what befits a human being; it is what is good for man – what brings dignity, respect, contentment, prosperity, joy, to man and his community. For instance, those who were witches during their lifetime cannot be ancestors because on earth they worked against the wholeness of society. Not everybody becomes an ancestor, so morality standards are important for those who eventually join this hierarchy. However a very small number believed that any member could be an ancestor, that behaviour was not important at all.

E.9. What is the place or role that the following play in your culture and to you as an individual?

Diviners (Izangoma)?

Izangoma also communicate with the ancestral spirits. Some use bones which they read and then interpret what the message is. Others possess a gift of seeing what is in the person's mind. Some of their duties include the following:

to predict future events, to diagnose illness in his or her clients and prescribe methods to heal them, to warn clients/community about problems to come, to establish cause of misfortunes, to mediate between community members and their ancestors, to give counsel to the chief of the area, to intercede for the community to the ancestors. In matters affecting the tribe, they act as priests for the tribe. They officiate at official ceremonies and give direction as to how sacrifices are to be offered.

Traditional doctors (Izinyanga)?

These are people who have the gift of knowing herbs and who also use these herbs to cure a variety of diseases. Traditional doctors also protect people against spiritual forces. Some have the ability to manipulate natural forces like thunder.

F- GOD

F.1 Who is God to you?

The sixth focus group dealt with questions relating to God. Participants were asked who God is to each one of them. Opinions were somewhat homogenous on the fact that God is creator of heaven and earth, the Almighty, the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent, the Protector and the Provider. God is also the Father of all mankind.

The view that God is creator of everything has not changed. He is still called uMdali (creator), the one who broke off nations from uthlanga. The fact that He created nations suggests that he himself was not created. The Zulu name of God 'Umvelinqangi' brings this idea out very clearly that He appeared (wavela).

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

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

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

Some of the qualities in God, which can be associated with the symbol father, are those related to the father's role in the family. That he is head of all the families of nations and as the father is head of his household. God like a human father also reprimands, admonishes, protects, supports, leads, loves and cares for his people.

The view expressed by other authors who have done research in this area, of a God who was defined vaguely and who had to be approached through

mediators, is challenged here. The understanding expressed by participants in this research that God is protector and sustainer of humanity poses a challenge to the view of a god who was vaguely understood. Obviously God is no longer seen by some Zulu people as uninvolved. He is directly involved in their day to day living. This we believe should be seen as an area of convergence, which needs to be fully, and properly developed in order to facilitate a smooth transfer from the Zulu Symbolic universe to the Christian. Viewing God as Creator, Protector and Sustainer demands of humanity a reciprocal response expressed in terms of worship, love, respect, obedience and continuous praise.

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

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

There is a strong biblical view that sees God the Creator as head just as an earthly father is head of an earthly family. He is the Protector just as an earthly father is expected to be protector of his own household. He is the Sustainer or provider just as an earthly father is expected to provide for his family.

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

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

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

Love means giving your heart and life for the one whom is loved. Being prepared to do that which appears impossible because you love. In a sense it describes the character of the one who loves than the one who is being loved Participants felt that there is a close connection between love and light and that God's works show him to be utter light in whom there is no shade or darkness at all.

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

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

F.6 Why do people associate God with light?

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

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

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

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

F.8. Who is Jesus to you?

Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Messiah, the Saviour and Master of our lives. He is God's answer to our sinfulness. He is the Mediator between God and the people. He is the intercessor for the people of God. He is the Shepherd of our souls and the champion of our salvation.

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

Participant admitted that the question of finding a representative symbol for Christ within the Zulu culture was not an easy one. Having made the admission they came up with the following: the Black Messiah- the example of how members of the Nazareth Church view Shembe was cited. Members however stated that that is not their view but a view held by a number of Zulu people hence their mentioning it. The second example likened Christ to the Elder brother in the family. That he performs all the functions that would be performed by the elder brother-the heir apparent. That all the duties the Father performs, once he is dead are assumed by the elder brother. The only difficulty they pointed out with regard to this example is that the elder brother only assumes his duties after the death of his father whereas Christ according to the Bible is given central focus and is active concurrently with God. The

third example, which others felt conveyed something of Christ, is likening him to the ancestors. The fact that he stands between God and people as mediator correlates best with what they know to be the role of ancestors.

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

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is the same Spirit who indwelt the prophets of old and spoke through. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter promised by Jesus who was to come into the world to be with believers forever, even the Spirit of truth. He dwells in us and through us continues Christ work of salvation. Through us he continues to perform mighty acts, which help us to recognise God's presence with us. He leads and guides believers into all truth.

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

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