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 ἀρχῇ 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 refered 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 organise 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 συμβαλλειν '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

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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

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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 shoul d 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 ἥτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα (1 Jn 1:2)

* ka῀ ¹ koinwn. a dè ¹ ¹metšra met¦ toà patrÕς (1 Jn 1:3)

* παράκλητονἔ χομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα (1 Jn 2:1)

* ἐ ἀν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκἔ στιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸςἐ ν αὐτῷ (1 Jn 2:15)

* ὃτι πᾶν τὸ ἐ ν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡ ἐ πιθυμί α τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐ πιθυμί α τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονέ α τοῦ β ου οὐκ ἔ στινἐ κ τοῦ πατρὸς (1 Jn 2:16)

* αὗτός ἐ στιν ὁ ἀντί χριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱον (1 Jn 2:22)

* πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱον οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα œcei ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱον καὶ τὸν πατέραἔ χει (1 Jn 2:23)

* καὶ ὑμεῖςἐ ν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐ ν] τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε. (1 Jn 2:24)

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* ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατὴρ ἵνα τεκύα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν (1 Jn 3:1)

* καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ πατήρ ἀπέσταλκεν τὸν υἱὸν σωτῆρα 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 ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία, ὅτι ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν, 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 receive d 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 ἀληθινὸν). 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 ἀληθινὸς 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,

* αὗτός ἐ στιν ὁ ἀντί χριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱον (1 Jn 2:22)

* πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱον οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα œcεἰ ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱον καὶ τὸν πατέραἔ χει (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

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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 ἱλασμος (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' (τεκνια), 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

Κοινωνíα (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 ζωη (ζωὴν αἰώνιος) 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 relationship 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 (καταριζει) 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 Ζωὴ and ζωὴν 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 ζωὴ and ζωὴν αἰώνιος are spoken of as 'having appeared'. Ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐ φανερώθη (1 Jn 1:2). Ἐφανερώθη, the aorist as stated above suggesting a manifestation in a precise moment in history. The appearing of ζωὴν 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 ζωὴ αἰώνιος was alluded to in chapter three and dealt with rather briefly. Here the intention is to unpack it further. The author says that ζωὴ αἰώνιος appearedἐ φανερώθη 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 κοινωνί α ἔ χητε μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ κοινωνί α δε ἡ ημετερα μετὰ τοῦ πατος καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ιησοῦ 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 eigentumlich ubertragenen 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 ζωὴ 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 boundanries 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 (ψευδομαι) (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 - οἴδατε 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

Τεκνία or τεκνία 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. Γεννάω 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

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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 ἐκ/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 ἐκ/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 (χπîσμα) 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 - ποιεî) 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

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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 metapho r 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 cola 76-89 we saw that sin constitutes a dominant theme, and distinguishes those who areἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου (colon 85) 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 amon 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 injuction 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 (Verryn 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 it's 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 πᾶς ὁ, 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

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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 ὅτιἐκ 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 ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτ ας ἡμῶν (1 Jn 1:9). The solution is not to deny sin but to confess it (Painter1986: 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 κοινων...α that exists between believers and God and must therefore be eradicated. In 1 John, κοινωί α 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 κοινωί α or holeness 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.

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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 ἱλασμος (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 ἱλασμος 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 ἱλασμος.

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 a s 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. Ἱλασμος 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 ἱλασμος 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 ἱλασκεσται 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 ἱλασμος 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 ἱλασμον 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.

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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

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2:18 the ʽἀντ 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 sinlesness 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 χρῖσμα.

4.11 The Holy Spirit

Χρῖσμα 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 (χρῖσμα) from the 'Holy One', and (they) know all' (πάντες) (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 'χρῖσμα' 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 σπέρμα in 1 John 3:9 with the Holy Spirit. Dodd identified both χρῖσμα and σπέρμα with the gospel whereas Findlay regarded them both as allusions to the Holy Spirit (in Stott 1964:134). The discussion over the meaning of σπέρμα 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 (σπέρμα) 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' (γνωσις) 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' (εἰἐ κ τοῦ θεοῦἐ στιν) (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 f act 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.

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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 ones life within a defined and specific social environment. Birth defines one's specific role and priviledges 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 priviledges 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 ἱλασμος 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.

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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: